

Today	Saturday	Sunday
High: 61 Low: 49 Precip: 30%	High: 64 Low: 50 Precip: 30%	High: 62 Low: 46 Precip: 70%

IN BRIEF

Four insurgent attacks kill 26 in Baghdad

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraqis seeking jobs with security forces were targeted again Thursday when a suicide bomber with explosives strapped to his body mingled among hundreds of men and blew himself up in one of four attacks that killed 26 people. The attacks are part of a surge of violence that has killed more than 200 since Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari announced his new government last week with seven positions still undecided.

Exit polls: Blair wins historic third term

LONDON — According to projections based on exit polls, Tony Blair won a historic third term as prime minister Thursday, but his Labour Party suffered a sharp, reduced parliamentary majority in apparent punishment for going to war in Iraq. A chastened Blair said "we will have to respond to that sensibly and wisely." Such an outcome, if confirmed by the actual vote count, could set the stage for Blair to be replaced midterm by a party rival such as Gordon Brown. As Treasury chief, Brown was widely credited for the strong economy that appears to have clinched Labour's victory, outweighing the bitterness many voters said they felt over Iraq.

House OKs bill to revise school speed zone law

SALEM — Doing a legislative U-turn, the Oregon House voted Thursday to revise a much-denigrated 2003 law that limits speeds to 20 mph in residential school zones 24 hours a day.

The 2003 Legislature passed the initial law in hopes of improving safety for children. However, the law drew widespread complaints from drivers who said there's no good reason to impose the lower speed limits at night when there are no children present.

Lawmakers clamored to support the bill, saying they hope it's the last time the issue will be in front of them.

"We screwed up that last statute," said Rep. Mitch Greenlick, D-Portland. "I think we've done good work on it, although I also thought that last time."

The bill passed the House 58-1 and will now head to the Senate.

Some lawmakers have said their constituents contacted them more about the 2003 law — which mandated vehicles travel 20 mph in school zones in residential areas in the middle of the night and on weekends — more than any other because they often felt it was unnecessary.

The new bill would change the speed limit to 20 mph between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday or when children are present.

It also includes the option for cities to add yellow flashing lights, which Rep. George Gilman, R-Medford, said "trump all."

"It's when those lights are on that you'll be doing 20 mph," Gilman explained, no matter what time of day it is. However, Gilman said installing the flashing yellow lights is optional.

Gilman stressed that the bill didn't strip safety from the current school speed zone law.

— The Associated Press

Gay men might be barred from donating sperm

Many accuse the FDA's new rule as discriminatory and call for a screening process based on sexual behavior

BY DAVID CRARY
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — To the dismay of gay-rights activists, the Food and Drug Administration is about to implement new rules recommending that any man who has engaged in homosexual sex in the previous five years be barred from serving as an anonymous sperm donor.

The FDA has rejected calls to scrap the provision, insisting that gay men collectively pose a higher-than-average risk of carrying the AIDS virus. Critics accuse the FDA of stigmatizing all gay men rather than adopting a screening process that focuses on high-risk sexual behavior by any would-be donor, gay or straight.

"Under these rules, a heterosexual man who had unprotected sex with HIV-positive prostitutes would be OK as a donor one year later, but a gay man in a monogamous, safe-sex relationship is not OK unless he's been celibate for five years," said Leland Traiman, director of a clinic in Alameda, Calif., that seeks gay sperm donors.

Traiman said adequate safety assurances can be provided by testing a sperm donor at the time of the initial donation, then freezing the sperm for a six-month quarantine and testing the donor again to be sure there is no new sign of HIV or other infectious diseases.

Although there is disagreement over whether the FDA guideline regarding gay men will have the force of law, most doctors and clinics are expected to observe it.

The practical effect of the provision — part of a broader set of cell and tissue donation regulations that take effect May 25 — is hard to gauge. It is likely to affect some lesbian couples who want a child and prefer to use a gay man's sperm for artificial insemination.

But it is the provision's symbolic aspect that particularly troubles gay-rights groups. Kevin Cathcart, executive director of Lambda Legal, has called it "policy based on bigotry."

"The part I find most offensive — and a little frightening — is that it isn't based on good science," Cathcart said. "There's a steadily increasing trend of heterosexual transmission of HIV, and yet the FDA still has this notion that you protect people by putting gay men out of the pool."

In a letter to the FDA, Lambda Legal has suggested a screening procedure based on sexual behavior, not sexual orientation. Prospective donors, gay or straight, would be rejected if they had engaged in unprotected sex in the previous 12 months with an HIV-positive person, an

illegal drug user or "an individual of unknown HIV status outside of a monogamous relationship."

But an FDA spokeswoman cited FDA documents suggesting that officials felt the broader exclusion was prudent even if it affected gay men who practice safe sex.

"The FDA is very much aware that strict exclusion policies eliminate some safe donors," said one document.

Many doctors and fertility clinics already have been rejecting gay sperm donors, citing the pending FDA rules or existing regulations of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine.

"With an anonymous sperm donor, you can't be too careful," said a society spokeswoman, Eleanor Nicoll. "Our concern is for the health of the recipient, not to let more and more people be sperm donors."

However, some sperm banks, notably in California, have welcomed gay donors. The director of one of them, Alice Ruby of the Oakland-based Sperm Bank of California, said her staff had developed procedures

for identifying gay men with an acceptably low risk of HIV.

Gay men are a major donor source at

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KEVIN CATHCART | Lambda Legal executive director

Traiman's Rainbow Flag sperm bank, and he said that practice would continue despite the new rules.

"We're going to continue to follow judicious, careful testing procedures for our clients that even experts within the FDA say is safe," said Traiman, referring to the six-month quarantine.

The FDA rules do not prohibit gay men from serving as "directed" sperm donors. If a woman wishing to become pregnant knows a gay man and asks that he provide sperm for artificial insemination, a clinic could provide that service even if the man had engaged in sex with other men within five years.

However, Traiman said some lesbian couples do not have a gay friend they know and trust well enough to be the biological father of their child, and would thus prefer an anonymous donor.

Dr. Deborah Cohan, an obstetrics and gynecology instructor at the University of California, San Francisco, said some lesbians prefer to receive sperm from a gay donor because they feel such a man would be more receptive to the concept of a family headed by a same-sex couple.

"This rule will make things legally more difficult for them," she said. "I can't think of a scientifically valid reason. It has to be an issue of discrimination."

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