

IN BRIEF

Tour boat overturns on upstate New York lake

LAKE GEORGE, N.Y. — A boat carrying tourists on a senior citizens' cruise overturned Sunday on a lake in upstate New York, killing at least 21 people and sending more than two dozen others to a hospital.

Authorities were investigating whether a large passing tour boat created a wake that caused the accident, Warren County Sheriff Larry Cleveland said.

The 40-foot, glass-enclosed Ethan Allen capsized around 3 p.m. on Lake George about 50 miles north of Albany in the Adirondack Mountains.

The accident apparently happened so fast that none of the passengers was able to put on a life jacket, Cleveland said.

Patrol boats that reached the scene within minutes found other boaters already pulling people from the water. All passengers had been accounted for within two hours.

Twenty-seven people were taken to a hospital in nearby Glens Falls. All of the injured were cold and wet, some with broken ribs and some complaining of shortness of breath. Five people were to be admitted, hospital spokesman Jason White said.

Talabani tells prime minister to step down

KIRKUK, Iraq — Iraq's Kurdish president called on the country's Shiite prime minister to step down, the spokesman for the president's party said Sunday, escalating a political split between the two factions that make up the government.

President Jalal Talabani has ac-

cused the Shiite-led United Iraqi Alliance, which holds the majority in parliament, of monopolizing power in the government and refusing to move ahead on a key issue for Kurds, the resettlement of Kurds in the northern city of Kirkuk.

"The time has come for the United Iraqi Alliance and the Kurdistan coalition to study Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari's stepping aside from his post," said Azad Jundiyan, a spokesman for Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. "This is for the benefit of the political process."

Jundiyan would not say whether the Kurds would withdraw from the government if the Shiite alliance does not back them in removing al-Jaafari. Talabani has made indirect threats to withdraw from the coalition if Kurdish demands are not met.

Bush considers 'lots of options' for high court

WASHINGTON — President Bush is watching his first Supreme Court nominee, Chief Justice John Roberts, take the helm of the high court Monday while weighing his options for nominating a second justice who also could shape the bench for years to come.

"He's still working," White House Chief of Staff Andy Card said Sunday about the president's effort to choose a replacement for retiring Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. "Still considering lots of options."

The White House will not disclose who is on Bush's short list, or hint at when an announcement will be made.

Legal experts who are in touch with administration officials say the

president is most likely to choose a woman to replace O'Connor, even though many of the often-mentioned candidates are white men.

Cathedral holds first Sunday service since Katrina

NEW ORLEANS — Churchgoers gathered to pray at the historic St. Louis Cathedral, convening in the building described as the "soul of the city" for its first Sunday Mass since Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans more than a month ago.

Emergency workers and soldiers — many of them out-of-towners who descended on Louisiana in the aftermath of the hurricane — mixed with newly returning residents as they prayed for the resolve to carry on.

One man, standing in the back of the church, said to himself as if in prayer: "Welcome back, New Orleans."

Louisiana Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes spoke of the more than 900 people who perished and offered hope for those who remain to face rebuilding a region that still has some floodwaters, scattered power outages and wind damage.

"This is indeed an historic moment in the life — not only in the church of New Orleans but in the whole city," Hughes said. "The structure which harbors the soul of our city has come back to life. ... Thanks be to God."

Sharon and Abbas agree to meet as violence eases

JERUSALEM — Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Leader Mahmoud Abbas agreed Sunday to hold their first summit since Israel's pullout from Gaza as

part of their efforts to restart the stalled Middle East peace process, officials from both sides said.

The announcement came as a new flare-up in fighting — blamed for the cancellation of a previously scheduled summit — eased in recent days.

Israeli officials said Sunday they were suspending the wide-ranging offensive against Palestinian militants following a lull in rocket attacks against Israeli towns, but said they would restart the operation if the rocket fire resumed. The officials said the operation succeeded in weakening militants' ability to attack Israel from Gaza.

As the offensive wound down, Hamas militants waged gunbattles with Palestinian police across Gaza City on Sunday night that killed two people — one bystander and one police officer — and wounded at least 50 others, including 10 police officers, according to the Palestinian Interior Ministry.

Pope opens meeting with the world's bishops

VATICAN CITY — Pope Benedict XVI inaugurated his first major Vatican event since being elected in April, welcoming more than 250 of the world's bishops to Rome on Sunday for a meeting about some of the pressing issues facing the Catholic Church.

Flanked by cardinals, bishops, patriarchs and other prelates from 118 countries, Benedict celebrated a two-hour Latin-filled Mass in St. Peter's Basilica to open the three-week synod, during which bishops will make recommendations to the pope on running the church.

"Let us pray that the Holy Spirit

illuminates, inspires and guides the work of the synod and pushes us to charity, agreement and the service of the truth," Benedict said in an opening prayer.

Officially, the Oct. 2-23 meeting was called to discuss the Eucharist, the sacrament in which Catholics receive Communion, believed by the faithful to be the body and blood of Christ.

FAA inspections of Northwest raise questions

MINNEAPOLIS — Reports filed by federal aviation inspectors during the first month of a strike by Northwest Airlines Corp.'s mechanics challenge assertions by executives that operations are running smoothly, according to a newspaper's review of the records.

In a story for Sunday's editions, the Star Tribune newspaper reported that the inspection records — which were reviewed by two independent aviation experts — describe training deficiencies among replacement workers, thin staffing, maintenance blunders and mistakes in recording aircraft repairs.

It cites one incident in which mechanics failed to find a dead bird in the engine of a jet about to leave Memphis, Tenn., but a co-pilot spotted it before takeoff.

In another case, it said inspectors watched replacement workers in Philadelphia work through the night to replace a brake. That job normally takes experienced mechanics less than three hours, the experts said.

—The Associated Press

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