

Israeli prime minister resists pressure to be replaced as candidate

INTERNATIONAL
JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Ehud Barak resisted pressure to allow elder statesman Shimon Peres to take his place as the Labor Party candidate before the key deadline passed early Friday.

Polls showed Peres faring better against hard-liner Ariel Sharon in the Feb. 6 election, who maintains a double-digit lead against Barak. The deadline for parties to switch candidates expired at midnight.

The Palestinian issue has dominated the campaign, and violence overshadowed peace efforts Thursday. Barak called off international efforts to arrange a pre-election summit with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat after an Israeli was shot to death while picking up his car at a West Bank garage.

Another Israeli, Dr. Shmuel Gillis, 42, later died when Palestinians opened fire on his car in the West Bank.

Two Palestinians also were killed Thursday, one by Israeli army gunfire in the Gaza Strip and the other by fellow Palestinians who suspected him of collaborating with the Israelis.

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Facing mounting criticism that its sanctions hit innocent civilians the hardest, the U.N. security council is considering changing the way it imposes such punishments.

The proposals include time limits, a partial easing of embargoes to reward good behavior and U.N. punishment for countries that trade with countries under sanctions.

The recommendations are contained in a draft report obtained Thursday by The Associated Press from a council committee that has been working since April to try to improve the effectiveness of sanctions.

Ambassadors decided to launch the reform effort to answer critics who say decade-old sanctions on Iraqis are hurting innocent civilians. They are also reacting to reports of large-scale violations of diamond embargoes against rebels who sell gems to fund their wars in Angola and Sierra Leone.

The draft report is still under negotiation, and the United States has made clear it has problems with several of the most dramatic changes suggested — apparently fearing that they could un-

dermine the hard-line U.S. position on Iraq, diplomats say.

NATIONAL
SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — After signing a \$10 billion package designed to ease the state's power crunch, Gov. Gray Davis expressed confidence that California may finally be turning the corner on its energy crisis.

The legislation allows the state to sell bonds and use the money to sign long-term contracts with energy wholesalers in attempt to provide power-starved California and its cash-strapped utilities with reliable and affordable energy sources for as long as a decade.

But residents still face the prospect of rate hikes. The measure allows the California Public Utilities Commission to raise electricity rates to repay the state for its power purchases. Another provision, designed to encourage conservation, would penalize residential customers with higher rates if they consume 30 percent more energy than a baseline specified by regional climate and energy use.

"This bill before me marks the first critical steps on the road to recovery from California's energy crisis," Davis said after signing the law, which took effect immediately.

California also hopes to save energy by launching a \$404 million conservation effort that Davis said is "the most aggressive in America."

BALTIMORE (AP) — Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy said he would continue promoting his theory that the 1972 break-in was about sex and not gathering political intelligence, now that a \$5.1 million defamation lawsuit against him has been dismissed.

District Chief Judge J. Frederick Motz declared a mistrial Thursday after jurors, who had deliberated for eight hours over two days, told him they could not reach a verdict. After another two hours of legal arguments, Motz dismissed the case for the second time in three years.

Liddy was sued by Ida "Maxie" Wells, a former Democratic National Committee secretary, for saying that the Watergate burglars were searching her desk for a package of call-girl photos believed to include a picture of the future wife of John Dean, the former

Nixon White House counsel. Liddy says Dean organized the burglary to retrieve the photos.

Liddy, 70, called the dismissal and the mistrial a "double victory" which would allow him to continue espousing his theory.

John and Maureen Dean have repeatedly denied Liddy's theory and sued him for libel. That lawsuit was dismissed last year but can be refiled. Wells' attorney, David Dorsen, said his client would likely appeal. Wells was not in the courtroom Thursday.

SYLVA, N.C. (AP) — Police have identified a corpse found in dense woods over a year ago as one of three missing members of a Wisconsin family and have charged the victim's 32-year-old son with murder.

Dental records confirmed the body was that of Allen Krnak, 55, of Sullivan, Wis., Sheriff Jim Cruzan said Thursday. An autopsy concluded Krnak died from a blow to the head.

The body was found in December 1999 along with a wedding ring inscribed with the initials "DKW & AFK" and what appeared to be a woman's T-shirt. Police and FBI agents returned to the spot on Thursday to search for traces of Krnak's still-missing wife, Donna, 52, and their 21-year-old son Thomas.

Investigators found no human remains, but did find those of a dog. The

family's cocker spaniel also disappeared in 1998 after the family left home for a fishing trip to their Wisconsin cabin and never returned.

The Krnaks' son Andrew, who later changed his name to Derek Anderson, was charged in Milwaukee with murder Thursday. Police said Anderson, 32, had attended Western Carolina University, about 10 miles from where the body was found.

FAIRFIELD, Conn. (AP) — General Electric Co. dismissed as false and mere guesswork a BusinessWeek magazine report that it plans 75,000 job cuts over the next two years.

Spokesman Gary Sheffer said Thursday that while chairman Jack Welch announced last month that significant layoffs were likely, the number has yet to be determined.

"The numbers being discussed are purely speculative, and because of that, inaccurate," Sheffer said.

The magazine, citing analysts who have spoken to GE executives, said some 50,000 of the cuts would come from GE's \$45 billion merger with Honeywell International Inc. The report is in the Feb. 12 edition released Thursday evening.

On Friday, USA Today published a similar report. Citing Wall street analysts, the paper said GE is expected to lay off as many as 80,000 people after it completes the Honeywell merger.

Honeywell spokesman Tom Crane said he did not know when the companies would announce layoff numbers, but said the merger is still on track to be completed by the end of March.

Honeywell International has about 120,000 employees worldwide. GE employs about 340,000 people worldwide.

WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON (AP) — Just as President Bush steers his White House toward a partisan tussle over tax cuts, he is making an unprecedented gesture to congressional Democrats: joining their annual closed-door retreats.

Bush was fielding questions from the opposition for a half-hour at the opening of Friday's Senate Democratic retreat at the Library of Congress before venturing back onto Republican turf in the afternoon at the House-Senate GOP retreat in Williamsburg, Va.

After an abbreviated weekend at Camp David, his first as president, Bush will fly on Sunday to Farmington, Pa., near Pittsburgh, where House Democrats were meeting at a mountain resort.

The president "hopes that by going to the retreats of the other parties, as well, of course, as his own party, that people across the country will see our government works together well," said White House press secretary Ari

Fleischer. Americans want to see Washington "focus less on bickering and more on working," he added.

Whether that focus can hold will be tested next week when Bush sends Congress his \$1.6 trillion, 10-year tax-cut package. Democrats have already mounted a campaign against the plan, saying its massive size risks a return to Reagan-era deficits.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The recent woes of delayed air travelers result from the government's "staggering failure" to invest in airports, planes and air traffic control systems, business leaders and passenger advocates say.

Traveler frustration grew last year as airline delays reached record levels. The Transportation Department said planes arrived late 27.4 percent of the time in 2000, 3.5 percentage points worse than the year before and the largest percentage of delays since the department began collecting such data in 1995.

"The skies have become congested, the airports are overcrowded, and the air traffic control system is woefully outdated—all because we've failed to make important investments over the last several decades," Thomas Donohue, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said Thursday at an "aviation summit" of industry and government officials.

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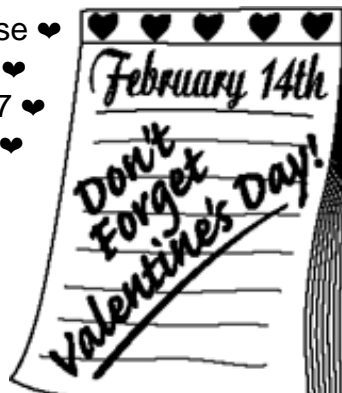
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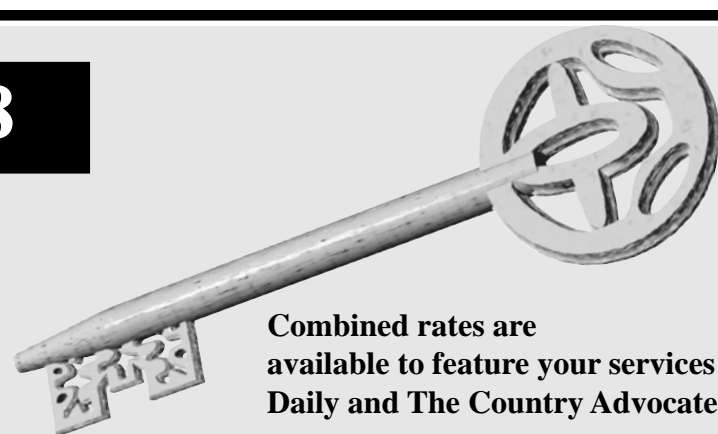
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