

# Decision to defer increase in crude prices won't be seen at pumps

By the Associated Press  
INTERNATIONAL

VIENNA, Austria — OPEC's decision to defer a possible increase in oil output until next month could trigger a modest rise in crude prices, but analysts said motorists probably won't see much impact on summer prices at the gas pump.

OPEC members meeting Tuesday in Vienna agreed, as expected, to keep pumping oil at their current levels. They also made a surprise decision to meet again on July 3 to assess the effects of Iraq's suspension of its crude exports.

The Iraqi government halted shipments on Monday, removing 2.1 million barrels from the world's daily oil supply. By meeting again next month, delegates of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries are demonstrating the seriousness with which they view Iraq's action.

OPEC ministers insisted there was plenty of crude on hand to meet current demand. The cartel's president, Chakib Khelil, said it wasn't even clear that Iraq has completely stopped exporting.

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica — Haiti's president promised to hold new elections in the Western Hemisphere's most troubled democracy — a promise that opposition leaders say he'll break.

In a resolution carefully couched with provisos, foreign ministers of the 34-nation Organization of American States gave a key endorsement of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's timetable to hold new elections in stages between this year and November 2004.

"We expect concrete actions, no more empty promises," U.S. Ambassador Luis J. Lauredo told the assem-

## ap news capsules

bly Tuesday before it passed the resolution.

The OAS also agreed to help unblock hundreds of millions of aid dollars frozen after last year's tainted legislative elections if there is progress toward "an enduring solution to the crisis." The resolution called on all sectors of Haitian society to accept Aristide's overture and "compromise totally."

Opposition leaders rejected the proposal and charged the organization is giving Aristide what he wants: the opportunity to bypass their demands for immediate elections while helping to unblock the frozen aid.

### NATIONAL

LOS ANGELES — City Attorney James Hahn emerged victorious from a tight Los Angeles mayoral race early today, beating back a strong challenge from Antonio Villaraigosa, who had sought to become the city's first Hispanic mayor in more than a century.

The two Democrats had waged one of the fiercest mayoral campaigns in the history of the nation's second-largest city, spending \$13 million for a race that became increasingly nasty toward the end.

With all precincts reporting on Tuesday's balloting, Hahn had 293,273 votes, or 54 percent. Villaraigosa, a former state Assembly speaker, had 254,491 votes, or 46 percent.

Hahn, the city attorney since 1985, is also a former city controller. His late father, Kenneth, was a four-decade county supervisor representing the largely black neighborhoods of South Los Angeles that now constitute his

son's base. Hahn attributed his victory to the same sort of coalition-building that characterized Villaraigosa's campaign.

Villaraigosa, the son of a Mexican immigrant, grew up on the rough streets of East Los Angeles. He had sought to become the city's first Hispanic mayor since 1872 by building a coalition that ranged from labor unions to millionaires, but the Hahn family's political capital ultimately proved too much.

DENVER — With the ordered execution of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh only days away, his lawyers have requested another delay to analyze thousands of suppressed FBI documents that could point to others involved.

U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch was to convene a hearing today morning to determine whether McVeigh's execution will proceed as scheduled June 11. There was no indication how long the hearing would last or when Matsch would rule.

In a court brief filed Tuesday, McVeigh's attorneys argued they may have been able to identify others who had major roles in the bombing if they had received the disputed 4,400 FBI documents before trial. They also alleged the government is continuing to withhold evidence.

McVeigh, 33, has accused the government of committing a "fraud upon the court" because it turned over the additional FBI documents and 11 CDs in May rather than before his 1997 trial and subsequent murder conviction.

Some of the newly released FBI materials apparently are related to the FBI's huge search for a John Doe No. 2 suspect.

Sketches of a dark, heavyset man were circulated after the bombing but federal officials eventually identified him as an Army private who had no role in the attack.

CANTON, Ohio — Ohio health officials plan to inoculate thousands of high school students in an effort to contain a meningitis-related outbreak that has killed two teen-agers.

"Our job is to err on the side of conservatism," said Nick Baird, director of the Ohio Department of Health.

The department decided Tuesday to administer vaccinations against the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis* to up to 5,800 students and staff members at six high schools in and around Alliance, Ohio. The free shots will be given starting on Friday.

Two students from an Alliance-area high school died in May after contracting a blood infection caused by a strain of the bacteria. The students, Jonathan Stauffer, 15, and Kelly Coblenz, 16, were thought to have shared a water bottle at a school picnic.

On Saturday, Christin VanCamp, 18, a student at a nearby high school, was diagnosed with the same kind of blood infection. Tests were being conducted to determine whether she contracted the same strain of the bacteria as the teens who died.

VanCamp, who is hospitalized in Akron, is expected to recover. She had become infected after attending calling hours for one of the dead teens.

DALLAS — Blockbuster Inc. hopes to settle nearly two dozen class-action

lawsuits over the company's overdue video fees without abandoning the charges, a big part of its business.

Dallas-based Blockbuster, the world's largest video-rental chain, has denied any wrongdoing but is offering to give out coupons with a face value of about \$460 million in discounts for movie rentals and merchandise.

Company officials also say they won't change the late-fee policy that led to the lawsuits, and that has critics howling.

Late fees are important to Blockbuster's bottom line. In 2000, the company earned about 19 percent of its rental income from late fees — \$795.8 million out of \$4.16 billion.

Blockbuster used to add a charge for every day a rental was late. In February 2000, it changed its policy to treat late tapes as if the customer had rented them for another 2-day or 5-day period. Both practices were attacked in lawsuits, claiming that the penalty far exceeds Blockbuster's potential loss from late tapes.

### WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON — President Bush is winning praise from the domestic steel industry but warnings from steel users that trade sanctions against foreign steel will mean higher prices for everything from automobiles to appliances.

Bush's decision to request an investigation by the U.S. International Trade Commission that could lead to punitive tariffs or quotas on foreign steel brought an immediate negative response from a major U.S. trading partner.

"This is bad news," said Pascal Lamy, the top trade negotiator for the 15-nation European Union. "The cost of restructuring in the U.S. steel indus-

try should not be shifted onto the rest of the world."

The U.S. industry, however, praised Bush's decision on Tuesday with stock prices for American steel companies soaring on the news.

In making his announcement, Bush said at the White House, "It's in our nation's interest to make sure that if there are unfair trade practices in the steel industry, we address them in a very aggressive way."

Bush asked the ITC, an independent government agency, to open an investigation to determine if domestic producers are being seriously harmed, using a provision of U.S. trade law known as Section 201, which allows for protections against import surges.

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration is considering a plan to rate health care providers used by elderly and disabled citizens who are eligible for Medicare.

Critics question whether the government can help find good nursing homes, dialysis centers, and other facilities that generally serve Medicare recipients.

"The challenge for everyone is to define the measures and make certain they are valid and reliable," said Carmela Coyle, a lobbyist for the American Hospital Association.

So far, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson is keeping mum on the details, awaiting a mid-June announcement from the administration on a myriad of changes for the federal health insurance program for the elderly.

"Ratings are something that we are considering," said Thompson, adding that no decision has been made. "Many things are on the table."

## Ag regulators fear spread of disease in wheat

WICHITA (AP) — Discovery of the first confirmed cases of Karnal bunt in the nation's wheat belt has sent agriculture regulators scrambling to contain the disease before it is spread by custom cutters following the winter wheat harvest northward.

At stake is the United State's ability to export wheat and wheat products to more than 80 countries, ag regulators said.

On Tuesday, the Kansas Department of Agriculture urged wheat growers to question harvest crews about where they have been before letting them come onto their fields.

The agency said crews who have

been in the infected areas must be able to show farmers a USDA certificate proving that their equipment has been properly cleaned.

Karnal bunt, a fungus which cuts crop yields, also discolors flour and gives it a harmless but unpleasant odor and taste. The disease, which originated in India, arrived in the United States in 1996, when it was found in Arizona and California. The next year it was found in Texas.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture imposed a strict federal quarantine on infected areas, successfully keeping the disease confined and out of the

nation's wheat belt — at least until last week.

On May 31, the fungus was found in Throckmorton and Young counties in northern Texas by alert elevator workers who segregated the infected wheat and notified USDA, said Tom Sim, program manager for plant protection at the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

"This find in northern Texas this past week is significant in that it is the first report of the disease in the wheat belt — so it is a little bit of a concern to us," Sim said.

The nation's wheat belt extends north from central Texas to Alberta,

Canada and includes Kansas. Winter wheat harvest has begun in Texas and is slowly moving northward as crops mature.

"Karnal bunt is a plant disease that could severely restrict our ability to export wheat and wheat products," said Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Jamie Clover Adams in a news release.

For growers, the fungus cuts production about 1 percent on average, Sim said. But if it is found in Kansas, the economic losses could be significant if the state is unable to certify its wheat for export. Kansas is the nation's biggest wheat producer.

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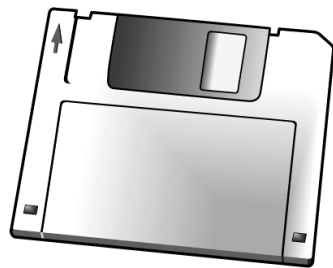
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