

Ousted Philippine president arraigned on capital offense

By the Associated Press INTERNATIONAL

MANILA, Philippines — Ousted President Joseph Estrada was arraigned today on the capital offense of economic plunder inside the imposing courthouse he once called a symbol of his tough campaign against corruption.

Despite last-minute attempts to quash or delay the case on constitutional grounds, the courts stood firm on trying the former action film star-turned-politician accused of taking millions of dollars in bribes and kickbacks during 31 months in office.

The Sandiganbayan anti-graft court also arraigned Estrada's son Jinggoy, whose term as mayor of Manila's San Juan district expired June 30, and attorney Edward Serapio.

As he did two weeks ago during arraignment on perjury charges, Estrada did not enter a plea today. Jinggoy and Serapio followed suit. The justices entered a plea of innocent on their behalf.

Estrada was ousted in January amid mass street protests. He has claimed he did not take a single penny of corrupt money.

KINGSTON, Jamaica — Soldiers in trucks and armored cars took to the streets with orders to halt violence between law enforcers and opposition party supporters that has left at least 20 people dead in three days.

Prime Minister P.J. Patterson called out the army on Monday night.

It was not clear how many soldiers were involved. They mainly moved into the streets in the capital, Kingston, as helicopters hovered overhead. Patterson said they also would deploy in other hotspots around the Caribbean country.

Leaders of Jamaica's two main political parties — Patterson and Labor Party leader Edward Seaga — accused the other of inciting the violence ahead of general elections scheduled to take place before the end of next year.

The violence grew out of more than two months of clashes between gangs with rival political ties. Thirty-seven people were killed in those fights. But at least another 20 have been killed since Saturday, when police and soldiers moved into Kingston's notori-

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ously dangerous Tivoli Gardens neighborhood, a Labor stronghold.

"The police are downtown killing people, but only Laborites," said 48-year-old Beverly Brown, among 30 protesters at a makeshift roadblock in the Grant's Pen neighborhood.

NATIONAL

NEW ORLEANS — NAACP President Kweisi Mfume, speaking at the group's annual convention, questioned whether President Bush has lived up to his promise of compassionate conservatism.

"For over a year we've heard about compassionate conservatism," said Mfume, a former Democratic congressman, referring to a favorite theme of Bush's campaign. "The NAACP says 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if every conservative was compassionate?'"

"Wouldn't it be great if they finally understood, in their pomp and circumstance and their power and position, that the Constitution does not belong solely to one party or one individual?"

Mfume's remarks came during his keynote address to some 4,800 people Monday attending the civil rights group's 92nd annual convention.

The convention runs through Thursday. Delegates were scheduled to meet to vote on resolutions for much of the day today.

A potential economic boycott of Mississippi is one issue that's likely to be considered. In April, 64 percent of the state's voters decided to keep the state's flag, which includes the Confederate symbol.

SALEM, Mass. — For more than a year, Christopher Reardon maintained his innocence as investigators compiled a mountain of evidence they said proved he raped and sexually assaulted young boys in his care.

On Monday, some of those victims and their families listened as Reardon, 29, hung his head and responded "guilty" to 75 charges during a five-hour hearing that included graphic details of the allegations.

"We're relieved that there is closure

to this case for both Chris and also for the children," said Reardon's father, John, reading a brief statement after the hearing.

Christopher Reardon, a former church youth leader and YMCA swim coach, could get up to life in prison when he is sentenced Aug. 17.

He had faced 130 charges, including rape, molestation and disseminating pornography involving 29 boys. Prosecutors called it the largest sex-abuse case in state history.

Defense attorney John Andrews said his client pleaded guilty to spare his victims the trauma of testifying against him in open court.

SNEADS FERRY, N.C. — A Marine Corps helicopter on a training exercise crashed into the New River near Camp Lejeune Marine Corps base, killing three Marines and injuring two others.

The pilot and co-pilot of the CH-46 Sea Knight, which went down at about 11 p.m. Monday, were taken to nearby hospitals. They were listed in stable condition.

The helicopter was participating in a training exercise for the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit when it crashed, said 2nd Lt. Paul C. Cabellon, a base spokesman.

The tail of the helicopter could be seen about 500 yards offshore, Cabellon said. The rest of the wreckage was submerged.

The bodies of one of the dead Marines was found. Emergency workers were still trying to retrieve the other bodies early today, military officials said.

PENSACOLA, Fla. — Doctors say possible brain damage is the biggest worry for an 8-year-old boy whose right arm was reattached after being bitten off by a shark.

Jessie Arbogast also suffered a severe leg wound and was nearly drained of blood. He was in critical but stable condition Monday after undergoing six surgeries to repair damage from the weekend attack.

The blood loss harmed virtually every organ in his body, said Dr. Jack Tyson, one of the surgeons who reattached the arm at Baptist Hospital. Jessie's kidneys have failed, and he was receiving dialysis.

Tyson said it was clear the boy was not brain dead, but it was too early to tell if he suffered brain damage.

A critical care pediatrician at Sacred Heart Children's Hospital, where Jessie was transferred Sunday, said a new brain wave study showed the boy was relatively stable.

The Ocean Springs, Miss., boy was attacked in the surf at the Fort Pickens section of the Gulf Islands National Seashore in the Florida Panhandle.

His uncle, Vance Flosenzler, of Mobile, Ala., wrestled the 7-foot-long bull shark to shore with the help of another beachgoer.

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — The condition of a former Ku Klux Klansman's memory has taken center stage at a hearing to determine whether he will be tried for a deadly 1963 church bombing.

On the first day of a mental competency hearing for Bobby Frank Cherry, a defense expert testified Monday that a brain disease has severely impaired the 72-year-old man's memory.

Clinical neuropsychologist Maura Carter said Cherry is of average intelligence but scored in the mentally retarded range on a test to determine how well he recalled things that people told him.

"This test would tell me that if Mr. Cherry were up on the stand, he would have difficulty ... remembering the questions long enough to provide valid responses," Carter said.

Judge James Garrett will decide after hearing testimony from defense and prosecution witnesses whether Cherry can stand trial on murder charges in one of the most notorious crimes of the civil rights era: the deaths of four black girls in the Sept. 15, 1963, bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.

The hearing was scheduled to resume today.

Another ex-Klansman, Thomas Blanton Jr., was convicted in the bombing in May and sentenced to life in prison.

WASHINGTON — Staph bacteria can quickly swap genes with relatives to turn into virulent, dangerous germs that can cause disease and resist antibiotics, a new study shows.

In a report appearing today in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, federal researchers said they used a new technology to learn that Staphylococcus aureus could grab new genes from nearby bacteria to adapt itself to a changing environment.

Staphylococcus aureus, or staph, is an extremely troublesome bacterium that causes a variety of illnesses.

Antibiotics once controlled the bacteria, but strains of staph are now re-

sistant to the drugs. "This is the first time we've been able to do such an extensive genetic comparison of these strains of Staphylococcus aureus," said Dr. James M. Musser, senior author of the study and head of a bacterial research lab at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease's Rocky Mountain Laboratories in Hamilton, Mont. NIAID is one of the National Institutes of Health.

In the study, Musser and his colleagues analyzed the genes of 36 of the most troublesome strains of staph and concluded that virtually any of the bacteria's 2,817 strains could acquire the genes to become resistant to antibiotics.

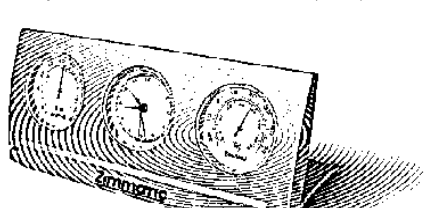
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