

Controversy threatens conference against racism

By Associated Press INTERNATIONAL
DURBAN, South Africa (AP) — The European Union has set a deadline today for making progress in its effort to remove anti-Israel language from the world conference against racism's proposed declaration.

Controversy over efforts to condemn Israel for its "racist policies" has threatened the success of the conference, which was meant to highlight discrimination around the world. The United States and Israel left Monday after efforts to find a compromise with Arab states failed.

Several delegations, anxious to salvage the meeting, worked Wednesday to come up with new language for the declaration.

A group of South Africans and Belgians — representing the European Union — as well as delegates from Norway, Namibia and the Palestinians, worked through the night Tuesday and hoped to have a compromise draft ready by Wednesday evening, a Belgian spokesman said.

SKOPJE, Macedonia (AP) — A crucial debate on Macedonia's peace process dragged into today with members of the largest party making increasingly defiant speeches against a Western-crafted deal.

But with intense international pressure on the lawmakers, there were high expectations the agreement granting minority ethnic Albanians more rights would be move forward.

The vote — to approve the framework for constitutional changes — is just the first step by parliament and an important gesture to keep momentum on efforts to end the six-month old insurgency by ethnic Albanian rebels demanding greater rights.

Approval will clear the way for NATO to resume collecting weapons voluntarily handed over by the rebels, and push parliament to the next phase of debating specific constitutional changes in the step-by-step process.

A rejection of the agreement would throw the whole peace deal into question. The rebels, known as the National Liberation Army, are unlikely to continue disarming if the Macedonian side

ap news capsules

does not adhere to its promises of constitutional changes.

NATIONAL
WEST GLACIER, Mont. (AP) — Firefighters battling a 58,000-acre blaze on the western edge of Glacier National Park finally got some good news: a forecast for rain and cooler temperatures.

Hot, dry weather and wind, combined with the steep land and dense woods, have hindered efforts to fight the lightning-sparked fire that expanded into the park last week.

More than 1,000 firefighters were on the line Tuesday and the air attack resumed, a day after dangerous wind sidelined both.

"Things are looking pretty good," incident commander Larry Humphrey said.

Cooler temperatures were forecast for today and Thursday, and fire meteorologist Chuck Redman said there was a strong chance of rain today, as much as a quarter inch.

The fire remained outside the park until Friday, when it doubled and made a run across Glacier's western boundary. As of Tuesday, officials said about 14,000 acres within the 1 million-acre park had burned.

According to the National Inter-agency Fire Center, there were 18 large fires burning on more than 171,800 acres in the West on Tuesday. About half that acreage was in Montana.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — The Ukrainian immigrant who sparked a nationwide manhunt after allegedly killing his pregnant wife and five other relatives has been charged with seven counts of first-degree murder.

Nikolay Soltys, 27, kept his head down Tuesday as Judge Patrick Marlette read the charges. He didn't enter a plea.

One of the counts was for the fetus. Lyubov Soltys was three-months pregnant when she was killed. District Attorney Jan Scully said she could file the charge as long as the fetus was at least 7 weeks.

"Baby Soltys is the seventh victim.

It's appropriate that he be charged for all victims," Scully said.

Soltys was arrested Thursday while hiding in his mother's back yard.

Soltys' attorney, Tommy Clinkenbeard, said he was investigating his client's background, studying Soltys' mental state and was "keeping all our options open."

He said he was considering an insanity plea or asking the court to suppress any confession Soltys made to investigators because he did not have an attorney present during police interviews.

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The Mormon church has agreed to pay \$3 million to an Oregon man who claims the church did too little to protect him from sexual abuse by a pedophile.

Despite the settlement announced Tuesday, church attorney Von Keetch said the denomination's officials are not accepting any blame for the abuse. He said the payment was simply cheaper than pursuing the case in court.

Jeremiah Scott, 22, sued The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints after a fellow church member was convicted of repeatedly sexually abusing him in Portland, Ore., when he was 11.

The suit claimed Gregory Lee Foster, then a bishop of the church, knew Franklin Richard Curtis had a history of sexually abusing children dating back to the 1970s, but did not warn Scott's mother before she allowed Curtis to move into their home. The case was scheduled to go to trial this fall.

Curtis, who was 87 at the time of the abuse, was arrested and convicted of first-degree sex abuse and given probation in 1994. He died in 1995.

WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON (AP) — The pace of Republican retirements is quickening 14 months before the 2002 Senate elections, with Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas the latest to announce plans to leave and the party anxiously awaiting word from Tennessee Sen. Fred Thompson on his political future.

However long it lasts, Democrats are

plainly enjoying the exodus
"The Republican caucus is on the defensive," Sen. Patty Murray, head of the Democratic campaign committee, claimed Tuesday, shortly after Gramm became the third Republican to announce retirement plans for 2002.

By contrast, she said, "each and every one of our Democratic incumbents continue to work diligently toward reelection."

Republicans quickly countered there was little for Democrats to brag about in Gramm's decision to step down in Texas, a state that has not elected a Democrat to the Senate in more than a dozen years.

An aide said Tuesday that Thompson has not yet made up his mind about running again.

Gramm stepped to the microphones to announce the end of his political career less than two weeks after Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina confirmed his retirement plans. Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, 98, is the third GOP retiree.

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush says there is ample money to pay for extra spending for defense and education, despite nonpartisan projections that the surplus has shrunk and Social Security funds are being eroded.

Mitchell Daniels, Bush's budget chief, was set today to become the first administration official questioned directly by Congress about the nation's deteriorating fiscal and economic health since updated budget estimates were released last month. Daniels was to appear before the House Budget Committee.

Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., emerged from a private meeting with Bush on Tuesday saying the president had reiterated his promise to not touch Social Security money. But still, Daschle said it was Bush's job to show how he could do that while financing his priorities.

Bush sounded combative before meeting separately with Daschle and Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss. Bush also opened the door to a future cut in the capital gains tax.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Bush

administration is defending its policy on embryonic stem cell research before Congress in the face of critics who say the limits on federal funding will hold back promising research.

The session before a Senate committee today offered the first public debate on President Bush's compromise over research that uses stem cells extracted from human embryos.

Bush allowed taxpayer funding for the research, but only for the 64 stem cell lines, or colonies, that had been created by Aug. 9, when he announced his decision.

Since then, research backers have

questioned whether all 64 of those stem cell lines are actually usable to scientists, and whether legal issues will prevent scientists from moving ahead.

Still, Bush appears to have satisfied enough people to keep Congress from acting, though some research supporters have said they will try to lift the restrictions.

"President Bush has opened the door. The question is whether he's opened it far enough," said Sen. Edward Kennedy, chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which was considering the issue today.

Oz developers repay portion of grants

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — One side called it a "misunderstanding." The other used much harsher words.

Whatever the true nature of the fight over money that erupted between Oz Entertainment Co. and the Unified Government of Kansas City, Kan., and Wyandotte County, it came to an end on Tuesday in the instant it took for Oz to wire \$150,000 into the Unified Government's account.

With the transfer, repaying some of the grants Oz received in the early 1990s, comes an official end to the company's flirtation with building a theme park in western Wyandotte county.

Oz previously had presented a \$150,000 check, but when Unified Government officials tried to deposit it, they learned that Oz had stopped payment.

"I'm glad (Oz) honored their commitment," Unified Government Mayor Carol Marinovich said Tuesday night. "I thought what they did wasn't right. And obviously they decided what they did wasn't right either and wanted to fulfill their obligation."

Officials with the Unified Government and the Board of Public Utilities said they were satisfied.
"From the Unified Government's

perspective, the book on Oz is closed," spokesman Don Denny said, and BPU board President John Pettey called the agreement a "win-win" situation.

Oz now wants to locate an \$861 million theme park and resort at the former Sunflower Army Ammunition plant near De Soto in neighboring Johnson County.

But Johnson County Commissioner Doug Wood — who had been one of the company's staunchest supporters before the grant flap erupted — remained skeptical.

"Oz is going to have to do more to regain the trust of Johnson County," Wood said Tuesday. "They need Johnson County, and we don't need them."

Last month, The Kansas City Star reported on Oz's decision to stop payment on its check, even as company officials were saying Oz had repaid Wyandotte County for grants received in the early 1990s.

Oz officials said the company stopped payment because the Unified Government had not cashed the check and because legal questions had been raised about whether the company had to repay the money.

At issue was \$550,000 — including the \$150,000 — that Wyandotte County governments gave Oz.

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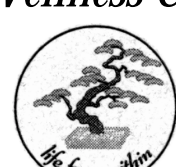
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