

Japan's unemployment jumps to a new high

INTERNATIONAL
TOKYO (AP) — Just two months after hitting a record high, Japan's unemployment jumped to a new record 5.3 percent in September as the global economic slowdown continued to batter the nation's export-dependent economy.

The report from the government Tuesday was far worse than the 5.1 percent that analysts had expected. In July, Japan's jobless rate hit 5 percent — then the highest since the government began keeping track in the 1950s. The unemployment rate stayed at 5 percent in August. The U.S. jobless rate in September stood at 4.9 percent.

On Monday, the central bank said the outlook was so bad Japan likely won't be out of a recession until March 2003. "The government will do all it can to tackle unemployment," said government spokesman Yasuo Fukuda.

Japan is struggling to pull itself out of a 10-year economic slowdown, but has yet to change what is at the root of the problem — an old-style economy that relies on public works spending and exports of mass-produced items to keep growing. ^NATIONAL=

DETROIT (AP) — Ford Motor Co. chief executive Jacques Nasser, whose future at the slumping automaker has been in doubt for months, will leave the company and be replaced by chairman William Clay Ford Jr., a company source told The Associated Press.

The move puts a Ford family member in charge of the automaker's day-to-day management for the first time

ap news capsules

since 1979, when Henry Ford II resigned. William Clay Ford Jr., 44, is a great-grandson of founder Henry Ford.

Nasser's departure, as well as other management changes, were to be announced Tuesday, said the source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

His fate had been the subject of much speculation in recent months as Ford was plagued by eroding sales, questions about vehicle quality and the ongoing Firestone tire crisis.

Nasser, 53, who earned the moniker "Jac the Knife" for his prodigious cost-cutting, took over in January 1999 and was poised to overtake General Motors Corp. as the top automaker in the world. The company has instead watched its market share dip.

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Napster won't let the music play until some time next year.

The embattled song-swapping service's chief executive, Konrad Hilbers, told a technology conference Monday that the company must still license more major record label music before it can go back online. That will probably be in the first quarter of next year, he said.

Napster has been off-line since July in an effort to comply with a federal judge's order that the free music trade be halted. Hilbers said Napster will replicate its popular file-sharing service in a secure environment while

pressing for licensing deals with major labels.

He hopes a settlement of the suit his company faces can help Napster recreate the song downloading magic that brought the company 60 million users at its peak.

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Police fired pepper spray at animal rights activists Monday after some tried to breach a barricade outside a firm with ties to a controversial British research company.

About two dozen activists were arrested outside the downtown headquarters of Stephens Inc. Nine of them had tried to scale the 3-foot barricade, chanting "stop the torture, stop the pain." Many wore gas masks, bandanas and animal masks, and some had painted animal features on their faces.

Two protesters were treated for minor injuries. Little Rock Police Lt. Terry Hastings said most of those arrested were charged with disorderly conduct and released by Monday evening.

About 150 people arrived in Little Rock over the weekend for protests against the company and its investment in Huntingdon Life Sciences.

The demonstration was organized by Philadelphia-based Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty, which claims the company's laboratories in Great Britain and New Jersey mistreat

animals.

Stephens says Huntingdon complies with government regulations in its treatment of animals and does not abuse animals.

WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON (AP) — With oil prices declining, President Bush is expected to order the government to put an additional 100,000 barrels of oil a day into its emergency stockpile.

While some details remain to be worked out, the Energy Department proposal is awaiting final approval from the president, with a decision expected soon, according to administration officials who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Private economists said the move, in addition to boosting emergency reserves, will signal U.S. intentions to help stabilize world oil prices at a time when OPEC producers — including Saudi Arabia — have been worried about the sharp drop in global demand.

The proposal calls for funneling an additional 70 million barrels of crude into the government's Strategic Petroleum Reserve over the next two years, with most — if not all — of the oil to be provided by companies in lieu of federal royalty payments.

While Congress would have to provide money for any additional direct purchases, an executive order could allow "royalty-in-kind" purchases immediately.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Organized labor isn't completely organized when

it comes to the idea of government-employed airport security screeners.

Several unions are running television ads this week supporting the plan, which the House is scheduled to vote on Wednesday.

But President Bush and the House GOP leadership, which oppose federalizing airport security, are finding an unlikely ally in the AFL-CIO's largest union, the Service Employees International Union, which represents about 2,000 screeners and has been trying to organize them nationally.

Hiring the nation's 28,000 screeners as government employees "would be a massive undertaking that nobody is saying could happen fast," said Jono Shaffer, SEIU's director of security organizing.

"We think there is a much more streamlined way to make changes that would result in dramatic improvements very fast."

With federalization, other unions see 28,000 new federal workers that quickly could become unionized. SEIU sees its organizing efforts over the last few years threatened.

WASHINGTON (AP) — FBI

agents are investigating a written bomb threat found aboard an American Airlines plane that prompted the pilot to make an unscheduled landing at Washington Dulles International Airport.

Three of the plane's 141 passengers suffered minor injuries Monday night while sliding down emergency chutes. No bomb was found.

The Boeing 757 plane, American Flight 785 en route to Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport from New York's La Guardia Airport, landed just after 7 p.m., according to officials at the airport in suburban Virginia, 25 miles west of Washington.

A recorded statement by American Airlines spokesman Gus Whitcomb said the plane was diverted after a passenger found a suspicious note.

A government official speaking on condition of anonymity said the note was a bomb threat.

After the plane landed, two airport runways were closed for an hour and 40 minutes while investigators searched the plane with bomb-sniffing dogs.

American Airlines sent most of the diverted passengers on another plane to Texas late Monday night.

Court reviews state sex predator law

WASHINGTON (AP) - Four years after ruling Kansas could lock up a child molester who admitted he couldn't "control the urge," the Supreme Court is deciding whether states must prove a sex offender cannot control his behavior.

The court heard arguments today in a second case involving Kansas' Sexually Violent Predator Law. At issue is whether due process requires the state to show total inability to control dangerous actions before it can jail an offender as a sexual predator.

Kansas Attorney General Carla Stovall argued today prosecutors must show only some lack of control, rather than total lack of control, under the Kansas law.

More than 20 states, including Mis-

souri, have similar laws allowing authorities to confine "sexually violent predators" indefinitely, based on a judge or jury's decision in a civil commitment proceeding.

Kansas lawmakers acted in 1994, after a convicted rapist who was released from prison killed a Pittsburg State University student, Stephanie Schmidt.

The case now before the high court involves Michael Crane, who was convicted in 1994 for offenses included grabbing a Johnson County, Kan., video store employee, ordering her to perform oral sex and threatening to rape her.

The Kansas Supreme Court later threw out three of the four charges — aggravated criminal sodomy, at-

tempted rape and kidnapping — leaving only a conviction for lewd and lascivious behavior.

The state in 1997 refiled the first two charges and, after Crane pleaded guilty to a lesser offense, filed a petition to have him civilly committed as a sexual predator under the state law.

A state judge decided Kansas was not required to prove Crane's inability to control his dangerous behavior and instead told jurors to decide whether he suffered from a personality disorder that made him likely to engage in future acts of sexual violence.

The judge rejected defense efforts to make the jury meet a tougher standard — that Crane was unable to control his behavior. However, the Kansas Supreme Court ruled the trial judge should

have granted the jury instruction.

"We believe there should be no distinction between mental abnormality and personality disorder," Stovall argued today.

Crane's attorney, John Donham, asked the high court to find middle ground.

"Some of these terms are pretty slippery," Donham said. "But I think this court can set a benchmark that can be followed."

Officials in Missouri, where the law is nearly identical, are watching the case because the same issues is now before the Missouri Supreme Court.

The Kansas Supreme Court in 1996 declared the sex predator law unconstitutional, which the U.S. Supreme Court overruled in 1997.

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