

Mubarak Denies Charges At Trial Opening

CAIRO (AP) — An ailing, 83-year-old Hosni Mubarak, lying ash-faced on a hospital bed inside a metal defendants cage with his two sons standing protectively beside him in white prison uniforms, denied charges of corruption and complicity in the killing of protesters at the start of his historic trial on Wednesday.

The spectacle, aired live on state television, was a stunning moment for Egyptians. Many savored the humiliation of the man who ruled with unquestionable power for 29 years, during which opponents were tortured, corruption was rife, poverty spread and political life was stifled.

After widespread skepticism that Egypt's military rulers would allow one of their own — a former head of the air force — to be prosecuted in front of the world, the scene went a long way to satisfy one of the key demands that has united protesters since Feb. 11, when Mubarak fell following an 18-day uprising.

"This is the dream of Egyptians, to see him like this, humiliated like he humiliated them for the last 30 years," said Ghada Ali, the mother of a 17-year old girl in the city of Alexandria who was shot to death during the crackdown.

72 Charged In International Child Porn Case

WASHINGTON (AP) — Seventy-two people have been charged with participating in an international child pornography network that prosecutors say used an online bulletin board called Dreamboard to trade tens of thousands of images and videos of sexually abused children.

Attorney General Eric Holder and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said Wednesday a 20-month law enforcement effort called Operation Delego targeted more than 600 Dreamboard members around the world for allegedly participating in the private, members-only Internet club created to promote pedophilia.

Numerous participants in the network sexually abused children ages 12 and under, produced images and video of the abuse and then shared it with other club members, according to court papers released in the case.

Policy Clashes Pose Obstacles For Congress

WASHINGTON (AP) — The special panel's goal is lofty: concoct a deal both parties will embrace to slash federal deficits by a mammoth \$1.5 trillion or more over the next decade.

Yet from the moment House and Senate leaders appoint the 12 members until the 2012 elections, hurricane-force political pressures are going to make it tough to produce anything substantial.

All sides will fiercely defend core priorities, Republicans opposing tax increases and defense cuts and Democrats protecting benefits for Medicare, Social Security and Medicaid recipients. Those happen to be exactly where nonpartisan analysts say savings must occur for any serious deficit-cutting package to emerge.

The decisions — at least the next big ones — rest with the committee set up by the agreement that defused the debt-limit crisis this week.

Every choice will have implications for President Barack Obama's re-election, for Republican hopefuls jockeying to unseat him and for Democrats and Republicans struggling for control of the House and Senate.

Investigators Probe Death Of 11-Year-Old Girl

STEWARTSTOWN, N.H. (AP) — Investigators probing the death of an 11-year-old northern New Hampshire girl hauled away a silver pickup truck from outside her home Wednesday.

Neighbors said the vehicle is typically driven by the girl's stepfather. While the pickup was on a flatbed outside the house, technicians could be seen examining its undercarriage.

Investigators said Wednesday that they didn't expect to make any announcements on the progress of their investigation into the death of Celina Cass, whose body was found Monday in the Connecticut River, almost a week after she disappeared.

New Hampshire Senior Assistant Attorney General Jane Young wouldn't comment Wednesday on the investigation.

On Tuesday, Young said an autopsy failed to determine how the girl died. She said further toxicology tests and more investigation were needed, but that the death was considered suspicious.

Anthony Won't Have To Return To Florida

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Casey Anthony can continue her under-cover life for now, after a judge ruled Wednesday she does not have to immediately return to Florida to start serving her probation for check fraud.

A hearing on her probation was set for Friday, Judge Belvin Perry said. Anthony won't have to show up for that either.

A different judge ordered Anthony to report to Florida on Thursday for her probation, but the judge later recused himself and turned the case over to Perry, who presided over Anthony's murder trial.

Anthony has been out of the public eye since she was acquitted last month in the death of her 2-year-old daughter, Caylee. The jury's decision angered many people online and elsewhere, and threats were made on Anthony's life. She vanished after leaving jail July 17.

Anthony's attorneys said local authorities would have to provide security if she was forced to return.

Alaska Officials Watch Volcano, Lava Dome

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — A growing lava dome has been spotted in the summit crater of an Alaska volcano, leading officials to raise the alert level.

The Alaska Volcano Observatory says the observation increases the possibility but doesn't guarantee an eruption at Cleveland Volcano.

Officials say the dome has grown from about 131 feet to 164 feet in diameter since Friday. Weak thermal anomalies also have been detected.

If the dome continues to grow, lava may flow onto the volcano's flanks. Officials say this would not be hazardous to airplanes. Short-lived eruptions could send an ash cloud up to 20,000 feet.

Economy Struggles To Find Footing

BY PAUL WISEMAN AND DAVID K. RANDALL
AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON — Shoppers won't shop. Companies won't hire. The government won't spend on economic stimulus — it's cutting instead. And the Federal Reserve is reluctant to do anything more.

Without much to invigorate growth, the economy may be in danger of slipping into a stupor like the one Japan has failed to shake off for more than a decade. And Wall Street is spooked.

The Dow Jones industrial average Wednesday barely broke an eight-day losing streak, finishing up about 30 points. A nine-day losing streak would have been the Dow's first since February 1978.

Even with the gain, the Dow has fallen 828 points, or 6.5 percent, over the past nine trading days. Investors didn't even pause to celebrate the resolution over the weekend of a dangerous debt standoff in Washington.

Stunned by news last week that the economy barely grew in the first half of 2011, economists are lowering their forecasts for the full year and recalculating the odds that the economy will slide back into recession.

Kurt Karl, chief U.S. economist at Swiss Re, has cut his 2011 forecast for growth this year to 1.8 percent from 2.6 percent. And he has bumped up the likelihood of another recession to 20 percent from 15 percent.

"The last week has made it much more likely that corporate profit estimates will be revised lower," said Nick Kalivas, a vice president of financial research at MF Global.

The stocks that have fallen the furthest have been those of companies that fare best in economic expansions. Industrial companies like Caterpillar and Boeing, energy companies like Exxon Mobil and Chevron, and retailers like Ama-

zon and Coach have all fallen by more than the broader stock market.

Investors have pushed government bond yields to their lowest level of the year. The 10-year Treasury note now yields 2.6 percent. Bond yields typically fall when the economy is weak because nervous investors view bonds as a safe place to park their money, and there's less chance that inflation will erode their value.

The economy started sputtering early in the year. Economists at first thought the slowdown would be temporary, the result of a short-term rise in gasoline prices and an earthquake in Japan that disrupted shipments of auto parts and electronics.

But the weakness persisted. And it worsened as a political fight over debt and deficits raised the risk that the U.S. government would not be able to pay all its bills.

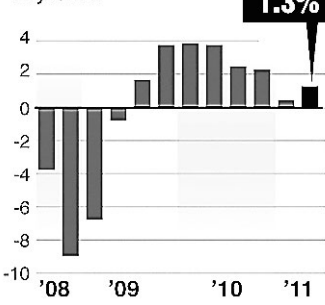
"It now seems fairly clear that those shocks have done a lot more damage than we expected," says Leo Abruzzese, global forecasting director for the Economist Intelligence Unit. "They seem to have had a devastating effect on confidence."

After the government reported that the economy grew at an annual pace of 0.4 percent in the first quarter and 1.3 percent in the second, Abruzzese is cutting his estimate for 2011 growth from 2.4 percent to less than 2 percent.

It's hard to see anything lifting growth to the 2.5 percent needed

GDP

Percent change from previous quarter, seasonally adjusted:



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Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

to keep employment from rising, let alone the 5 percent needed to bring the rate down significantly from June's 9.2 percent.

"Sales are what keeps the market moving higher, and there's not much demand when there's only 0.4 percent growth," said Andrew Goldberg, U.S. market strategist at JP Morgan Funds.

When the economy grows less than 2 percent over a 12-month period, it risks slipping into recession, says Mark Vitner, senior economist at Wells Fargo Securities. Over the most recent such period, the economy grew just 1.6 percent.

Few economists are predicting another recession, despite a series of weak economic reports. Gasoline prices have come down from their high of almost \$4 a gallon in May. And Japanese factories are starting to crank up again after the March earthquake.

At the heart of the economy's problems are the debts that consumers built up during the early and mid-2000s. Many borrowed against the equity in their homes, convinced that house prices would rise forever.

When housing prices collapsed, people were left owing more than their homes were worth. Others charged up their credit cards. Now it's payback time, and Americans are spending less or spending cautiously as they slash their debts.

Companies are reluctant to hire until they're convinced enough customers are ready to

buy their products or services. Corporate profits are booming, though, because companies laid off millions of workers, learned to operate more efficiently with smaller staffs and expanded in growing markets overseas.

"If companies were inclined to hire, they could," Abruzzese says. So companies are waiting for consumers to spend, and consumers are waiting for companies to hire them or offer generous pay raises and job security. It's a tough cycle to break.

In the past, the government has helped by spending on infrastructure projects or jobs programs. This time, it's cutting at all levels. In the second quarter, government cutbacks reduced economic growth by 0.2 percentage points.

More cuts are coming. The deal to raise the debt limit calls for \$917 billion in federal spending cuts. Those won't do much immediate damage to the economy because they mostly kick in after 2013, but a special congressional committee is supposed to find at least another \$1.2 trillion in savings over the next decade, and no one knows where the ax will fall.

"You're not sure if there are going to be huge spending cuts or tax increases. Or are they just going to wrangle?" Swiss Re economist Karl says. "If you're a supplier to any part of the government, you certainly are not rushing to hire people or buy equipment. There's definitely a damper on growth."

To some economists, the United States is starting to look eerily like Japan. The Japanese economy fell into a recession in the early '90s. It has never fully returned to health, largely because of policy mistakes. The government raised taxes after declaring victory over the downturn prematurely. And U.S. economists, including current Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke, criticized the Japanese central bank, the Bank of Japan, for being too passive to turn the economy around.

ACLU Seeks Info On How Police Use Cellphone Data

BY CRISTIAN SALAZAR
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The use of cellphone location data by law enforcement agencies is "shrouded in secrecy" even though it has become widespread throughout the country, the American Civil Liberties Union said Wednesday in demanding the agencies disclose how they collect and use the data.

The civil rights organization said 34 of its affiliates around the country have filed open-records requests with hundreds of law enforcement agencies seeking disclosure on cellphone location data, which can be used to pinpoint where people go with their phones.

"We have a lot of questions about how people are tracked in this country," said Catherine Crump, staff attorney for the ACLU Speech, Privacy and Technology Project. "Technology is an increasingly powerful way to engage in surveillance."

She said law enforcement officials should be required to demonstrate probable cause and get warrants before tracking cellphone locations.

"We need to make a decision: Either law enforcement agents are going to be able to track us wherever we go or we are going to set up some ground rules," she said.

ACLU affiliates want to know procedures for accessing cellphone location data, including

whether law enforcement agencies have to demonstrate probable cause to obtain warrants for access. They also are requesting statistics on how often law enforcement agencies get the data and how much money is being spent on tracking cellphones.

Location information can be collected in various ways, such as by tracing a cellphone's signal to nearby towers or by using satellite data from GPS chips embedded in an increasing number of phones. The Federal Communications Commission requires carriers to provide location information to public safety agencies when 911 calls are placed.

The first vice president of the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police, Raymond Hayducka, said the use of cellphone tracking technology had become routine in many investigations.

"Every week we get some kind

of crime where we have to do some kind of tracking," said Hayducka, the chief of the South Brunswick Police Department.

He said his department would comply with the open-records request from the ACLU.

He said examples of non-criminal cases in which police have used cellphone tracking include locating people lost in the woods and finding people who made 911 calls but hung up.

In New Jersey, he said, the use of cellphone location data in higher-level criminal cases is limited and investigators first have to obtain communication data warrants from a judge.

"It's done for a legitimate law enforcement purpose," he said. "There's no other reason to do it."

Congress is considering a bill to force police to obtain warrants before collecting cellphone location information.

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