

### Ukrainians Stage Large Anti-Gov't Rally

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — A protest by about 300,000 Ukrainians angered by their government's decision to freeze integration with the West turned violent Sunday, when a group of demonstrators besieged the president's office and police drove them back with truncheons, tear gas and flash grenades. Dozens of people were injured.

The mass rally in central Kiev defied a government ban on protests on Independence Square, in the biggest show of anger over President Viktor Yanukovich's refusal to sign a political and economic agreement with the European Union.

The protesters also were infuriated by the violent dispersal of a small, opposition rally two nights before.

While opposition leaders called for a nationwide strike and prolonged peaceful street protests to demand that the government resign, several thousand people broke away and marched to Yanukovich's nearby office.

A few hundred of them, wearing masks, threw rocks and other objects at police and attempted to break through the police lines with a front loader. After several hours of clashes, riot police used force to push them back.

### Egypt: Tear Gas Fired At Morsi Backers

CAIRO (AP) — Police fired tear gas to drive hundreds of supporters of Egypt's ousted Islamist president from Cairo's famed Tahrir Square on Sunday, as a panel tasked with amending the constitution adopted during his time in office agreed on changes to the text.

The 50-member panel revising the Islamist-tilted charter adopted under former President Mohammed Morsi managed to resolve its differences after two days of clause-by-clause voting on the final draft.

The text gives women and Christians "suitable representation" but says a future law must decide the details. It also calls for elections, either parliamentary or presidential, within 90 days after the draft constitution is adopted. The other election should be held up to six months later.

The new charter would require future presidents to declare their financial assets annually, and allows lawmakers to vote out an elected president and call for early elections if they have a two-thirds majority.

Members agreed that a contentious proposed article allowing military tribunals for civilians would be scaled back, allowing them only in case of direct attack on military personnel or assets.

### China Launches Moon Rover Mission

BEIJING (AP) — China launched its first mission Monday to land a rover on the moon, an unmanned operation scheduled to arrive in mid-December to start surveying the lunar surface and transmitting images.

A Long March-3B rocket carrying the Chang'e 3 lander blasted off Monday as scheduled at 1:30 a.m. from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in southwest China, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The launch center's director, Zhang Zhenzhong, declared the launch successful. "We will strive for our space dream as part of the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation," Zhang was quoted as saying.

If the Chang'e 3 successfully soft-lands on the moon, China will become the third country to do so, after the United States and the former Soviet Union. A soft landing does not damage the craft and the equipment it carries. An earlier Chinese craft orbited and collected data before intentionally crash-landing on the moon.

The moon rover carried in the latest mission, called "Yutu" — or "Jade Rabbit" in Chinese — will survey the moon's geological structures, Xinhua said.

A telescope will be set up on the moon to survey the moon surface and observe the earth's plasmasphere, a region of dense, cold plasma that surrounds the earth, Xinhua said.

China sent its first astronaut into space in 2003, becoming the third nation after Russia and the United States to achieve manned space travel independently.

### Speed A Factor In Paul Walker Crash

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Details continue to emerge about the fiery car crash that killed "Fast & Furious" star Paul Walker and one other person.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department says speed was a factor in the one-car crash in the community of Valencia. Deputies found a red Porsche engulfed in flames when they arrived Saturday afternoon.

Walker's publicist said Sunday the other person in the car was Roger Rodas, a friend of Walker's who owned a sport car dealership.

Walker's publicist said the actor was the passenger, though the sheriff's department did not confirm that.

The Porsche crashed into a light pole and tree and burst into flames. The downed light pole had a speed limit sign of 45 mph.

Walker was in Valencia for a fundraiser benefiting victims of the recent typhoon in the Philippines.

# Up And Running?

## Officials: Worst Tech Bugs Over For Healthcare.gov

BY PHILIP ELLIOTT  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The worst of the on-line glitches, crashes and delays may be over for the problem-plagued government health care website, the Department of Health and Human Services said Sunday.

But that doesn't mean HealthCare.gov is ready for a clean bill of health.

Officials acknowledged more work remains on the website that included hundreds of software bugs, inadequate equipment and inefficient management for its national debut two months ago. Federal workers and private contractors have undertaken an intense reworking of the system, but the White House's chief troubleshooter cautioned some users could still encounter trouble.

"The bottom line — HealthCare.gov on December 1st is night and day from where it was on October 1st," Jeff Zients told reporters.

More than 50,000 people can log on to the website at one time and more than 800,000 people will be able to shop for insurance coverage each day, the government estimated in a report released Sunday. If true, it's a dramatic improvement from the system's first weeks, when frustrated buyers watched their computer screen freeze, the website crash and error messages multiply.

The figures — which could not be independently verified — suggest millions of Americans could turn to their laptops to

shop for and buy insurance policies by the Dec. 23 deadline.

"There's not really any way to verify from the outside that the vast majority of people who want to enroll can now do so, but we'll find out at least anecdotally over the coming days if the system can handle the traffic and provide a smooth experience for people trying to sign up," said Larry Levitt, a senior adviser at the Kaiser Family Foundation.

But, he added, HealthCare.gov is clearly working better than when it first went on-line. Its challenge now is to convince users who were frustrated during their first visit to give it another chance.

Politically, a fixed website could also offer a fresh start for President Barack Obama and his fellow Democrats after a wave of bad publicity surrounding the president's chief domestic achievement.

"This website is technology. It's going to get better. It's already better today," said Rep. Keith Ellison, a Minnesota Democrat who is a co-chairman of the liberal Congressional Progressive Caucus. "And we're only going to be working out more kinks as we go forward."

Amid all the problems with HealthCare.gov, Obama set a deadline for Saturday for several significant problems to be resolved. The administration organized a conference call with reporters Sunday morning to give a status report and boast that 400 technical problems had been resolved but declined to say how many items remain on the to-do list.

Even with the repairs in place, the site still won't be able to do everything the administration wants, and companion sites for small businesses and Spanish speakers have been delayed. Questions remain about the stability of the site and the quality of the data it delivers to insurers.

"The security of this site and the private information does not meet even the minimal standards of the private sector, and that concerns me," said Rep. Mike Rogers, the Michigan Republican who leads the House intelligence panel. "I don't care if you're for it or against it, Republican or Democrat, we should not tolerate the sheer level of incompetence securing this site."

Obama promised a few weeks ago that HealthCare.gov "will work much better on Nov. 30, Dec. 1, than it worked certainly on Oct. 1." But, in trying to lower expectations, he said he could not guarantee that "100 percent of the people 100 percent of the time going on this website will have a perfectly seamless, smooth experience."

Obama rightly predicted errors would remain. The department reported the website was up and running 95 percent of the time last week — meaning a 1-in-20 chance remains of encountering a broken website. The government also estimated that pages crashed at a rate less than once every 100 clicks.

"Yes, there are problems," said Rep. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, the top Democrat on the House Budget Committee. "There's no denying that. Let's work to fix them."

### Holiday Shopping

# Weekend Crowds Up, Spending Down

BY ANNE D'INNOCENZO  
AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK — Did stores shoot themselves in the foot?

Target, Macy's and other retailers offered holiday discounts in early November and opened stores on Thanksgiving Day. It was an effort to attract shoppers before Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving that traditionally kicks off the holiday shopping season.

Those tactics drew bigger crowds, but failed to motivate Americans to spend.

A record 141 million people were expected to shop in stores and online over the four-day Thanksgiving weekend that ended Sunday, up from last year's 137 million, according to the results of a survey of nearly 4,500 shoppers conducted for The National Retail Federation.

But total spending is expected to fall for the first time ever since the trade group began tracking it in 2006, according to the survey that was released on Sunday. Over the four days, spending fell an estimated 2.9 percent to \$57.4 billion.

Shoppers, on average, are expected to spend \$407.02 during the four days, down 3.9 percent from last year. That would be the first decline since the 2009 holiday shop-

ping season when the economy was just coming out of the recession.

The survey underscores the challenges stores have faced since the recession began in late 2007. Retailers had to offer deep discounts to get people to shop during the downturn, but Americans still expect those "70 percent off" signs now during the uneven economic recovery.

Stores may have only exacerbated that expectation this year. By offering bargains earlier in the season, it seems they've created a vicious cycle in which they'll need to constantly offer bigger sales to get people to spend. That's because shoppers who took advantage of "holiday" deals before Thanksgiving may have deal fatigue and are cautious about buying anything else unless it's heavily discounted.

"The economy spoke loud

and clear over the past few days," said Brian Sozzi, CEO and chief equities strategist at Belus Capital Advisors. "We are going to see an increase in markdowns."

Matthew Shay, president and CEO of The National Retail Federation, said that the survey results only represent one extended weekend in what is typically the biggest shopping period of the year. The combined months of November and December can account for up to 40 percent of retailers' revenue.

Overall, Shay said the trade group still expects sales for the combined two months to increase 3.9 percent to \$602.1 billion. That's higher than the 3.5 percent pace in the previous year.

But to achieve that growth, retailers will likely have to offer big sales events. In a stronger economy, people

who shopped early would continue to do so throughout the season. But analysts say that's not likely to be the case in this still tough economic climate.

"It's pretty clear that in the current environment, customers expect promotions," Shay said. "Absent promotions, they're not really spending."

Take Tuesday Trasvina, 37, who said she's been bombarded with holiday discounts since early November. Trasvina, a marketing coordinator, plans to spend \$500 on holiday gifts, about a quarter of what she spent last year.

"They've been stretching out this Black Friday thing so long," said Trasvina, who was shopping with her husband on Friday at a Target store in Portland, Ore. "I just think the over-commercialization of the holiday has gotten to us."



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