

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

Congressman John Murtha Dies At Age 77

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Rep. John Murtha, the tall, gruff-mannered former Marine who became the de facto voice of veterans on Capitol Hill and later an outspoken and influential critic of the Iraq War, died Monday. He was 77. The Pennsylvania Democrat had been suffering from complications from gallbladder surgery. He died at Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington, Va., with his family at his bedside, the hospital said.

In 1974 Murtha, then an officer in the Marine Reserves, became the first Vietnam War combat veteran elected to Congress. Ethical questions often shadowed his congressional service, but he was best known for being among Congress' most hawkish Democrats. He wielded considerable clout for two decades as the ranking Democrat on the House subcommittee that oversees Pentagon spending.

Murtha voted in 2002 to authorize President George W. Bush to use military force in Iraq, but his growing frustration over the administration's handling of the war prompted him in November 2005 to call for an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops.

Murtha's opposition to the Iraq war rattled Washington, where he enjoyed bipartisan respect for his work on military issues. On Capitol Hill, Murtha was seen as speaking for those in uniform when it came to military matters.

Iran Moves Closer To Nuke Warhead Capacity

VIENNA (AP) — Iran pressed ahead Monday with plans that will increase its ability to make nuclear weapons as it formally informed the U.N. nuclear agency of its intention to enrich uranium to higher levels.

Alarmed world powers questioned the rationale behind the move and warned the country it could face more U.N. sanctions if it made good on its intentions.

Iran maintains its nuclear activities are peaceful, and an envoy insisted the move was meant only to provide fuel for Tehran's research reactor. But world powers fearing that Iran's enrichment program might be a cover for a weapons program were critical.

Britain said the Islamic Republic's reason for further enrichment made no sense because it is not technically advanced enough to turn the resulting material into the fuel rods needed for the reactor.

France and the U.S. said the latest Iranian move left no choice but to push harder for a fourth set of U.N. Security Council sanctions to punish Iran's nuclear defiance.

More Snow On The Way For Mid-Atlantic

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal workers and school children got a day off Monday as the Mid-Atlantic region dug out from as much as 3 feet of snow that made travel nearly impossible and knocked out power to tens of thousands of people.

Federal agencies that employ 230,000 in Washington were closed, as were many local governments, businesses and school districts. Utilities warned it could be days before power is restored to everyone.

With more snow expected Tuesday into Wednesday — as much as a foot in some places and close to another foot and a half in Philadelphia — stranded travelers wondered when they might escape the icy, gray mess.

At Washington's Reagan National Airport, where flights had resumed after more than two days, the "on time" flights on the departure board started to outnumber the canceled ones by mid-afternoon. But many people still didn't know when they might get out.

Lookout Deck Of Largest Tower Closes

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The world's tallest skyscraper has unexpectedly closed to the public a month after its lavish opening, disappointing tourists headed for the observation deck and casting doubt over plans to welcome its first permanent occupants in the coming weeks.

Electrical problems are at least partly to blame for the closure of the Burj Khalifa's viewing platform — the only part of the half-mile high tower open yet. But a lack of information from the spire's owner left it unclear whether the rest of the largely empty building — including dozens of elevators meant to whisk visitors to the tower's more than 160 floors — was affected by the shutdown.

The indefinite closure, which began Sunday, comes as Dubai struggles to revive its international image as a cutting-edge Arab metropolis amid nagging questions about its financial health.

The Persian Gulf city-state had hoped the 2,717-foot (828-meter) Burj Khalifa would be a major tourist draw. Dubai has promoted itself by wooing visitors with over-the-top attractions such as the Burj, which juts like a silvery needle out of the desert and can be seen from miles around.

In recent weeks, thousands of tourists have lined up for the chance to buy tickets for viewing times often days in advance that cost more than \$27 apiece. Now many of those would-be visitors, such as Wayne Boyes, a tourist from near Manchester, England, must get back in line for refunds.

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HAITI

Springtime Rains Threaten Survivors

BY PAISLEY DODDS
Associated Press Writer

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Survivors of Haiti's catastrophic earthquake have had one saving grace: There's been no significant rain since the disaster. But that won't last.

The rainy season in Haiti is deadly even in a good year. Now, in a devastated capital city, the early spring rains threaten to cause landslides and bring about health problems in the makeshift camps where more than 500,000 people are living.

Rain is already falling in some parts of the country, but Haiti's shattered capital, where most of the quake damage occurred, has been spared so far — a rarity for this time of year, when afternoon showers are common. Steady rains could come as soon as the end of the month, and hurricane season begins in June.

Workers are racing to move victims outside of flood plains and into tents. They are also trying to clear tons of debris from ravines, canals and riverbeds, so rain does not turn the survivors' encampments into breeding grounds for disease.

"There will be health concerns," said engineer Mario Nicoleau of the U.S. Agency for International Development's office in Haiti. "The risks will be enormous, and it is difficult to contemplate the unforeseen consequences."

Toyota Still Remains Silent On Possible Prius Recall

TOKYO (AP) — Toyota is close to recalling as many as 300,000 of its popular Prius hybrids over brake problems, according to Japanese media — a decision that would further embarrass a trusted brand suddenly beset by safety problems.

The company may have no choice: A week has passed since the problems emerged, and analysts say further delays could be devastating to the automaker's already damaged reputation in a global market it fought for decades to dominate.

"Listening to management now, I think they still think there isn't a real problem with the Prius," Christopher Richter, auto analyst at CLSA Asia Pacific Markets, said Monday.

In the meantime, auto safety experts say driving the Prius is probably still safe but suggest extra precautions, like allowing extra room to stop. A recall would cover Prius cars for this model year.

Kyodo news agency and the country's top Nikkei business newspaper reported Monday that Toyota was likely to notify both the U.S. and Japanese governments of Prius recalls Tuesday. Toyota spokeswoman Ririko Takeuchi said no decision on a Prius recall has been made.

The report also said that Toyota was likely to announce recalls of its much smaller selling Lexus HS250h and SAJ hybrids, which use a braking system similar to the Prius. On Tuesday, Japan's business daily

Haiti's government said it needs more money or tents if people are to be moved.

"We are going to have a big problem when the rainy season starts," said Interior Minister Paul Antoine Bien-Aime. "We don't have \$60 million to buy 100,000 tents."

Haitians are fearful. Jeanne Marceau, 40, is camped out with hundreds of others under plastic tarps just feet from the Bois de Chene River. On one side, dozens of houses lie flattened from the quake. On the other, a dozen dwellings that slid off the mountain during 2008 rains are piled in a mound.

"Every day we look at the sky for clouds," she said. "My house is gone, and now I'm wondering whether I will be swallowed by the river."

Hurricanes, tropical storms and floods are a constant threat in Haiti.

In 2004, some 3,000 people died in the northern city of Gonaives after Tropical Storm Jeanne. Following the storm, more than \$70 million in aid was collected, but little of that was used for flood control. Gonaives flooded again in 2008, killing nearly 800 more.

Before the earthquake, aid groups were already trying to mitigate risks to flood-prone areas: building walls to stabilize hills, installing drainage systems and working with farmers to plant crops with root systems that help hold water. Much of that work was suspended after the quake, when aid groups

shifted into emergency mode to help survivors.

"We are now considering the setting up of some hazard-resistant or hurricane-proof type of shelter," Kim Bolduc, the U.N. deputy special representative and humanitarian coordinator in Haiti, told reporters at U.N. headquarters in New York during a teleconference Monday.

But she said the structures are heavy and there needs to be a port opened to get them to the country. The capital's port is still not fully functioning.

"We are trying to identify some sites outside of Port-au-Prince so that people could be evacuated when the rains come," Bolduc said.

The No. 2 official at USAID, Anthony Chan, said the organization's Cash for Work program has employed 6,000 Haitians, many of whom are cleaning irrigation canals in anticipation of the rain.


Demolition crews and workers are piling rubble into designated places, but there's still no long-term plan for debris disposal, and the rains may come before the government settles on one. Engineers are studying how the piles of rubble will shift water flows during flooding.

Haiti's government has talked of trying to relocate earthquake victims to organized camps outside the capital, but so far none has been built.

Toyota says a software glitch is behind the problem and says it has already fixed vehicles that went on sale since last month. It has also said that the brakes will work if the driver keeps pushing the pedal.

Any recall would come on top of the millions of vehicles Toyota has recalled since last fall because the accelerator can become stuck, either because the gas pedals themselves are faulty or because floor mats can catch them.

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5 Killed In Conn. Power Plant Blast ID'ed

MIDDLETOWN, Conn. (AP) — Authorities have released the names of the five men killed in an explosion at a power plant that was under construction in a Connecticut town.

Middletown police say Peter Chetulis of Thomaston, Conn.; Ronald J. Crabb of Colchester, Conn.; Raymond Dobratz of Old Saybrook, Conn.; Chris Walters of Florissant, Mo.; and Roy Rushton of Hamilton, Ontario, died in Sunday's blast at the Kleen Energy plant.

Kleen Energy says about 114 workers were on the site and nine subcontractors were working there at the time.

Fireplaces and wood burning stoves were responsible for some 23,600 residential fires.

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