

NATION/WORLD DIGEST

Thai Government To Continue Crackdown

BANGKOK (AP) — Anti-government unrest boiling over in downtown Bangkok spread to other areas of the capital and Thailand Sunday as the military defended its use of force in a crackdown that has left 30 civilians dead in four days. Thai leaders flatly rejected protesters' demands that the United Nations intercede to end the chaos.

Towering plumes of black smoke hung over city streets where protesters set fire to tires, fired homemade rockets and threw gasoline bombs at soldiers who used rubber bullets and live ammunition to pick off rioters who approached their lines. Army sharpshooters crouched behind sandbags carefully taking aim and firing to keep attackers at bay.

Leaders of the protesters, who have dubbed themselves Red Shirts, said they wanted talks mediated by the United Nations, provided the government agreed to an immediate cease-fire and pulled its troops back.

Government spokesman Panitan Wattanayagorn, however, said a pause was unnecessary since troops were "not using weapons to crack down on civilians." The government maintains it is targeting only armed "terrorists" among the demonstrators.

Authorities insisted they would continue the crackdown aimed at choking off the Red Shirts, who have occupied a 1-square-mile (3-square-kilometer) protest zone — barricaded by tires and bamboo spikes — in one of Bangkok's ritziest areas since early April. The protesters are demanding that Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva resign immediately, dissolve Parliament and call new elections.

Iraq Recount Affirms Win For Sunni Bloc

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's electoral commission affirmed on Sunday the narrow victory of a Sunni-backed bloc in the March vote after a partial recount undercut the Shiite prime minister's claims of fraud in the tally.

The result was a setback for Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who came in second to former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi by a small margin. But his alliance with another Shiite bloc still gives him a strong chance of holding on to power for another four years.

"I hope that all political blocs are satisfied now that the electoral process was honest and all allegations of fraud and forgery were totally incorrect," electoral commission spokesman Qassim al-Abboudi told reporters after the results of a recount of votes for the capital Baghdad were announced.

Miss Michigan Takes Miss USA Crown

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A 24-year-old brunette from Michigan recovered after nearly stumbling in her evening gown and beat out four blondes and 46 other women to take the 2010 Miss USA title on Sunday.

Rima Fakih of Dearborn, Mich., won the pageant at the Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino on the Las Vegas Strip after swimsuit, evening gown and interview competitions.

When asked how she felt about winning the crown, she said, "Ask me after I've had a pizza."

Fakih nearly fell while finishing her walk in a long, strapless gown because of the length of its train, but she made it without a spill and went on to win.

During the interview portion, Fakih was asked whether she thought birth control should be paid for by health insurance, and she said she believed it should because it's costly.

Fakih replaces Miss USA 2009 Kristen Dalton and won a spot representing the United States in the 2010 Miss Universe pageant. She also gets a one-year lease in a New York apartment with living expenses, an undisclosed salary, and various health, professional and beauty services.

Miss Oklahoma USA Morgan Elizabeth Woolard was named first runner-up after handling a question about Arizona's new immigration law. Woolard said she supports the law, which requires police enforcing another law to verify a person's immigration status if there's "reasonable suspicion" that the person is in the country illegally.

She said she's against illegal immigration but is also against racial profiling.

Miss Nebraska USA Belinda Renee Wright won the Miss Congeniality award, roughly one week after her father was killed in a farm accident. Miss Alabama USA Audrey Moore won Miss Photogenic after an online fan vote.

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SUPREME COURT

Kagan Unlikely To Face GOP Filibuster

BY JESSE J. HOLLAND
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan is unlikely to face a GOP filibuster but should expect difficult questions from lawmakers who will decide whether she deserves the lifetime appointment despite having no judicial experience, the Senate's second-ranking Republican said Sunday.

"The filibuster should be relegated to the extreme circumstances, and I don't think Elena Kagan represents that," said Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The committee chairman, Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., said he hoped to have Kagan on the bench this summer, succeeding retiring Justice John Paul Stevens well ahead of the new term that begins in October.

GOP senators are placing great weight on her testimony in determining the fate of President Barack Obama's second nominee for the high court. At issue is her lack of a judicial paper trail.

Kagan is now solicitor general, the top government lawyer who argues the administration's cases before the Supreme Court, and was dean of Harvard Law School. But she has never been a judge.

"She has so little other record, this is going to be a big deal," said Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, the committee's top Republican. "It's so important how she testifies."

Republicans want to know "whether she will lay her political beliefs aside when she's deciding cases and decide those cases strictly based upon the facts and the law of the case," Kyl said. "That may be a little difficult

in her case because she's never had to do that before as a judge, and so it's more difficult to know whether she is actually able to set her views aside. But that will be the primary issue."

Kyl also said he wants answers on her thoughts about the "enemy combatant" designation used for terrorism suspects. The Senate's Republican leader, Kentucky's Mitch McConnell, said he wants to know about Kagan's thoughts on campaign finance and free speech.

Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Kagan's time at Harvard, as well as a professor and Clinton White House adviser, should suffice. "She doesn't have judicial experience. But she has a lot of experience, a lot of practical experience. She's hardly a blank slate," Schumer said.

Leahy said he would meet this week with Sessions to decide when to begin the hearings for Kagan. Leahy noted that Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Sonia Sotomayor both were nominated in the spring and confirmed long before October. "If we could follow a schedule roughly like that, we'll be done this summer," he said.

Roberts was nominated by President George W. Bush. Sotomayor was Obama's first nominee.

Sessions and other Republicans said they planned to question Kagan about Harvard's barring military recruiters over the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy while she was law dean.

GOP senators have said the decision — which Sessions said came about because of Kagan's "deep personal belief" that the ban on gays serving openly in the military was

wrong — casts doubt on Kagan's fitness for the bench.

"This is no little-bitty matter," Sessions said. "She would not let them come to the area that does the recruiting on the campus. ... This is not acceptable. It was a big error."

Former GOP House Speaker Newt Gingrich called Kagan "antimilitary" and urged Obama to withdraw the nomination.

That drew a sharp response from Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., who batted the remarks away as "nonsense" and "Gingrich hyperbole."

"I would hope that no one would fall for that," said Feinstein, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

To Leahy, the complaints are "sound and fury signifying nothing." He said conservative interest groups are trying to come up with an issue that could possibly slow down Kagan's confirmation.

"I realize you have so many special interest groups on the far right or the far left who have points," Leahy said. "Ignore those. We ought to make up our own mind. We should be bright enough to do it."

Sessions said senators should tread carefully when it comes to questions about a nominee's personal life. "I don't believe that is a fundamental judgment call on whether a person can be a good judge or not," he said.

What's important, Sessions said, is whether they can "restrain their personal political views and follow the law faithfully and serve under the Constitution? That's the fundamental test in personal integrity. So those are questions that go to the heart of whether a person will be an able judge or not," he said.

Abortion Foes Now Capitalize On Health Reform

WASHINGTON (AP) — Abortion opponents fought passage of President Barack Obama's health care overhaul to the bitter end, and now that it's the law, they're using it to limit coverage by private insurers.

An obscure part of the law allows states to restrict abortion coverage by private plans operating in new insurance markets.

Capitalizing on that language, abortion foes have succeeded in passing bans that, in some cases, go beyond federal statutes.

"We don't consider elective abortion to be health care, so we don't think it's a bad thing for fewer private insurance companies to cover it," said Mary Harned, attorney for Americans United for Life, a national organization that wrote a model law for the states.

Abortion rights supporters are dismayed.

"Implementation of this reform should be about increasing access to health care and increasing choices, not taking them away," said Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., a member

of the Senate leadership. "Health care reform is not an excuse to take rights away from women."

Since Obama signed the legislation March 23, Arizona and Tennessee have enacted laws restricting abortion coverage by health plans in new insurance markets, called exchanges. About 30 million people will get their coverage through exchanges, which open in 2014 to serve individuals and small businesses.

In Florida, Mississippi and Missouri, lawmakers have passed bans and sent them to their governors. Most of the states allow exceptions in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother. Insurers still could offer separate policies to specifically cover abortion.

Three other states may act this year — Louisiana, Ohio and Oklahoma. Overall, there are 29 states where lawmakers or public policy groups expressed serious interest, Harned said.

Before the overhaul became

law, five states had limits on private insurance coverage of abortion — Idaho, Kentucky, Missouri, North Dakota and Oklahoma.

Abortion rights supporters are concerned that the list is growing as a result of the new federal law.

Murray had joined in voting down a federal abortion coverage ban when the Senate debated health care last year. Now she and other abortion rights supporters worry the same sorts of restrictions could spread from state to state.

Most private health insurance plans cover abortion as a legal medical procedure, but research indicates many women opt to pay directly.

The federal law allows private insurance plans in the exchanges to cover abortion as long as they collect a separate premium. That money must remain apart from public subsidies available to help pay insurance premiums for most customers in the exchanges.

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May 16th – 22nd, 2010

EMS Week Events:

Monday, May 17th: Free blood pressure and blood glucose checks at K-Mart, 2210 Broadway Avenue from 1:00 PM until 4:00 PM.

Wednesday, May 19th: Yankton County EMS employees will be handing out treats to students, teachers and parents who come in to the Yankton High School parking lot before school begins.

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