

Egypt President Defends Controversial Edicts

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt's president told the country's top judges Monday that he did not infringe on their authority when he seized near absolute powers, setting up a prolonged showdown on the eve of a mass protest planned by opponents of the Islamist leader.

An aide to President Mohammed Morsi said the decree was limited to "sovereignty-related issues," but that did not satisfy his critics.

The uncompromising stance came during a meeting between Morsi and members of the Supreme Judiciary Council in a bid to resolve a four-day crisis that has plunged the country into a new round of turmoil with clashes between the two sides that have left one protester dead and hundreds wounded.

The judiciary, the main target of Morsi's edicts, also has pushed back, calling the decrees a power grab and an "assault" on the branch's independence. Judges and prosecutors stayed away from many courts in Cairo and other cities on Sunday and Monday.

A spokesman said Morsi told the judges that he acted within his right as the nation's sole source of legislation when he issued decrees putting himself above judicial oversight. The president also extended the same immunity to two bodies dominated by his Islamist allies — a panel drafting a new constitution and parliament's mostly toothless upper chamber.



Morsi

Report: Health Law A Good Deal For States

WASHINGTON (AP) — States will receive more than \$9 in federal money for every \$1 they spend to cover low-income residents under President Barack Obama's health care law, according to a nonpartisan analysis released Monday.

Expanding Medicaid to cover about 20 million more low-income people will cost over \$1 trillion nationally from 2013 to 2022, said the joint report from the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Urban Institute. But the analysis found that states will pay just \$76 billion of that, a combined share of roughly 7 percent. The feds will pay the other \$952 billion.

Republican governors have resisted the Medicaid expansion, saying it adds an unacceptable burden to already strained budgets. And the Supreme Court handed the governors a victory this summer, ruling that states are free to reject the Medicaid deal.

Medicaid is one of the two main ways that Obama's law expands coverage to most of the 50 million uninsured U.S. residents. As a broader Medicaid safety net picks up more low-income people, new health insurance markets called exchanges will offer subsidized private coverage to the middle class. Both parts of the strategy take effect in 2014, at the same time that most Americans will be required to carry health insurance or pay a fine.

The new analysis was unlikely to change the minds of state leaders who have already rejected the Medicaid expansion, but it may help shape the debate in a majority of states still on the fence.

US Fights Back At Climate Critics At UN Talks

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — Anticipating an onslaught of criticism from poor nations, the United States claimed "enormous" strides in reducing greenhouse emissions at the opening of U.N. climate talks Monday, despite failing to join other industrialized nations in committing to binding cuts.

The pre-emptive U.S. approach underscores one of the major showdowns expected at the two-week conference as China pushes developed countries to take an even greater role in tackling global warming.

Speaking for a coalition of developed nations known as the G77, China's delegate, Su Wei, said rich nations should become party to an extended Kyoto Protocol — an emissions deal for some industrialized countries that the Americans long ago rejected — or at least make "comparable mitigation commitments."

The United States rejected Kyoto because it didn't impose any binding commitments on major developing countries such as India and China, which is now the world's No. 1 carbon emitter.

American delegate Jonathan Pershing offered no new sweeteners to the poor countries, only reiterating what the United States has done to tackle global warming: investing heavily in clean energy, doubling fuel efficiency standards and reducing emissions from coal-fired power plants. Pershing also said the United States would not increase its earlier commitment of cutting emissions by 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. It is half way to that target.

Holiday Shoppers Seek Cyber Monday Deals

NEW YORK (AP) — Americans clicked away on their computers and smartphones for deals on Cyber Monday, which is expected to be the biggest online shopping day in history.

Shoppers are expected to spend \$1.5 billion on Cyber Monday, up 20 percent from last year, according to research firm comScore. That would not only make it the biggest online shopping day of the year, but the biggest since comScore started tracking shoppers' online buying habits in 2001.

Online shopping was up 25.6 percent on Cyber Monday compared with the same time period a year ago, according to figures released Monday afternoon by IBM Benchmark, which tracks online sales. Sales from mobile devices, which include tablets, rose 10.9 percent. The group does not track dollar amount sales.

The strong start to Cyber Monday, a term coined in 2005 by a shopping trade group that noticed people were doing a lot of shopping on their work computers on the Monday following Thanksgiving, comes after overall online sales rose significantly during the four-day holiday shopping weekend that began on Thanksgiving.

Transplant Pioneer Murray Dies In Boston

BOSTON (AP) — A doctor who performed the world's first successful kidney transplant and won a Nobel Prize for his pioneering work has died in Boston. Dr. Joseph E. Murray was 93.

Brigham and Women's Hospital spokesman Tom Langford says he died there Monday. No cause of death has been announced.

Murray's son says he had unwavering optimism. In the early 1950s, there had never been a successful human organ transplant. Murray and his associates at Boston's Peter Bent Brigham Hospital developed new surgical techniques after transplanting kidneys on dogs. In December 1954, they found the right human patients: a 23-year-old man with end-stage kidney failure and his identical twin.

After the operation, the sick twin had a functioning kidney transplanted from his brother. He lived another eight years, marrying a nurse he met at the hospital and having two children.

Superstorm Sandy

N.Y. Damage Estimate: \$42B

BY MICHAEL GORMLEY
 Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — Superstorm Sandy ran up a \$42 billion bill on New York and the state and New York City congressional leaders are preparing big requests for federal disaster aid.

The cost includes \$32 billion for repairs and restoration, but also includes an additional accounting of \$9 billion for mitigation of damage and for preventive measures.

"It's common sense; it's intelligent," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said of the effort to seek preventive work for the next storm. That would include protecting the electrical power grid and cellphone network. "Why don't you spend some money now to save money in the future? And that's what prevention and mitigation is."

Cuomo said that Sandy caused more costly damage than Hurricane Katrina that slammed the

Gulf Coast in 2005, although Katrina had a far higher death toll than Sandy.

He said New York taxpayers can't foot the bill: "It would incapacitate the state. ... Tax increases are always a last, last, last resort."

The most basic recovery costs for roads, water systems, schools, parks, individual assistance and more total \$15 billion in New York City; \$7 billion for state agencies; \$6.6 billion in Nassau County and \$1.7 billion in Suffolk County, both on suburban Long Island; and \$527 million in Westchester County and \$143 million in Rockland County, both north of New York City; according to a state document used in the private briefing of the delegation and obtained by The Associated Press.

Cuomo met with New York's congressional delegation Monday to discuss the new figures that he said is "less than a wish list." The delegation, Cuomo and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg will now draw up a request

for federal disaster aid.

Sen. Charles Schumer said the unprecedented damage "demands a strong and equally serious response from the federal government."

"Make no mistake, this will not be an easy task, particularly given the impending fiscal cliff, and a Congress that has been much less friendly to disaster relief than in the past," Schumer said. "We will work with the (Obama) administration on supplemental legislation, to be introduced in the upcoming December session of Congress, that will set us on the road to meeting New York's needs. This will be an effort that lasts not weeks, but many months, and we will not rest until the federal response meets New York's deep and extensive needs."

"It really is survival," said Rep. Peter King, R-New York. "This is an emergency. This should be separate of all the debate about the fiscal cliff and everything else."

IF YOU BUILD IT ...



Preparations have started of a review stand in front of the White House for the presidential inauguration Monday in Washington. The presidential inauguration will take place on Jan. 21, 2013. The inauguration traditionally takes place on Jan. 20, but that date falls on a Sunday in 2013.

OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT

Despite Talk Of Compromise Fiscal Deal Remains Elusive In Washington

BY JIM KUHNHENN
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Talk of compromise on a broad budget deal greeted returning lawmakers Monday, but agreement still seemed distant as the White House and congressional Republicans ceded little ground on a key sticking point: whether to raise revenue through higher tax rates or by limiting tax breaks and deductions.

House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, pressed his case for revenue derived by reducing tax loopholes rather than raising tax rates on wealthy taxpayers, as President Barack Obama insists.

Boehner, voicing the Republican stance, said: "The American people support an approach that involves both major spending cuts and additional revenue via tax reform with lower tax rates."

At the White House, Obama spokesman Jay Carney reiterated the president's pledge not to sign legislation that extends current tax rates to the top 2 percent of income earners — households with incomes over \$250,000. "That is a firm position," Carney said.

Congress and Obama have until the end of the year to avoid across-the-board tax increases that would do away with rates set during the administration of President George W. Bush and restore higher tax rates in place during President Bill Clinton's administration when the economy was robust and the federal government had a budget surplus.

White House and congressional leadership aides said Obama spoke separately with House Speaker John Boehner and Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid over the weekend. The aides would not reveal details of the conversations. Obama last met with the bi-

partisan congressional leadership to discuss the fiscal cliff on Nov. 16. No new meetings have been announced.

Boehner and other GOP leaders planned to meet Wednesday with members of a bipartisan coalition of former members of Congress and business leaders that has advocated cuts in spending in major health care programs as well as changes in the tax code to raise more money but also to lower rates.

Obama met with some members of that same coalition earlier this month. Top officials from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and from the Business Roundtable met with senior White House aides on Monday.

In addition to looming tax hikes, the new year could also result in steep spending cuts in defense and domestic programs. Lawmakers and the White House fear that such a combined "fiscal cliff" would undercut the military and set back an economic recovery. Republicans say that while they are open to revenue increases, Obama also has to agree to reductions in entitlement spending, particularly in massive health care programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

Carney on Monday said Obama was open to changes in those pro-

grams, but said Obama does not want to address Social Security as part of the fiscal cliff discussions.

"The president has long made clear that he is open to discussions about strengthening Social Security as part of a separate track," Carney said, adding that Social Security is not contributing to the deficit.

Looking to buttress their case on taxes, White House economists warned Monday that the uncertainty of a potential hike in taxes next year for middle class taxpayers could hurt consumer confidence during the crucial holiday shopping season.

In a new report, President Barack Obama's National Economic Council and his Council of Economic Advisers said that if lawmakers don't halt the automatic increase in taxes for households earning less than \$250,000, consumers might even curtail their shopping during the current holiday season.

"As we approach the holiday season, which accounts for close to one-fifth of industry sales, retailers can't afford the threat of tax increases on middle-class families," the report said.

Meanwhile, the stock market edged lower in the morning as the outcome of the budget talks remained inconclusive.

Rice's Star Rises As Opposition Recedes

WASHINGTON (AP) — With congressional opposition softening, U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice could find her name in contention as early as this week to succeed Hillary Rodham Clinton as secretary of state. It's a step that may signal greater U.S. willingness to intervene in world crises during President Barack Obama's second term.

As Obama nears a decision on who should be the country's next top diplomat, Rice has emerged as the clear front-runner on a short list of candidates that many believe has been narrowed to just her and Sen. John Kerry, despite lingering questions over her comments about the deadly Sept. 11 attack on a U.S. Consulate in Libya.

According to congressional aides and administration officials, Rice will be making the rounds on Capitol Hill this week for closed door meetings with key lawmakers whose support she will need to be confirmed. Those appearances follow her first in-depth explanation of her Benghazi remarks that Republicans seized on as evidence of the administration's mishandling of the attack that took the lives of the U.S. ambassador to Libya and three other Americans.

Acting CIA Director Michael Morell will join Rice in her meetings with lawmakers.

A senior Senate aide said the administration was trying to measure the strength of the Republican opposition to a Rice nomination, sounding out the more moderate members of the Foreign Relations Committee such as Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., who is in line to become the panel's top Republican next year, and Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga.

Rice is scheduled to meet on Tuesday with Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., her most vocal critic on Capitol Hill. She will also meet with Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H. McCain and Ayotte are members of the Armed Services Committee.



Rice

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