

## Around the Globe

### WORLD NEWS

#### Chinese domestic airliner crashes in southeast China

BEIJING (AP) — A Chinese domestic airliner crashed today in southeast China, an airport official said.

The China Southwest Airlines plane was flying from the southwest city of Chongqing to the southeastern city of Wenzhou, an official at Wenzhou airport said. He said the plane crashed in Ruian, near Wenzhou in Zhejiang province.

The official, who refused to give his name, refused to say how many people were aboard the plane or whether there were any casualties.

Ruian is near the coast of the East China Sea, about 900 miles southeast of Beijing.

### ACROSS THE U.S.

#### Federal Reserve will have extra cash on hand for year 2000

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan says it's not a good idea for people to be carrying around a big wad of cash New Year's Eve 2000.

"The most sensible thing is to leave it where it is," he told the Senate Banking Committee on Tuesday.

Greenspan said Americans' money will be safe in financial institutions.

"There's almost no conceivable way ... that computers will break down and records of people's savings accounts would disappear," he said. "There's, fortunately, so many checks and balances that if it's knocked out one place, it's available in 20 others."

Greenspan said the "overwhelming majority" of U.S. banks have made "impressive progress" in ensuring their computer systems are rid of codes that would read the year '00 as 1900 rather than 2000. Regulators are following up with the small minority who have fallen behind, he said.

Although the Fed will make cash available, he urged people to think twice before "taking it out and waving it around."

"Walking around with a lot of \$100 bills is not the safest thing," he said. "There's going to be an awful lot of people who are going to be pretty interested in that."

### AROUND IOWA

#### Doctor says woman found dead on roof was not overmedicated

CLINTON, IOWA (AP) — A woman found dead on the roof of a Clinton hospital last month was not overmedicated, an state medical examiner said.

Patricia K. Schmidt, 32, was found on a first-floor roof at Samaritan Hospital North on New Year's Day. An autopsy performed last month indicated that Schmidt died of hypothermia, not from the injuries suffered when she fell from a fourth-floor window onto the roof.

Dr. Francis Garrity, who conducted the autopsy on Schmidt, said her body contained appropriate levels of drugs used for psychiatric care.

"It wasn't the medications that caused this incident. That's my judgment," Garrity said.

Schmidt's boyfriend, James Feldpausch, has contended an overdose of drugs caused Schmidt to have hallucinations and resulted in her falling from the window.

Garrity said the lab results also indicated there was no alcohol nor any illegal drugs in her system. He has ordered a more detailed examination of her brain to make sure an aneurysm was not caused when she fell, he said.

#### Podiatrist booted to prison for defrauding nursing homes

MAQUOKETA, Iowa (AP) — A Maquoketa podiatrist has been sentenced to more than 10 years in prison for defrauding dozens of nursing homes, billing for minor surgery when he was really performing procedures as simple as toenail clipping.

Mark Intlekofer, 44, allegedly billed 26 nursing homes in several counties, including Scott, Clinton and Jackson, for medical work he did not perform.

Federal agents said they began monitoring his work and eventually charged him with 85 counts of mail and insurance fraud in 1997. Those charges were in connection with submitting false claims to Medicare, Medicaid and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Iowa in excess of \$462,000 for procedures that were not performed, authorities said.

Last week, Intlekofer was sentenced in U.S. District Court on 25 of those counts. He was ordered to serve five months in prison on each count, with each sentence to be served concurrently. He had pleaded guilty to those counts in September.

While thousands of patients were involved, Whetstone said the 25 counts to which Intlekofer eventually pleaded guilty all involved patients at Community Care of Clinton.

#### Cedar Falls stinks says residents and treatment plant officials

CEDAR FALLS, Iowa (AP) — Odor from the city's downtown wastewater treatment plant isn't just in the air. It's also on the minds of Cedar Falls officials.

The rotten-egg stench of hydrogen sulfide has periodically permeated the downtown area since trees near the plant were cleared for a flood dike construction project.

Plant superintendent Lyle Kruger said the level of hydrogen sulfide in the air, even at the plant's perimeter, is only 5 parts per million after various steps to remove 90 percent of the odor are taken. A level of 10 parts per million is considered a safe level for human exposure to hydrogen sulfide over an eight-hour period, under federal guidelines.

City officials are considering several options in trying to put an end to the unpleasant odor.

### Soldiers, villagers search for dozens missing

## Death toll rising in Austrian avalanche

LANDECK, Austria (AP) — Austrian soldiers took advantage of a break in heavy snowfall today to mount a rescue of avalanche victims from a stricken Alpine town, joining villagers who dug with their bare hands in a frantic effort to reach those buried below.

The confirmed death toll from Tuesday's avalanche at Galtuer stood at nine early today, but was expected to rise. More than 30 people were still believed buried under tons of snow.

"We're doing everything humanly possible to rescue people," said Austrian army spokesman Maj. Thomas Schoenherr from nearby Landeck, where rescue operations were

headquartered.

He said that soon after daybreak, about a dozen helicopters ferried some 200 troops to the avalanche site and also carried some of the injured back to hospitals in Landeck, 25 miles away. The main road into Galtuer was blocked by an earlier avalanche.

Children, some of whom had been playing in the streets when the snow rumbled over them, were among the dead. The Austria Press Agency said early today that 32 people were still missing in the village in the Tyrol region, near the Swiss border.

Firefighters, tourists and residents joined in the search for survivors, some digging in the

snow with their bare hands.

"It's a terrible day for Tyrol," provincial governor Wendelin Weingartner said Tuesday.

Schoenherr said that people caught in the open by the slide had little chance of surviving more than a few minutes but those trapped in their homes, where they had air to breathe, had a chance of surviving considerably longer.

He said the United States, Germany and Switzerland had all offered to lend helicopters to the rescue efforts, and officials were evaluating how best to use them.

The Galtuer avalanche was one of the worst to strike Central Europe this winter as the region continues to endure its heaviest

snowfall in 50 years.

Tens of thousands of travelers were stranded in train stations, traffic jams and isolated resort towns across France, Italy, Switzerland and Austria as the avalanches buried homes, roads and railways.

At least 60 people have died in avalanches in Europe this year.

In Austria's western Vorarlberg province, rescuers near Gargellen found a man and a woman Tuesday who were buried a day earlier when an avalanche swallowed a mountain restaurant, APA reported.

The man was still alive, but bad weather prevented an emergency flight to a hospital, and he died later of his injuries.



Emotions run high and there are plenty of heartbreaks on the way to the Girls State Basketball Tournament in Des Moines. As reflected in their faces, hopes of making it to the state tourney were dashed for the South Winneshiek girls Tuesday night as they lost to Dyersville Beckman in regional semi-finals. The game was played in the Oelwein High School gym. (Photo by Mark Schmidt) (For more basketball highlights, check the sports pages)

## Indiana man admits to 50 church arsons

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — An Indiana man has allegedly admitted to setting fire to as many as 50 churches in 11 states, and claims he began his spree with two others who helped him burn a church in a satanic ritual.

The arrest of Jay Scott Ballinger of Indiana was made with the help of the National Church Arson Task Force, which was formed in 1996 to investigate a series of fires at Southern black churches, the U.S. Department of Justice announced Tuesday.

Ballinger, 36, was charged with setting seven church fires in Indiana and admitting setting fire to one in Ohio dating back to 1994, according to a probable cause affidavit filed by the

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

However, he allegedly said he set fire to up to 50 churches between 1994 and 1998 in Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio, Alabama, and four other states authorities refused to identify.

Ballinger was arrested Sunday after going to a hospital with bad burns, which he got from an Ohio church fire, investigators allege. Satanic books and writings were recovered from his home. Ballinger was being held in federal custody in Indianapolis.

Two others were charged in one fire: Angela Wood, 24, of Atlanta, identified in court

documents as Ballinger's girlfriend, and Donald A. Puckett, 37, of Lebanon, Ind. Wood is in federal custody in Georgia and Puckett is being held in Indianapolis.

All three are white and most of the church burnings in Indiana have involved rural white churches.

Judith A. Stewart, U.S. Attorney for southern Indiana, would not comment on a possible motive.

The ATF said searches of Ballinger's central Indiana residence turned up a gasoline container and satanic books and writings.

According to the affidavit, Ballinger said that he and the

others set fire to the Concord Church of Christ in January 1994 after engaging in a satanic ritual at which Wood painted an upside-down cross on the steps of the Lebanon, Ind., church.

Investigators said Wood admitted she was present for several fires.

After a Feb. 6 church fire in Brookville, Ohio, authorities say a radio call for medical assistance was made from the Ballinger house in Yorktown, Ind. An officer who recognized Ballinger's name from a church arson investigation interviewed Ballinger's father, who said his son was badly burned when he came home early on Feb. 7, authorities said.

## Vilsack touts new health promotion effort

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Gov. Tom Vilsack is boosting a new promotional effort on health care he says could bring another 15,500 Iowa youngsters under coverage.

Vilsack said the plan would boost a new Iowa program giving health care to children of the working poor, and he joined President Clinton in the announcement of the new effort.

"It parallels our effort," Vilsack said in a telephone conference call with Iowa reporters.

The focus of the effort is a program called HAWK-I, which

was approved by the Legislature last year. A little-noticed section of the federal budget deal between Clinton and congressional Republicans gave states additional money if they agreed to spend it expanding health coverage for youngsters.

In the Iowa program, the state uses the money to subsidize health care coverage for children in families where parents make too much to qualify for government health programs like Medicaid, but don't make enough to afford health coverage.

Vilsack is seeking to expand that program this year, and he

said the effort announced Tuesday will help.

The program Clinton announced is designed to launch a massive new advertising and promotion effort "to educate parents about the existence of insurance options."

The drive will feature public-service announcements and the creation of a nationwide toll-free hotline which offers details of the insurance plans offered in the various states.

Vilsack said officials estimate there are 15,500 youngsters in the state eligible for the program, but not participating because their

parents aren't aware it's being offered.

The program will be touted in radio ads reaching into 45 states, Vilsack said.

He said most states took advantage of the offer from Congress, and began offering expanded health care for youngsters.

Promoting the program at the same time lawmakers are being asked to expand the effort makes sense because attention will naturally be focused on the effort.

Vilsack was in Washington for his initial meeting of the National Governors Association.

## Omaha man awarded \$1 million in sex ring scandal

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — An Omaha man who claimed he was forced into a child prostitution ring in the 1980s by a man who managed a now-defunct credit union was awarded \$1 million by a U.S. district judge.

Senior District Judge Warren K. Urbom entered the judgment Monday against Larry King, who began serving a 15-year federal sentence in 1991 for misusing the credit union's funds.

Paul Bonacci was unavailable for comment but his attorney said he was stunned by the judgment amount.

"Obviously, you don't award \$1 million if you don't think he (Bonacci) was telling the truth," John DeCamp said. "I was thinking the judge would award maybe \$100,000 just to send a message."

Decamp doubted Bonacci would ever collect damages from King, however.

In 1991, Bonacci sued King, several other Omaha officials and prominent business figures, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Omaha, the city of Omaha, Omaha Public Schools and the Omaha World-Herald.

Among his many allegations, Bonacci said King and others forced him and other young boys and girls to participate in sex orgies. He also alleged the defendants plied him and the other youths with drugs.

A Douglas County grand jury investigating a case involving Franklin Credit Union, which King managed, called allegations raised by several youths, including Bonacci, a hoax.

In the years after the lawsuit was filed, Urbom dismissed all the defendants except King. Urbom last year entered a default

judgment against King, who apparently never responded to the lawsuit. A hearing was held before the judge two weeks ago to determine the damage amount.

Testimony in the Bonacci hearing Feb. 5 raised new questions in the search for a West Des Moines boy who disappeared in 1982.

Johnny Gosch was 12 years old when he vanished on Sept. 5, 1982. His wagon was found about two blocks from his West Des Moines home, filled with copies of The Des Moines Sunday Register he was to deliver.