

NATION & WORLD | In Brief

Soaring gas prices should stabilize soon

CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP) — Gasoline prices jumped to record highs during the past two weeks as the nation's epic blackout temporarily shut down some refineries and a broken pipeline caused shortages in Arizona. The shortages pushed average retail gasoline prices up more than 15 cents a gallon nationally, the biggest two-week hike since the Lundberg Survey began keeping records 50 years ago. The survey of 8,000 service stations Friday showed the average price of all grades of gasoline reached \$1.7484 a gallon, just

short of the survey's all-time high weighted average of \$1.7608 set March 21, analyst Trilby Lundberg said Sunday. The refinery shutdowns, caused by the blackout in parts of the Northeast and Midwest, combined with the break in a major pipeline in Arizona to disrupt supplies, Lundberg said. The reopening of the pipeline Sunday and the end of the blackout means gas prices should fall, she said. The customary September decline in demand and an influx of imported gasoline also should stabilize prices.

Former priest killed by fellow prisoner

BOSTON (AP) — His crimes ruined young lives and many say he destroyed their faith in the Roman Catholic Church. But even some victims of defrocked priest John J. Geoghan didn't wish for the violent death he met. "Many victims are disappointed," said attorney Mitchell Garabedian, who represents more than 200 alleged victims of Geoghan and other clergy. "They wish Father John Geoghan had time to be in prison to reflect." Geoghan was allegedly strangled and beaten Saturday by Joseph L. Druce, a fellow inmate in the maximum security Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center in Shirley. The former priest molested nearly 150 boys over three

decades and became a catalyst for the clergy sex abuse scandal that shook the foundations of the Catholic Church. "He's never going to hurt anybody again, and at the same time, he still had a lot of penance to do on Earth," said Michael Linscott, 45, who claims he was abused by Geoghan from 1967-1972. Geoghan, 68, was serving a nine- to 10-year sentence for assault and battery on a 10-year-old boy. Druce, 37, a reputed member of the neo-Nazi group Aryan Nation, is serving a life sentence for a 1988 murder. He also pleaded guilty to sending fake anthrax from prison to lawyers with Jewish-sounding names and was sentenced to an additional 37 months in prison.

Attempts to impregnate pandas fail

TOKYO (AP) — Attempts by Ling Ling the giant panda to impregnate his female companions in Mexico last spring have failed, zoo officials said. Sperm taken from the 17-year-old Ling Ling was used to inseminate 15-year-old Shuan Shuan in March and 12-year-old Xin Xin in April at Mexico City's Chapultepec Zoo, according to a statement from Tokyo's Ueno Zoo. Levels of their sex hormones had begun to rise, peaking in July, and Shuan Shuan had begun exhibiting behavior that indicated she might be pregnant.

Their hormone levels have since fallen and with no signs of an upcoming delivery, officials determined Sunday that the two were not pregnant. Plans for the procedure on 17-year-old female Xiu Hua were scrapped because officials were unable to determine if she ovulated after going into heat. Officials tried artificial insemination after Ling Ling's three-month breeding stay in Chapultepec earlier this year ended unsuccessfully. It is the third time artificial insemination has failed.

Ignacio bombards Mexico

LA PAZ, Mexico (AP) — About 3,000 people took refuge in shelters as Hurricane Ignacio roared along the coast of Baja California on Monday, bending palm trees with winds topping 90 mph and lashing tourist resorts with sheets of rain.

The hurricane knocked down trees, signs and power poles in the fishing port of La Paz and cut power to part of the city. "Our big job now is to take care of the people in the shelters at local schools," said Juan Manuel Rivera, civil defense director for Baja California Sur state. He said there were no immediate reports of deaths or injuries.

One of those who abandoned a cardboard dwelling for the safety of a university campus was Abram Pineda, 22.

"We left our house last night because it felt like the house was going to blow away," he said.

For others, it merely meant an interrupted fishing vacation.

"It could have been worse," said Buddy Holt, 36, of Dallas, as he watched the choppy water off of La Paz's boardwalk. "It could have caught us while we were out there."

By Monday, the hurricane's winds weakened slightly to 85 mph, but it was still just 20 miles northeast of La Paz.

Forecasts indicated the storm might bring rainfall to the southwestern United States as it advances and weakens, but forecaster Dave Roberts at the National Hurricane Center said, "I wouldn't think it would be drastic."

The storm's predicted course, adjusted slightly westward Monday, would have Ignacio march slowly up the Gulf of California over the tourist town of Loreto, then cross the peninsula and emerge near Rosarito, another popular tourist area.

Authorities closed all ports in Baja California Sur on Sunday and tried to convince residents of low-lying shanty towns to move into shelters set up in schools.

"If they won't leave, we'll ask the army to go in and get them out of their houses," Gov. Leonel Cota



wire photo

Navy sailors pull a boat out of the water as Hurricane Ignacio passes through La Paz, Mexico on Monday. Ignacio's winds topped 90 mph, bending palm trees and lashing tourist resorts with sheets of rain.

said. "We have to evacuate them for their own good."

State officials said Sunday that flooding had cut one coastal highway, and a few beach huts had been destroyed, but they called the damage minor. They were concerned most about shanty towns of cardboard shacks built practically in riverbeds, like the hamlet of Agua Escondida on the outskirts of La Paz.

Communities hunkered down together. A dozen people gathered on the ground floor in Juan Lopez's food store, one of the few solid two-story buildings in Agua Escondida. A dozen more were

expected, as Lopez' wife, Maria Elena Armendariz, prepared to feed them all.

"We've been here for 24 years," Armendariz said. "And we're not leaving now."

Small fishing boats were pulled out of the water and moored to palm trees around La Paz. Larger boats were either tied up to docks or headed out to sea to avoid the storm.

The hurricane bypassed the resort city of Cabo San Lucas, known for its deep sea fishing and golf courses.

Ignacio's center remained over the gulf Monday. The storm drift-

ed slowly northwest along the eastern edge of the Baja California peninsula at about 3 mph.

Hurricane-force winds extended out up to 25 miles from the center, and tropical-storm force winds extended out up to 70 miles.

The National Hurricane Center in Miami said rainfall of more than 20 inches could cause life-threatening flash flooding and mud slides.

Martin Cruz, a 33-year-old construction worker, left his house in the hamlet of Progreso with daughters and took shelter in a university.

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