



WEATHER

FORECAST for WEDNESDAY:
Cloudy and cool with a chance of rain.

HIGH:57 LOW:42

2nd Soviet quake in 2 months kills up to 1,000

MOSCOW (AP) — A predawn earthquake in Soviet Central Asia unleashed a 50-foot-high wall of dirt and mud that buried a mountain village and swept through at least two others Monday, killing up to 1,000 people as they slept, officials said.

The devastating earthquake in the republic of Tadjikistan was the second to strike the Soviet Union in two months.

"Almost everybody died," Zainiddin Nasreddinov, editor-in-chief of Tadjikistan's official news agency, said by telephone after visiting the wrecked farming settlement of Sharora. He estimated the number of dead there alone at 600.

Sharora "had more than 150 peasant

households before that tragic moment," the Soviet news agency Tass reported. "Now most of it is razed to the ground by the ruthless force of the natural calamity."

Tass said the number of dead in the disaster zone 1,800 miles southeast of Moscow was estimated at 1,000, but cautioned that was a preliminary figure.

"Rescue work is being continued and distant mountain villages have not been checked yet," Tass said. Damaged roads were hampering those efforts.

The quake struck the southwestern part of Tadjikistan, a Soviet republic of more than 4.8 million people that borders Afghanistan and China.

The 40-second tremor, at 5:02 a.m. (5:02 p.m. CDT Sunday) was centered about 20 to 30 miles southwest of Tadjikistan's capital of Dushanbe, a city of more than 460,000 people in the fertile Gissar district, a center of grapegrowing and livestock-raising, Tass said.

An official at Dushanbe's seismic center said the quake was strong enough to knock things off shelves in tall apartment buildings in the city, but that it caused no known damage or injuries there. He declined to give his name.

The U.S. Geological Survey in Reston, Va., estimated the quake at 5.4 on the Richter scale, which measures ground motion as

recorded on a seismograph. The Dec. 7 earthquake in northwestern Armenia, 1,300 miles west of Dushanbe, registered a 6.9 on the Richter scale and killed about 25,000 people.

The earthquake unhinged a wall of sodden dirt and mud at least five miles wide that buried the village of Okuli-Bolo and much of Sharora, Erkin Kasimov, an official of Tadjikistan's Foreign Ministry said.

"Almost all of the victims died asleep in their beds," Maj. Alexander Loparev, duty officer at Tadjikistan Interior Ministry headquarters in Dushanbe said by telephone.

Residents of another village, Okuli-

Poyen, apparently roused in time, fled in panic before the mudslide, which traveled 1.25 to 1.5 miles, could reach their homes, Kasimov said from Dushanbe.

Officials and Soviet media said the devastation was vast, and total in places.

In Sharora, "cries and wails can be heard everywhere," Tass reported. "Some are bemoaning and burying their near and dear ones, while others are trying to find the few survivors between the thick layer of sand and clay."

It said all of the village's streets had been buried under the 50-foot-high layer of earth that the earthquake detached from a hill near the village.

Board moves ahead on lowering tracks

By Stephen Masters

SENIOR STAFF WRITER

The Texas A&M Board of Regents Monday approved a proposal asking the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation to proceed in developing a plan to depress Wellborn Road and the adjacent railroad tracks.

Moving the tracks adjacent to Wellborn Road has been called the project that "would not die" — all it does is change its format and cost.

Suggestions have ranged from moving them west to raising them to lowering them. But they're still in the same place.

Last summer the Board voted to look into moving the tracks, but the idea fell out of favor when it was revealed that federal funding would only pay about \$45 million of the \$60 million price tag.

Now it looks like something could possibly happen. If it does, they'll take Wellborn Road with it.

The resolution passed Monday also requests that the department cease planning of "Alignment W," a proposal to move the tracks west of Easterwood Airport, so that it can continue looking into other construction projects.

Byron Blaschke, assistant director of the highway department, said it would be difficult to plan construction of State Highway 47 and the extension of FM 2818 without some kind of decision on where the tracks will be.

"It's not a matter of if (Highway 47) won't happen if the railroad is there," he said. "It's a matter of doing it differently if the railroad is there."

The depression proposal brought before the Board Monday was similar to one offered at the November meeting, which called for depressing Wellborn as much as 20 feet and the tracks as much as 24 feet. The trench was to stretch between Jersey Street and University Drive with access roads on both sides.

The proposal called for a pedestrian mall about 200 feet wide over the trench at Old Main Road and a smaller crossing at Joe Routt. The estimated cost of the original proposal was around \$30 million.

The revised proposal calls for a limited use of access roads and makes use of Option 1 from the original, adding vehicle crossings on either side of the mall for access between the east and west sides of campus, Blaschke said. The estimated cost of the revised plan is \$29 million, he said.

Blaschke said about half of the cost could be paid by state funding, leaving \$14 million to \$15 million to be divided between College Station, A&M, and the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads.

There was some disagreement between out-going Board Chairman David Eller and Bryan Mayor Marvin Tate over what role Bryan would play financially if the project were carried out. Tate said he didn't think funding from Bryan would be necessary unless the trench was continued from University Drive to Villa Maria Road.

Eller disagreed with Tate on the basis of A&M's contributions to the local economy.

"This Board will look to Bryan and College Station for (financial) assistance in some way," Blaschke said it has not been decided whether a grade separation at Villa Maria would be eligible for federal funding.

College Station Mayor Larry Ringer said his city is willing to work with the Regents.

"It will be a bond issue," he said. "Right now I can't commit a dollar figure, but we have discussed this in council meetings. We're waiting to see what happens here."

Blaschke said the project could be completed in as little as four years "if everything goes smoothly," but admitted it was an optimistic projection. A minimum of two years would be required for environmental assistance and clearance before federal assistance would be available.



Just-a swingin'

Chance Cartwright plays on a tire swing in Central Park Sunday. He, his mother Janie

and his sister Courtney took advantage of the recent sunny weather by visiting the park.

Photo by Jay Janner

Official ready for criticism of state test

AUSTIN (AP) — Higher Education Commissioner Kenneth Ashworth said Monday a test of college freshmen will show minorities are less prepared to do college work than whites.

Ashworth said lower scores for minorities would show that many are coming through inferior educational systems.

"We know it's going to be one of the major criticisms of the test," Ashworth said, and a lawsuit is expected. He said the prediction is based on other states' experiences and results of other tests administered in Texas.

"My observation would be this, that if the test were given and all ethnic groups scored exactly the same on it, we would have to say there was something wrong with the test," Ashworth said.

"I think there are going to be accountability questions raised by the Legislature, as there already are," he said. "I think it may make a better case for equitable funding" for school districts.

Ashworth added that testing coupled with remedial courses will allow the state to improve the skills of students with deficiencies.

"The standards will not be lowered to meet the student, but the student will be raised to meet the expected standard," he said.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board, which is to set testing standards this week, doesn't have estimates of the percentage of students expected to fail, Ashworth said.

The committee that recommended the test estimated a 30 percent failure rate. Ashworth said that wouldn't surprise him, and added, "It could be higher."

The Texas Academic Skills Program test was mandated by the 1987 Legislature. It will be given for the first time in March, and it includes sections on reading, mathematics and writing.

High court: SMU files stay secret

WASHINGTON (AP) — Confidential investigation files on Southern Methodist University's recruiting scandal will remain privileged information, the U.S. Supreme Court decided Monday.

Without comment, the Supreme Court let stand a ruling that files compiled by the National Collegiate Athletic Association and the Southwest Athletic Conference do not have to be made public under the Texas Open Records Act.

Last May, the Texas Supreme Court ruled in favor of the university by failing to find any reversible errors in lower court rulings that athletic departments at the schools are not "governmental bodies" subject to the Texas Open Records Act.

The *Dallas Morning News*, the *Dallas Times Herald*, WFAA-TV and other news organizations sought the information on SMU and three other conference schools, including Texas A&M, under the Texas Open Records Act after a football recruiting discovery was uncovered at the Dallas school.

"Obviously, we are disappointed that the initial

federal court ruling supporting the public's right to know was not upheld by the higher court," Roy Bode, editor of the *Dallas Times Herald*, said.

Ralph Langer, vice president and executive editor of the *Dallas Morning News*, said, "We're very disappointed that the court would not hear the appeal, because we believe the original ruling was correct."

Langer said apparently there will be no other ground on which to appeal the case, adding the action will make it more difficult for Texas reporters to cover private universities.

Officials from other news organizations did not immediately return telephone calls from the Associated Press.

The news organizations also sought SWC files on SMU, as well as Texas Christian University, Baylor University and Rice University, which are private schools.

The news organizations had based their case on the 1973 state law that requires "governmental bodies" receiving "public funds" to make public their internal documents.

But a federal trial judge ruled that the state law applies to the NCAA and the Southwest Conference, and ordered that the sought-after documents be surrendered so it could be determined which should be made public.

When the case advanced to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals last July, the appellate court reversed that ruling.

The appeals court agreed that the NCAA and the Southwest Conference receive Texas public funds. But it said they are not governmental bodies, defined in the state law as those entities "supported in whole or in part by public funds."

The NCAA and the conference provide specific, measurable services in return for the Texas tax money they receive, and therefore are not supported by that money, the 5th Circuit Court concluded.

The news organizations appealed to the Supreme Court, arguing the appeals court wrongly reversed the trial judge's factual rulings, without finding that those rulings were "clearly erroneous."

But the high court let the ruling stand.

Teachers' English discussed by Board

By Stephen Masters

SENIOR STAFF WRITER

A report on Texas House Bill 1012 at the Texas A&M Board of Regents meeting Monday turned into a discussion of complaints about the quality of English spoken by some A&M instructors.

Regent Lowry Mays of San Antonio voiced concern about complaints students made to him about the quality of their teachers' English.

Mays said the most common complaint was that classes are often taught by teacher's assistants and students have trouble understanding their instructors' speech. Most of the complaints were made by students in technical fields, he said. Other Regents said they have received similar complaints.

University President William Mobley said instructors whose English skills are not good "should not be in the classroom." Who will teach which classes is the decision of the college's dean each semester, Mobley said. This decision is to be based in part on the prospective teacher's language ability, he said.

Mobley pointed out A&M's Center for Teaching Excellence as an example of the University's commitment to improving the quality of teaching.

Eddie J. Davis, deputy chancellor for finance and administration, and Mobley both cautioned that the com-

plaints could have come from students making excuses after receiving poor grades. Mays agreed with the possibility, but noted the problem extended beyond excuses.

"I had a student complain after he got an 'A' in one class," he said, "and he told me he couldn't understand the teacher half the time."

Davis said another bill in the state Legislature would create minimum requirements for teachers' English skills.

Mobley said 6.7 percent of undergraduate lecture classes and 21 percent of undergraduate labs are taught by teaching assistants. He agreed with Mays that these numbers are high, but said the experience is a necessary part of the student-teacher's education.

In other action, the Board voted to amend the name of the David G. Eller Building to the David G. Eller Building for Oceanography and Meteorology. The Board voted at its November meeting to change the name from the Oceanography and Meteorology Building to honor Eller.

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Abortion protesters hold rally in Dallas

DALLAS (AP) — Thousands of anti-abortion protesters rallied Monday at Dallas City Hall and marched to the Federal Courthouse to place a black wreath where the precedent-setting Roe vs. Wade lawsuit was filed nearly 19 years ago.

"Because this is where it started, we in Dallas have the responsibility for stopping this," said Bill Price, president of Dallas Right to Life, who led the rally of nearly 3,000 demonstrators. "The abortion issue will be won at the ballot box. Look around you. It is an issue we won and they lost."

Over the weekend, anti-abortionist forces nationwide have been marking the 16th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on Roe vs. Wade, which set the precedent for a woman's right to legal abortion, with protest rallies. The case, filed March 3, 1970, on behalf of Norma McCorvey — known in the case as Jane Roe — challenged a 19th-century Texas law banning abortion except to save the life of the mother.

The nation's high court ruled 7-2 for McCorvey on Jan. 22, 1973, and said she and others have a right "to be free from unwarranted governmental intrusion into matters so fundamentally affecting a person as the

decision whether to bear or beget a child."

But Price said anti-abortion interests have helped turn the public tide on the issue and predicted that the Supreme Court would overturn the ruling within the next year.

"We're on the verge of a miracle," Price said. "We are on the verge of making history . . . After 16 long years, the Supreme Court has finally agreed to reconsider the Roe vs. Wade decision."

"Never before have we needed more prayer than we do right now on Roe vs. Wade," he said.

The Rev. Edward Robinson, pro-life coordinator of the Catholic Diocese of Dallas, said his prayers for the group, calling Roe vs. Wade "a cruel and unjust decision by our Supreme Court."

"I am optimistic," said Wayne House, an instructor at the Dallas Theological Seminary. "Certainly a lot still remains to be done, but we are carrying the light of freedom for the pre-born children of this nation."

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"Today is our day to celebrate life," House said. "It is also our day to mourn for the dead." He noted more than 23 million babies have

been aborted since the Roe vs. Wade ruling. But House and the others believe the anti-abortion movement has gained momentum.

"The world's greatest holocaust is now beginning to stop," Price said.

Eight-year-old Danny Saindon was dressed in his Cub Scout uniform as he walked with his dog, Bubbles, along the route. "I'm here so that babies won't be killed," he explained, saying he had been to other pro-life rallies. "Our dog's pregnant, too."

Price told the crowd that even if the Supreme Court overturns its ruling and the Texas Legislature agrees to strike down legalized abortions in the state, it will remain an uphill battle for the anti-abortionists.

"The battle that we've been fighting the last 16 years, the future generations will have to continue fighting," Price said. "New warriors will have to join the fight. I'm sure with God's help, we shall overcome some day."

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