

NEWS BRIEFS

Early voting begins for state election

Early voting for the Aug. 9 state election will last through Aug. 5. Texans will vote on a proposed amendment to the state constitution that would increase the residence homestead exemption from school district taxes from \$5,000 to \$15,000 of home's market value. The amendment would also allow Texas Legislature to approve a transfer of all or part of the tax freeze to the residence homestead of a person older than 65 years of age. Early voting polling places are: — Brazos County Courthouse at 100 E. 26th Street, Bryan — Arena Hall at Tabor Road and East Bypass, Bryan — Galilee Baptist Church at 804 North Logan, Bryan — MSC at Texas A&M University — College Station Independent School District Building at 1812 Fish, College Station

Workers accept GM contract to end strike

MADISON HEIGHTS, Mich. (AP) — United Auto Workers approved a deal Monday to end a six-day strike at a General Motors plant that shut down four assembly plant shut-downs and threatened GM's entire North American production. About 2,800 union employees went on strike Tuesday at the GM Powertrain Group plant in Warren, which makes front-drive transmissions, wheels and suspension parts for many GM cars and trucks. Two days after a tentative contract agreement was reached, the pact was approved by 89.4 percent of the 1,082 workers who voted, the UAW said. Production at the Warren plant is to resume Sunday night.

Flooding continues in Germany, Poland

FRANKFURT AN DER ODER, Germany (AP) — Floodwaters that broke through a dike and submerged villages last week poured back into the Oden River on Sunday, raising water levels downstream to record highs and forcing evacuations. Officials ordered the 17,000 people in the Polish border city of Slubice — across the water from Frankfurt an der Oder — to evacuate again for fear the river would break through the dike. To the north, about 15,000 people in the German side were told to be ready to leave at a moment's notice. Hundreds of sandbaggers worked furiously to prevent a new tear in the weakening dike from worsening. The north-flowing Oder, which forms a natural border between Poland and Germany, started flooding about three weeks ago after heavy rains in Poland hit the Czech Republic.

TODAY IN BATTALION

SPORTS

The first German since 1903 wins the famous cycling race, the Tour de France.

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OPINION

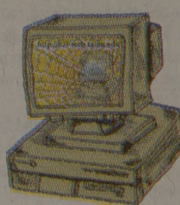
Demons: Bill Cosby, other American role models seem to fade from the public eye.

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Regents OK budget, new scholarships

By JENARA KOCKS
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M Board of Regents approved a \$1.5 billion budget for the 1998 fiscal year and authorized \$2.5 million for need-based scholarships for Texas A&M University System students Friday.

The budget is 10.6 percent higher than the 1997 fiscal year budget.

The regents also allocated over \$675 million of the System's funds for the University, including Texas A&M at Galveston and the Texas A&M Health Science Center.

Earlier this year, the Texas Legislature allocated \$2.5 million to the A&M System for need-based scholarships. Texas A&M students who qualify will be eligible for \$867,298

of these funds.

Don Engelage, executive director of student financial aid, said the new scholarships will be very helpful to some A&M students.

"We're very happy," Engelage said. "We have more kids that need financial aid than we have scholarships and grants."

Engelage said the scholarships will help students who have financial need and were not able to get grants and scholarships before.

According to a press release, each university's president will make guidelines to award the scholarships beginning in the Fall 1997 semester.

The regents approved a bid by Acklam Construction Company Inc. of College Station for the new tennis complex, which will replace the tennis courts near Kyle Field.

Marine geologist Dr. David B. Prior was approved by the Board as the new dean of A&M's College of Geosciences and Maritime Studies.

Prior is Texas A&M's deputy dean of geosciences and maritime studies, and he will replace Dr. Robert A. Duce, dean since 1991, starting Aug. 1.

Prior said he was looking forward to acting as the College of Geosciences and Maritime Studies' dean.

"I'm very excited and honored to be given this appointment," Prior said in a press release. "The college has many strengths, including the most interesting collection of different disciplines and research and educational activities of any geoscience organization in the country. It's a pleasure to join

that in a service role."

The regents also authorized A&M officials to revise admission requirements for Fall 1998 and to hold public meetings to discuss tuition increases.

The new admissions requirements give automatic admission to high school students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school classes, in accordance with House Bill 588 passed by the 75th Legislature.

A public hearing will be held from 9 to 10:30 a.m. on Aug. 1 in MSC Rm. 292 to announce a previously approved increase in the University Authorized Tuition, formerly known as the General Use Fee. Dr. William B. Krumm, vice president for finance and controller, will preside over the hearing.

Budget bargainers near tax credit compromise

Clinton wants proposed cuts to help lower-paid families

WASHINGTON (AP) — With bargainers at the brink of a budget pact, Republican leaders and others said Sunday they were near compromise over who would qualify for the proposed \$500-per-child tax credit, one of their thorniest and highest-profile standoffs.

Details were still being finalized, said participants who spoke on condition of anonymity. But the emerging solution was aimed at satisfying President Clinton's demand that the credit help lower-paid families who owe little or no income tax, plus Republicans' insistence that it apply to families earning more than \$60,000, where Clinton wanted to begin phasing it out.

That possible compromise was just one detail of the still-evolving package discussed by eight congressional leaders and White House officials who blitzed the Sunday television news shows. Negotiations were ready to resume Sunday evening, and some participants speculated that a deal might be announced as early as Monday.

They also pointed toward a likely cigarette tax increase, a victory for Clinton and many senators of both parties. And while Republicans will win a cut in the capital gains tax rate, a GOP leader conceded they might have to jettison the House-approved plan to exempt property values due to inflation from that levy — which has drawn an explicit White House veto threat.

Appearing on ABC's "This Week," House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, said the

two sides were nearing agreement on the children's tax credit and "trying to fit the president's details into our principles and it's a very difficult fit to be made but I think we can get there."

And Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., said Republicans were for the first time considering applying the credit to people who only owe the payroll tax.

"But they've got to be willing to help us, too," he added on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Aides who spoke on condition of anonymity verified that an agreement on the children's credit was evolving but provided little detail.

Exactly who should receive the credit has been one of the fiercest disputes in the long-running negotiations. Clinton has cast Republicans as favoring the rich over low-income people, and the GOP has accused the president of thirsting to expand welfare.

Clinton wants the \$500 credit to apply to families earning as little as \$18,000 annually who owe no income tax but still owe the payroll tax deducted for Social Security and Medicare. He would phase it out for families making \$60,000 to \$75,000 through 2000. After that, the phase-out range would be \$80,000 to \$100,000.

Republicans would deny the credit to low-paid people who earn no income tax, but save it for their use if they owe tax over the following three years. They also would begin phasing it out at a higher, \$75,000 level.

First, however, they have to finish negotiations. Republicans want a speedy deal so they can get bills cutting taxes and extracting savings from Medicare, Medicaid and other programs to Clinton by Friday, the scheduled start of Congress' August break.



Clinton

Western powers rely on Asian nations to police Cambodia

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Call it deferential diplomacy.

In seeking a political settlement of the government mess in Cambodia, the United States and other Western nations are deferring to Southeast Asians to find it.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright confronted Burma on human rights Sunday but noted it is the job of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to get that country's military rulers to change their ways.

Welcome to Southeast Asia, where the United States, Russia, the European Union and others are outsiders looking in, trying to influence change without leaving themselves open to charges of interference. At stake is security in all of East Asia, where the United States has fought three wars this century.

"We need to be true to our principles in describing how we believe various societies should operate for the benefit of their people," said Albright, in Malaysia to attend the ASEAN Regional Forum. "But there are different ways of making those points in terms of tone and how one addresses people."

"I believe that the best role for the United States is as a partner and as somebody who respects the operating procedures of various countries."

An often-confrontational Albright chooses reason in dealing with ASEAN, an economic bloc that is gradually becoming a regional political arbitrator.

Deferring to her conference host, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Albright is even asking permission to hold a news conference — with or without him — on her way out of town Tuesday.

"You have to be good guests. You can't always be the elephant that tramples on the grass," her spokesman, Nicholas Burns, explained.

America is not the only elephant-sized nation stepping carefully.

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, for example, complained, "The

process of change in Myanmar (Burma) has been moving at a pace similar to that of glue moving uphill." But asked whether Southeast Asian nations hurt the campaign by accepting Burma into ASEAN this year, Downer demurred: "It was an ASEAN decision."

Tom Carothers, a democracy expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said the rising economic power of Southeast Asian's 450 million people means they can take care of their own more than ever. "Of all the regions of the world, Asia is least

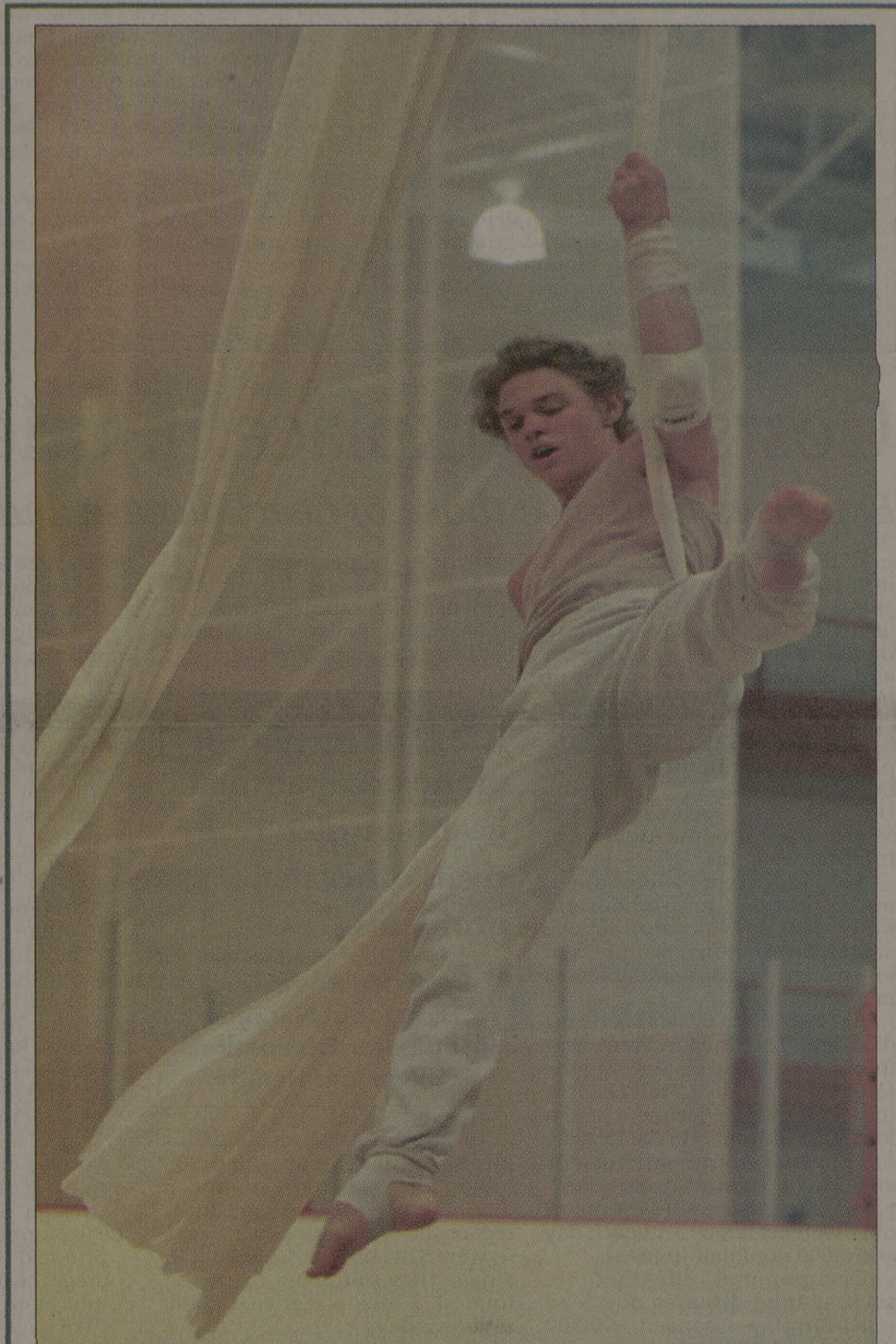
... the best role for the United States is as a partner and as somebody who respects the operating procedures of various countries."

Madeline Albright
Secretary of State

susceptible to a sort of Western acceptance with an international community telling it what to do," Carothers said. "These are ancient civilizations, with long traditions of their own. They're developing, and they're solving their own problems."

Richard Fisher, a policy analyst with the conservative Heritage Foundation, said all that Southeast Asia wants from the West is capital and security guarantees. One of the region's largest investors, the United States has 100,000 troops setting a shield for Asia, thousands aboard Japan-based ships.

"The thing they don't want is lectures from us," Fisher said.



PHOTOGRAPH: Tim Moog

Flying High

Alexander Straitsov practices an aerial ballet for Cirque Angenue at the indoor soccer court in the Student Recreation Center. The 27-member troupe employs contortionists, acrobats and vocalists to tell the story of a young, aspiring trapeze artist. See story, Page 6.

Priest to face trial for assault charges

Altar boy claims he was drugged, sodomized while sleeping

SINTON, Texas (AP) — Four days after the Catholic Diocese of Dallas was slammed with a record judgment in a priest molestation case, a trial was set to begin for a South Texas priest charged with sodomizing an altar boy.

The Rev. Jesus Garcia, 39, is accused of assaulting the boy in 1992 during an overnight stay at the rectory of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Mathis, a town 30 miles northwest of Corpus Christi.

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The boy, who was 15 at the time, contends Garcia slipped drugs into a glass of milk, then sodomized him when he was in a sleep state. He says the priest asked him to spend the night because he was scheduled to assist at Mass the following day.

"That was the night that killed our family. That was the night he stole our lives from us," the teen's mother said in an interview before a gag order was issued against all parties in the case.

The priest maintains his innocence, and the Catholic Diocese of Corpus Christi is standing by him.

"We follow the great American principle that an individual is innocent until proven guilty," said Marty Wind, a spokesman for the diocese. "It's very important that Father

Jesus gets his day in court. I'm just sorry it took this long to come to trial."

Jury selection was scheduled to begin Monday morning.

The case comes just days after a civil jury ordered the Catholic Diocese of Dallas and a suspended priest to pay \$119.6 million to 10 men the priest is accused of molesting and the family of another who committed suicide. The award was the largest ever rendered in a priest molestation case, attorneys said.

A civil lawsuit also is pending against Garcia by his accuser and three other men who say he assaulted them in a similar manner. A fifth plaintiff, who is a former deacon and the father of the accuser in the criminal case, contends Garcia fondled him during a 1994 pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

A grand jury declined to indict Garcia in connection with the other allegations.

The lawsuit also names the Catholic Church, the Corpus Christi Diocese and its former bishop, Rene Gracida, accusing them of conspiring to cover up Garcia's acts and of attempting to coerce the plaintiffs into keeping quiet.

The lawsuit seeks an unspecified amount of damages. Wind said he could not comment on the lawsuit because it is pending litigation.