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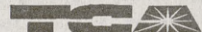
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Yeltsin says he'll step aside in 2000

MOSCOW (AP) — Boris Yeltsin — Russia's first popularly elected president — declared Monday that he will step aside when his term expires in 2000, clearing the way for a pack of candidates already jockeying to succeed him.

Yeltsin's recent health problems and a two-term limit in the constitution already had appeared to rule out a third term for the Russian leader. But his sudden announcement at a Moscow school still caught many by surprise.

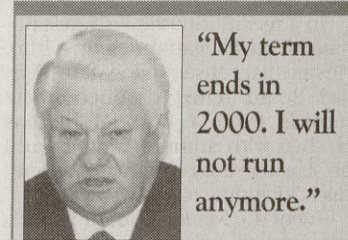
"My term ends in 2000. I will not run anymore," Yeltsin told children and teachers on the first day of classes at School No. 1253.

Looking upbeat and smiling, the 66-year-old Yeltsin said younger, more energetic people would be needed to run the country in the future.

"We have a very good team — a good, friendly and intelligent team," he said, suggesting that his preferred successor would come

from within his own administration.

Yeltsin, who underwent heart surgery last year and suffered a bout



BORIS YELTSIN
RUSSIAN PRESIDENT

"My term ends in 2000. I will not run anymore."

of pneumonia early this year, returned to full-time duty several months ago. He appears in good health and no one questions his intention to serve out the final three years of his current term.

Yeltsin has kept up an active

schedule, pushing the government to complete free-market reforms, while repeatedly locking horns with the communists and nationalists in Parliament.

The Russian economy, which has been in a free fall for most of the 1990s, is stabilizing, although millions of Russians are mired in poverty and only modest growth is forecast in the coming years.

The 1993 Russian constitution limits a president to two terms, but some Yeltsin supporters reportedly had been looking for ways to allow him to seek a third, four-year term. However, there had been no indication that Yeltsin himself wanted to find a way around the constitutional limit.

There is already a large group of potential presidential candidates for 2000, although none could be considered a front-runner at present.

In Yeltsin's administration, Prime Minister Viktor Cher-

nomyrin may pursue the job, though he has never fared well in opinion polls. First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov is the country's most popular politician, according to several recent polls, though at 37 some think he is too young and inexperienced.

Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, defeated by Yeltsin in presidential runoff election in 1996, is likely to run again. But most analysts view the Communist Party as being in decline because the majority of its supporters are elderly and it holds little appeal for the young.

Alexander Lebed, a gruff-talking former general, finished a strong third in the first round of the 1996 presidential balloting. But he was dismissed as Yeltsin's national security chief last fall and has since struggled to maintain his visibility. A political party he formed has inspired only limited interest.

Authorities: Diana's driver was intoxicated

LONDON (AP) — Britain mourned its fallen princess Monday in silent, patient, and grieving lines, and heard the latest from France with new dismay: Diana's driver was loaded with alcohol when he roared off for her final ride.

The black Mercedes-Benz sedan may have been hurtling along at more than 100 mph when it crashed in a Paris tunnel early Sunday, killing Princess Diana, millionaire boyfriend Dodi Fayed, and the driver, a French source reported.

The news hit hard in a nation already coping with losing such a youthful icon so abruptly — and angered that celebrity photographers, who had chased the speeding vehicle, may have been partly responsible.

But outside St. James's Palace, where Diana's coffin lay within a closed chapel, the thoughts of ordinary Britons seemed to turn again and again to the life, not the death, of the "people's princess." "Diana was the one in the royal family who was most on our level," said Halaena Hankin, one of thousands waiting for hours to sign books of condolence inside St. James's.

"She added the style and the flavor that the monarchy needed," said London businessman

Christopher Buckmaster. "Now the monarchy will be poorer."

Buckingham Palace announced Diana's funeral will be conducted at 11 a.m. (6 a.m. EDT) Saturday at Westminster Abbey — where kings and queens are christened and crowned, wed and buried.

It will be a state event, but not quite a full state funeral, Prime Minister Tony Blair said.

Diana, Princess of Wales, lost the full title of Her Royal Highness upon her divorce from Prince Charles last year, but retained many of her privileges.

The former Diana Spencer, mother of England's future king, Prince William, will then be buried privately in her family's ancestral chapel near Althorp, the family home 60 miles north of London. There lie 20 generations of Spencers.

The government, not wanting the funeral ceremonies to involve merely "the great and the good," as Blair's spokesperson put it, will include as many ordinary Britons as possible.

"There should be people there who represented the causes she touched and the people that she touched," he said. The palace said it plans to issue

2,000 invitations.

Much of the nation will stand still during the televised funeral. London airports will suspend service and many stores will close.

The investigation of the crash took an even more dramatic turn with the statement by French prosecutors that an analysis of driver Henri Paul's blood found "that the alcohol level was illegal."

A French judicial source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it was 1.75 grams per liter of blood — more than three times France's legal limit.

Under France's strict law, exceeding 0.5 grams — the level after about two glasses of wine — is considered a misdemeanor, and 0.8 grams is a greater offense. The 0.5-gram limit translates to a blood-alcohol content of about 0.065 percent. Most U.S. states consider a driver legally drunk if the blood-alcohol content reaches 0.1 percent.

A source close to the investigation said the Mercedes' speedometer was found stuck at 196 kilometers per hour — 121 mph — after the crash, a good indication of the speed at impact.

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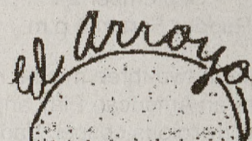
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