

BRIEFS

STATE

BOSTON

Boston Scientific: Guidant agreement imminent

Boston Scientific Corp. said Thursday it hopes to reach a definitive agreement with Guidant Corp. by the end of next week to buy the rival medical device maker, whose shareholders are due to vote Jan. 31 on a competing but smaller offer from Johnson & Johnson.

Boston Scientific and Guidant are close to concluding more than three weeks of due diligence of one another's operations and reviewing details of Boston Scientific's \$25 billion offer.

Spokesmen for Indianapolis-based Guidant and New Brunswick, N.J.-based J&J declined to comment.

Boston Scientific on Dec. 5 made a cash-and-stock offer to buy Guidant for about \$72 per share, potentially derailing J&J's plans to acquire Guidant.

Guidant shareholders are due to vote on the J&J offer on Jan. 31. Boston Scientific hopes it can reach its own deal with Guidant's management before then.

ANDERSON

Guide Corp. announces plan to lay off 62

A plant that makes lighting components and plastic body parts for cars plans to lay off 62 production workers, the company said.

Guide Corp. said the workers would be laid off indefinitely, effective Tuesday.

About 1,000 people work at the Guide plant in Anderson, making the parts for GM vehicles.

"We do not know what the future is going to hold," United Auto Workers Local 663 President Steve Lewis said.

Lewis said the layoffs were not as bad as union leaders had feared but that company managers would not promise any new jobs.

"We've had several meetings with the upper echelon, and we're not aware of any new jobs," he said.

The workers being laid off next week will get benefits equaling 95 percent of their take-home pay until their contract ends in March 2009, Lewis said.

Guide laid off 83 workers last June and another 60 in May.

FORT WAYNE

Burton to give away Abramoff donations

U.S. Rep. Dan Burton plans to give to charity about \$7,000 in campaign contributions he has received from lobbyist Jack Abramoff, who has pleaded guilty to charges in a corruption investigation involving members of Congress.



BURTON

Burton, a Republican who is Indiana's longest-serving U.S. House member, said he also was making a \$12,000 donation to charity for the amount given to his campaign from American Indian tribes that were clients of Abramoff.

"I can ensure my Hoosier constituents that neither myself nor any member of my staff participated in any illegal, immoral or unethical dealings with Mr. Abramoff or his tribal clients," Burton said in a statement Wednesday.

While dozens of lawmakers are dumping contributions from Abramoff and his clients, others including Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid smell no taint and plan to keep the money.

Still other officials and lawmakers, including President Bush, Democratic Rep. Charles Rangel of New York, and Democratic Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York, are splitting the difference. They say only some money linked to Abramoff is tarnished.

THE WAR IN IRAQ

At least 130 Iraqis killed in series of attacks



An Iraqi firefighter hoses down the remains of the wreckage from a suicide car bomber Thursday in Baghdad, Iraq. The bomber was targeting an Iraqi army patrol but missed, injuring three civilians and killing himself in the al-Kailani district central Baghdad, police said.

Roadside bomb kills five U.S. soldiers in Baghdad

By SAMEER N. YACOUB
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq

Suicide bombers targeted Shiite pilgrims in the south and police recruits in central Iraq, and a roadside bomb killed five U.S. soldiers, bringing Thursday's death toll to at least 130 people in a series of attacks as politicians tried to form a coalition government.

The two-day toll from insurgent attacks rose to 183, reflecting a dramatic upsurge in bloodshed following the Dec. 15 parliamentary elections. Some leading Sunni politicians accuse the Shiite-led government of condoning fraud in the voting.

Iraq's prime minister denounced the violence as an attempt to derail the political process at a time when progress was being made toward including the Sunnis in a new, broad-based government and thereby weakening the Sunni-led insurgency.

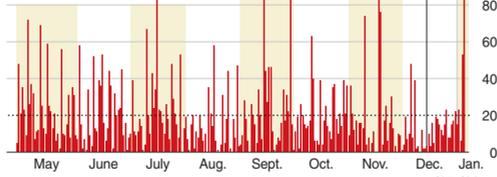
But Iraq's largest Shiite party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, blamed the violence on Sunni Arab groups that fared poorly in the elections. SCIRI warned that Shiite patience was wearing thin, and it accused the U.S.-led coalition forces of restraining the Iraqi army and its police forces.

Thursday's death toll was the largest single-day total since Sept. 29, when 162 died. It

Relentless attacks by insurgents

Insurgent attacks in Iraq during the past two days killed more than 180 people, including five U.S. soldiers. An AP count compiled since April 2005 shows more than 5,000 Iraqi deaths.

Daily Iraqi deaths



NOTE: This number includes civilians, government officials and police and security forces, and is considered only a minimum based on AP reporting. In addition, nearly 1,000 Shiite pilgrims were killed on August 21 by a bridge stampede caused by someone shouting there was a suicide bomber in their midst.

AP

was one of the bloodiest days in the three-year insurgency and included five American soldiers killed by a roadside bomb while patrolling the Baghdad area, the U.S. military said.

Earlier, Iraqi police Capt. Rahim Slaho said the U.S. convoy was heading for the Shiite holy city of Karbala when it was attacked 15 miles south of the city, and five soldiers were killed.

At least 2,188 members of the U.S. military have died since the war began, according to an Associated Press count.

A suicide blast near the Imam Hussein shrine in Kar-

bala, 50 miles south of Baghdad, killed 63 people and wounded 120 others, Karbala police spokesman Rahman Meshawi said.

In the attack's aftermath, a woman and an infant girl in a bright red jumpsuit lay in a pool of blood, their faces covered by a sheet. Television images showed men ferrying the wounded in pushcarts.

The bomber appeared to have blown himself up about 30 yards from the shrine in a busy pedestrian area surrounded by shops.

In Ramadi, an insurgent stronghold 70 miles west of Baghdad, a U.S. spokesman

said dozens were killed when a suicide bomber attacked a line of about 1,000 police recruits. Marine Capt. Jeffrey S. Pool initially put the death toll at about 30, but Mohammed al-Ani, a doctor at Ramadi General Hospital, later said 56 people were killed and 60 were injured.

The attack took place at a police screening center. Pool said recruits later got back in line to continue the screening process.

In other violence Thursday, a suicide car bomb killed three Iraqi soldiers in Baghdad, Lt. Col. Thamir al-Gharawi said, and gunmen killed three people in separate incidents, police said.

The Karbala bomber detonated a vest stuffed with about 18 pounds of explosives and several hand grenades, al-Taie said. Small steel balls that had been packed into the suicide vest were found at the site, as was one unexploded grenade, he said.

Like many pilgrims, Mohammed Saheb travels to Karbala every Thursday to be at the holy site for Friday prayers.

"I never thought such a crime could happen near this holy site," said Saheb, who had a head injury. "The terrorists spare no place from their ugly deeds. This is a criminal act against faithful pilgrims. The terrorists are targeting the Shiites."

Sharon fights for his life

Israelis, Palestinians prepare for new era

By RAVI NESSMAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM

Doctors said Thursday that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon will be kept in a coma-like state for up to three days to prevent further damage from a massive stroke. His sons held a bedside vigil and state media broadcast mournful songs.



SHARON

Hadassah Hospital's switchboard was flooded with get-well messages and the nation's top rabbis called on Israelis to rush to synagogues and pray for the 77-year-old ex-general, whom many saw as the best hope for peace with the Palestinians.

Sharon's deputy, Ehud Olmert, tried to convey a sense of stability while serving as acting prime minister, but Sharon's dramatic downturn left Israelis fearful.

The Web site of the respected Haaretz daily quoted hospital officials as saying Sharon suffered vast brain damage.

But Dr. Shlomo Mor-Yosef, Hadassah Hospital director, sought to quash widespread rumors that the prime minister was brain-dead. Sharon's pupils were responding to light, "which means the brain is functioning," he told reporters.

"We are fighting for the life of the prime minister, with no compromise," he said.

Dr. Zeev Feldman, a neurosurgeon at Israel's Tel Hashomer Hospital who is not involved in Sharon's treatment, said the test results appeared encouraging.

However, other neurosurgeons not involved in Sharon's treatment said a full recovery was unlikely after such a massive stroke. Sharon aides said they assume he would not return to work.

Sharon underwent seven hours of surgery Thursday at Hadassah Hospital after suffering a brain hemorrhage. He will remain sedated and on a respirator for two to three days to give him time to recover, and then he will be gradually awakened, hospital officials said.

His sons, Omri and Gilad, were by his side at the neurological intensive care unit.

Sharon's collapse less than three months before March 28 elections left in limbo his moderate Kadima Party, which had appeared headed for an easy victory.

Supreme Court says Padilla can be moved to Florida

Man detained without charges to be released from military custody, face criminal court



Jose Padilla was arrested after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and held for more than three years as an enemy combatant.

By GINA HOLLAND
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

The Bush administration won a temporary victory when the Supreme Court agreed that Jose Padilla, who was held for 3½ years as an enemy combatant, can be transferred to civilian authorities in Miami.

The justices' decision Wednesday overruled a lower court, which had attempted to block the transfer in a

rebuttal of the White House.

Padilla, a former Chicago gang member who was arrested after the September 2001 terrorist attacks, will be released from military custody to face charges in a civilian criminal court.

The Supreme Court said it would decide later whether to consider a broader appeal by Padilla challenging President Bush's authority to order the indefinite detention of suspected terrorists. The case has been set for

review at a private meeting of the justices on Jan. 13.

"That's fine. It's great," said Donna Newman, one of Padilla's lawyers. "Both things are good. I don't think it's a bad day for us."

Padilla's detention as an enemy combatant has been the subject of multiple court rulings and criticism by civil rights groups.

He was arrested at Chicago's O'Hare Airport and put in military custody, where he was held without

charges for several months and denied traditional legal rights, such as access to an attorney.

The Supreme Court had been asked to use Padilla's case to define the scope of a president's power over American citizens taken into custody on U.S. soil.

The justices had been expected to agree to hear his appeal, but shortly before word was to come, the government brought criminal charges against him in Florida and then argued that the appeal was moot.

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