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# Battered Tour ousts team in new scandal

### Vinokourov found positive for doping; 'We all feel cheated,' race organizer says

By Samuel Abt

**PAU, France:** In a new and stunning doping scandal, the Tour de France's organizers evicted the Astana team on Tuesday after its leader, Alexandre Vinokourov, tested positive for an illegal blood transfusion.

Vinokourov, a 33-year-old Kazakh, failed the test after he won an individual time trial on Saturday. The early favorite in the Tour, he also won a stage in the Pyrenees on Monday but was low in the overall standings because of time lost after crashes last week and Sunday.

"It was the only decision possible — to ask the team to leave," said Patrice Clerc, the chairman of the race's organizers. "It's true that Vinokourov is a personality, that he has panache and that the fans liked him especially. We all feel cheated."

[The Astana team manager, Marc Biver, on Tuesday said that Vinokourov "denies having manipulated his blood." The Associated Press reported from Pau.

[Biver added that the rider believed that "blood anomalies in his body" might have resulted from a crash he was involved in last week.]

Clerc spoke amid controversy after the announcement last week that the Tour's leader, Michael Rasmussen, had been disciplined by the Danish cycling federation for evading surprise drug tests by not revealing his whereabouts.

Noting that he had not been found guilty of any violation, the Tour's organizers allowed Rasmussen to continue in the race. That decision has been criticized by some riders and team officials.

Answering a question at a hastily called news conference in the southwestern city of Pau, Clerc insisted that the new scandal would not halt the 94th Tour de France, which is scheduled to end Sunday in Paris.

"It is out of the question to quit," he said. "Never has that thought crossed my mind."

"The Tour de France is 104 years old," he said later, "and has had plenty of problems. But it always goes on."

The last major problem was the withdrawal of a handful of teams to protest police drug inspections. They left midway through the Tour in 1998 during the so-called Festina Affair.

[The French police raided the Astana team's hotel later Tuesday, Reuters reported from Pau.

[Officers arrived on the scene with big bags and were searching the Hotel de la Palmeraie in Pau.]

Although both Clerc and Christian Prudhomme, the director of the race, asserted that they would continue their fight against doping, Prudhomme went even further.

"We need a revolution," he said. "Only a revolution will change the system."

"The system doesn't work," he continued. "We need to change that system. It's clear that the system has betrayed the fans."

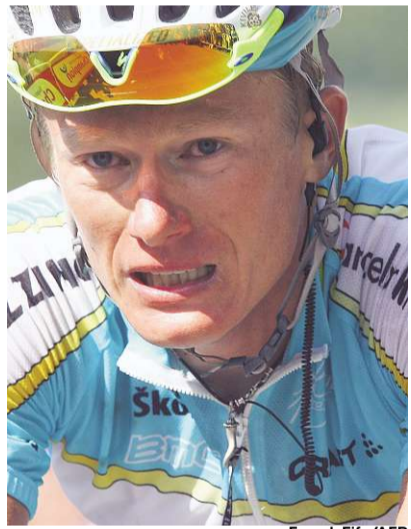
"The riders are playing Russian roulette," he said. Nevertheless, when asked what message he would have for the riders when they start on Wednesday, he said, "I will tell the riders not to give up."

First revealing the news about Vinokourov on Tuesday, a rest day in the race, a French sports newspaper, l'Equipe, said on its Web site that the analysis of his blood was conducted by the Chatenay-Malabry laboratory outside of Paris.

It said that two distinctive types of red blood cells were found in the A, or first, test of his blood and showed that Vinokourov received a transfusion from a compatible donor shortly before the time trial in Albi.

Fresh blood augments the number of red corpuscles, which carry oxygen to

**TOUR DE FRANCE, Continued on Page 17**



Alexandre Vinokourov, a 33-year-old Kazakh, tested positive after he won an individual time trial on Saturday.

# Medics free after long Libya ordeal



Four Bulgarian nurses — facing the camera from left, Valentina Siropulo, Nasya Nenova, Snezhana Dimitrova and Valya Chervenyashka — with relatives after arriving Tuesday in Sofia. They had been imprisoned, along with two others, for more than eight years.

### Deal clears the way to international ties for Qaddafi regime

By Matthew Brunwasser and Elaine Sciolino

**SOFIA:** After eight and a half years in captivity in Libya, five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor stepped off France's presidential plane here to freedom Tuesday morning, welcomed by tearful family members, Bulgaria's top officials and a presidential pardon.

They were accompanied by the two women who reached the final breakthrough with the Libyan leader, Muammar el-Qaddafi — France's first lady, Cécilia Sarkozy, and the European Union's foreign affairs commissioner, Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

Sarkozy, who has said nothing publicly about her role in the negotiations, waved to journalists as she descended from the plane, putting her hand over her heart and mouthing "Merçi."

"I still can't believe that I am standing on Bulgarian soil," Kristiana Valcheva, 48, one of the five nurses, told state Channel 1 television as the medical workers embraced their families. "I want my life to return to what it was before all this happened."

The medical workers' liberation brings to an end a bizarre and tortuous episode in Libya's recent history that tarnished its standing in the world. The conclusion opens the way to full political and economic rapprochement for Libya in the international community.

Despite proclamations of innocence and despite contrary evidence, the six medical workers had been convicted and condemned to death, accused of having deliberately infected hundreds of Libyan children with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Along the way, Qaddafi accused the nurses of acting on the orders of the CIA and Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad, calling their actions part of a plot to destabilize the Libyan state. The workers were allegedly tortured to extract confessions.

Bulgaria consistently said the medical workers were not guilty. Then, suddenly, days after their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment last week, they were allowed to leave Libya.

Their liberation is the result of an intense, three-year diplomatic process that the European Union began, that Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain and German officials moved forward and that the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, and Sarkozy's wife clinched. In the end, the rapport that Cécilia Sarkozy established with Qaddafi and his wife and daughter helped propel the outcome.

In Sofia, Ferrero-Waldner described the liberation as "a joyous day for Europe and Bulgaria," adding, "This

**LIBYA, Continued on Page 4**



President Georgi Parvanov of Bulgaria in Sofia on Tuesday with Cécilia Sarkozy of France, who helped free the nurses.

### Release may help Libya

■ EU leaders welcome Libya's release of the medical workers. **Page 4**

■ Libya may gain foreign investment and modernize its economy. **Page 9**

# Quake stokes Japan's nuclear fears

By Martin Fackler

**TOKYO:** After a deadly earthquake struck northwestern Japan last week, the nation was stunned when a nuclear power plant near the earthquake's center suffered widespread damage, including minor radiation leaks, ruptured pipes, flooding and a fire that belched black smoke for more than an hour on live television.

But perhaps the most startling discovery came in the days that followed, when scientists used data from the magnitude 6.8 earthquake to conclude that the builders of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant, the world's largest by electrical output, may have unknowingly constructed it directly on top of an active seismic fault.

"Not finding the fault was a miss on our part," said Toshiaki Sakai, who heads the engineering group in charge of Tokyo Electric's nuclear plants. "But it was not a fatal miss by any means."

The earthquake, which killed 11 people and destroyed hundreds of homes in the nearby city of Kashiwazaki, has raised questions about the safety of Japan's nuclear plants.

The plants in this earthquake-prone nation are supposed to be nearly

## Fault line at plant underscores risks

quake-proof, built to withstand the most powerful punch. Tokyo Electric Power, the plant's operator, said the tremors last week were more than twice as strong as the plant's design limits. So the plant's vulnerability to damage has distressed many Japanese.

The damage at the Kashiwazaki facility also offered a vivid reminder of the risks of nuclear power at a time when the United States, Europe and countries elsewhere are giving atomic energy a second look as a clean, plentiful alternative to oil and other fossil fuels. Resource-poor Japan kept building new nuclear plants even after accidents like Three Mile Island in 1979 in the United States and Chernobyl in 1986 in Ukraine froze construction in the United States and parts of Europe for decades.

Nuclear experts applaud the fact that all four of the Kashiwazaki plant's seven reactors that were operating when the earthquake struck were safely shut down, despite the unexpected strength of the tremors. But Tokyo Electric's

failure to predict the possible size of the tremors that could strike the area and to detect the fault line have left many here wondering whether regulators and plant operators could also have underestimated the potential for devastating earthquakes at Japan's 48 other nuclear reactors.

"The plant did an excellent job of ensuring the safety of the reactors themselves," said Michio Ishikawa, president of the Japan Nuclear Technology Institute, an industry-sponsored research group. "But how could they have not known about the active fault line?"

On Tuesday, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which oversees energy-related policy, said it would create an independent panel to investigate the damage at the Kashiwazaki plant, in Niigata Prefecture. The panel's findings will be presented to the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency, which also will send inspectors to the plant.

The discovery of the fault line below the Kashiwazaki plant has attracted intense media attention in Japan, partly because it echoes problems that have already plagued nuclear plants else-

**JAPAN, Continued on Page 11**

# Bush bonds with Maliki over Iraq and their gods

By Jim Rutenberg and Alissa J. Rubin

**WASHINGTON:** Once every two weeks, sometimes more often, President George W. Bush gathers with the vice president and the national security adviser in the newly refurbished White House Situation Room and peers, electronically, into the eyes of the man to whom his own legacy is so inextricably hitched: Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki of Iraq.

In sessions usually lasting more than an hour, Bush, a committed Christian of Texas by way of privileged schooling in New England, and Maliki, a Shiite Muslim of Abu Gharaf by way of political exile in Iran and Syria, talk about leadership and democracy, troop deployments and their own domestic challenges. Sometimes, said an official who has sat in on the meetings, they talk about their shared level of faith in a God they call by different names.

"They talk about the challenges they face being leaders," said the official, who requested anonymity to discuss private conversations. "They, of course, also share a faith in God, and that's also a tie they share."

The official declined to elaborate on the extent of their religious discussions, but said: "It is an issue that comes up between two men who are believers in difficult times, who are being challenged."

In these sessions, Bush views Maliki's image on a wall of plasma screens that put the tested Iraqi leader in lifelike relief. But as aides describe them, the sessions are typical of the type of personal diplomacy Bush has tried to practice throughout his presidency, exemplified by the way he warmed to President Vladimir Putin of Russia (misguidedly, in the view of some policy analysts) after Putin showed him a cross he wore that was given to him by his mother.

In recent months, White House officials said, Bush has spoken more frequently with Maliki than almost any other leader — the leaders of Britain and Germany were the exceptions.

So far, the sessions with Maliki appear to have further pointed up the lim-

**FAITH, Continued on Page 4**

**Little progress as U.S. opens talks with Iran on Iraq. Page 4**



Anthony Devlin/The Associated Press

### A spot of tea in a tight spot

Klaus Pittaway making a cup of tea on Tuesday in his flooded home near the Severn River in Gloucester, England. Weeks of heavy rain have caused massive flooding, the worst in at least 60 years, in central and western England. Meanwhile, southern Europe, from Italy to Romania, sweltered under a weeklong heat wave that has caused at least 35 deaths. **Page 3**

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## CURRENCIES | New York

	Tuesday 4 p.m.	Previous
€1 =	\$1.3817	\$1.3801
£1 =	\$2.0604	\$2.0580
¥1 =	¥120.079	¥121.200
\$1 =	SF1.2034	SF1.2070

Full currency rates | Page 13

## OIL | New York

	Tuesday 4 p.m.	Change
Light sweet crude	\$73.56	↓ \$1.33

## STOCK INDEXES

	Tuesday	Change
The Dow 4 p.m.	13,716.95	↓ 1.62%
FTSE 100 close	6,498.70	↓ 1.90%
Nikkei 225 close	18,002.03	↑ 0.21%

ih.t.com/worldmarkets

## Mixed bag for big firms

Earnings season got into full swing Tuesday with several of the world's largest companies reporting quarterly results. BP's second-quarter profit fell slightly, while Amazon.com more than tripled its net income for the period. AT&T and Fiat reported rises. The U.S. defense contractors Lockheed and Northrop also joined the upward trend. **Articles on pages 9, 12, 14**

## A legal culture clash

As the European Union opens its market for legal services, law firms on the Continent are struggling to adapt to successive waves of British and American law firms, the English they speak and the common law practices they bring. Not surprisingly, these inroads are sowing tensions among local firms and some governments. **Page 9**

## Militant in Pakistan commits suicide

One of the most wanted Taliban militants in Pakistan, Abdullah Mehsud, blew himself up with a grenade when troops raided a hideout in Baluchistan Province, government officials said Tuesday.

Mehsud, who was 32 and was missing a leg, was known for his daredevil personality and bravado. He spent 25 months in American custody at the detention center in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. **Page 5**

## Optimism grows in developing world

Despite a thicket of troubles, from deadly illnesses like AIDS and malaria to corrupt politicians and deep-seated poverty, a plurality of Africans say they are better off today than they were five years ago and are optimistic about their future and that of the next generation, according to a poll conducted in 10 countries in sub-Saharan Africa by The New York Times and the Pew Global Attitudes Project.

The poll results offer an unusual and complex portrait of a continent in flux, a snapshot of 10 key modern African states as they struggle to build accountable governments, manage violent conflict and turn their natural resources into wealth for the population.

more satisfied with their lives than five years ago, with their incomes increased by economic reform and globalization. But it also finds substantial pessimism in wealthier parts of the world, where spending power has been more stagnant.

But in Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States, large majorities said they expected their children would face worse lives than they have.

While Americans were the most optimistic in the developed West, just over half of those questioned for the report by the Pew Research Center said they expected to be personally better off in five years. Discontent has grown more in the United States than in any other country surveyed. **Articles on Page 2**