

BUSH

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In the first test of his leadership, Bush was trying to convince the American people and their legislators that cutting taxes would boost the sluggish economy and ensure that Congress doesn't squander the surplus on pork-barrel spending. Polls suggest voters are lukewarm to Bush's tax-cut package, which he presented on the campaign trail 14 months ago.

To the applause of Republicans, Bush urged Congress to cut taxes retroactively because the sluggish economy "needs a jump start." He added: "Tax relief is right and tax relief is urgent." Advisers have said Bush would support making tax cuts retroactive to Jan. 1.

Bush proposed increasing spending for Social Security, Medicare and entitlement programs by \$81 billion — much of which is due to the routine growth of the entitlement programs.

He also would increase discretionary spending by an additional \$26 billion, a 4 percent increase. That is a bit higher than inflation but lower than the growth of government in each of the last three years.

Bush was careful to cultivate Democrats, paying tribute to cancer-

stricken Rep. Joe Moakley of Massachusetts, praising Philadelphia Mayor John Street and quoting John F. Kennedy, a Democratic icon.

He cloaked his debt-reduction plan in bipartisanship. "Many of you have talked about the need to pay down our national debt. I have listened, and I agree."

Bush said his education budget dedicates \$5 billion over five years to help children learn to read. The school budget, which received the biggest increase in his blueprint, also spends money to train and recruit teachers "because we know a good education starts with a good teacher," he said.

He used the education theme to salute his wife, Laura, a one-time school teacher and librarian and said she will travel the country to promote education.

Bush said his plan will pay off \$2 trillion of the \$3.2 trillion in publicly held debt over 10 years. It would leave enough money, he said, for a \$1 trillion contingency fund "for unexpected needs (and) additional priorities."

Bush advisers said that possible uses for the reserve could include extra debt reduction if actual federal surpluses shrink below current projections and added spending for defense, agriculture or other programs; or instituting personal saving accounts that workers could use to build up retirement nest eggs.

Bush said he would appoint a

presidential commission this spring to overhaul Social Security and instruct the panel to report its findings by next fall. "It must return Social Security to sound financial footing, and it must offer personal savings accounts to younger workers who want them."

The president also said he instructed Attorney General John Ashcroft to develop recommendations "to end racial profiling" — the practice of police officers targeting suspects based on their race or other traits.

"It is wrong and we must end it," said Bush, reaching out to black voters after winning only one out of 10 of their votes in the contentious presidential election.

The address was Bush's first chance to showcase his agenda on a broad stage. After a brief inaugural address Jan. 20, the president has struggled to make his arguments heard above the din generated by former President Clinton's pardons, a spy scandal and an airstrike against Iraq.

The speech was set in the House's ornate chamber, where history and recent controversies mingled in memories. Eisenhower delivered his State of the Union speeches to a Republican Congress in the mid-1950s, the last GOP president to do so until Bush. Two years ago, Bush's predecessor was impeached in the same chamber and sent to trial in the Senate, where he was acquitted.

England seeking ways to combat foot-and-mouth disease outbreak

BY CHRIS FONTAINE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON — Five more sites of foot-and-mouth disease were identified Tuesday, and officials trying to stop the fast-spreading outbreak canceled all horse racing in England and granted new powers to stop hiking on rural land.

The five new cases brought the confirmed number of outbreaks to 17.

Prime Minister Tony Blair called an emergency Cabinet meeting at Downing Street as agriculture officials scrambled to trace the intricate path of the livestock virus. Farmers believe as many as 25,000 sheep, cattle and pigs passed through three markets at the center of the outbreak during the week before a Friday ban on moving livestock within Britain.

"These figures show the sheer volume of movement," said Peter Kingwill, chairman of the Livestock Auctioneers' Association. "In terms of an outbreak, they are worrying."

As the impact of the disease spread, the government granted local authorities the power to place footpaths and rights-of-way off limits to walkers. Dartmoor National Park, a popular hiking destination in southwest England, was closed to protect the 60,000 cattle and sheep that graze there.

The Jockey Club, which runs horse racing in England, announced that racing would be suspended for at least seven days until March 7. The fate of the

Cheltenham Festival — the prestigious three-day jump meeting scheduled for March 13-15 — was in doubt. The last major outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, in 1967, saw racing in Britain suspended for six weeks.

Foot-and-mouth disease almost never infects humans, but it is highly contagious among cloven-footed animals like sheep, cows and pigs. It isn't usually fatal in itself, but causes blisters on the mouth and feet, fever and loss of appetite.

Vaccines exist, but are quickly rendered ineffective by the development of new strains of the virus, so wholesale slaughter is used to contain the disease.

Officials elsewhere in Europe were growing increasingly worried that the disease could spread. The European Union extended until at least March 9 a ban on British exports of livestock, meat and dairy products.

Thousands of livestock have been killed in continental Europe, where no cases have been found. Germany said it had slaughtered another 1,600 sheep Tuesday, following the earlier killing of 360 animals imported from England.

The Netherlands slaughtered more than 3,200 animals brought from Britain before the outbreak was discovered. Spain ordered the destruction of 540 pigs imported from Britain, and France has decided to destroy 20,000 sheep brought from Britain since the beginning of the month.

The new cases identified in Britain

on Tuesday spanned the country, from Anglesey in north Wales to Northamptonshire, north of London. They followed five new cases that cropped up Monday.

The sudden escalation after a weekend in which only one new case was reported set off fresh fears the country could experience a repeat of the 1967 epidemic, when nearly half a million livestock were slaughtered.

Two British newspapers published maps Tuesday showing the spiderweb-like spread of the disease through England. Bonfires lit up affected areas for a second night as authorities disposed of about 7,000 slaughtered animals.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Monday called the outbreak "a dreadful blow" to a farming industry already struggling with mad cow disease, a fatal brain-wasting illness first identified in Britain.

Even if the foot-and-mouth outbreak is quickly contained, Chief Veterinary Officer Jim Scudamore has warned that an export ban — imposed two days after the first case was discovered at a slaughterhouse on Feb. 19 — could remain in place for up to six months after eradication.

Efforts to trace the disease's progress have led investigators to three livestock markets — one in central England and two further north near Scotland — believed to have handled diseased animals.



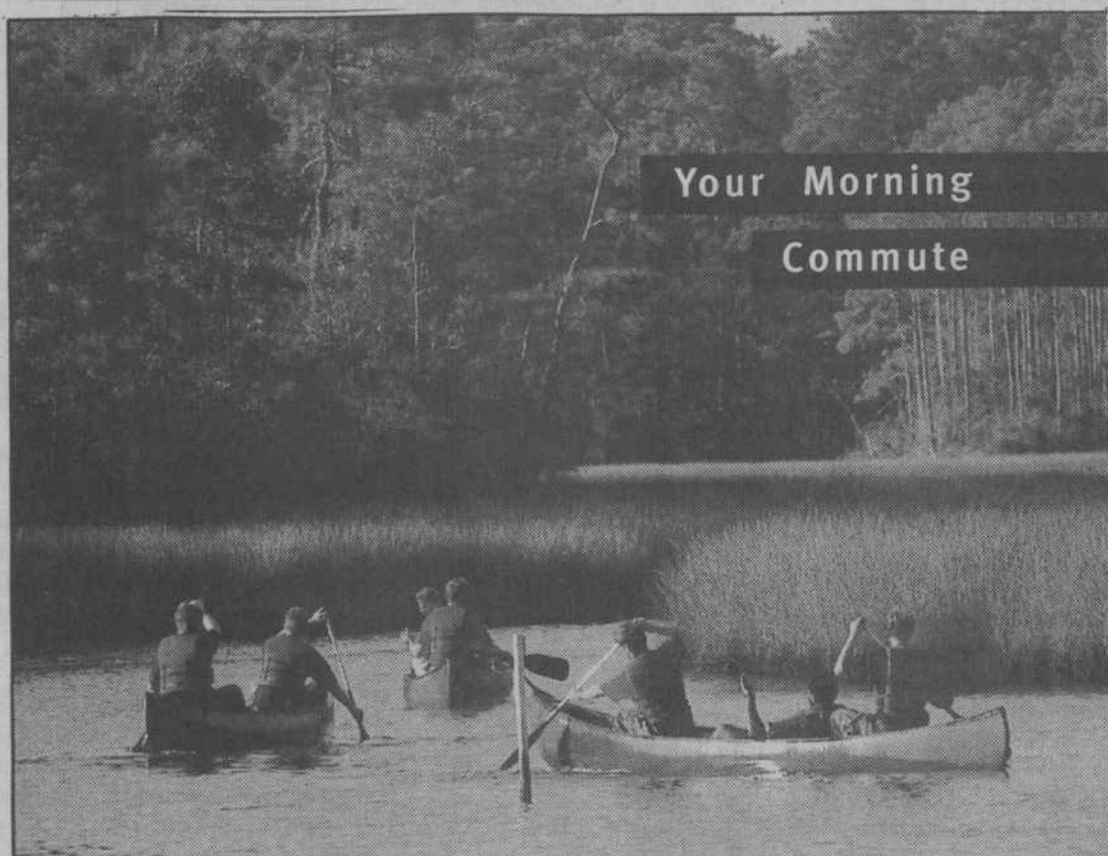
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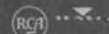


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