

SET ON HIGH
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with high in the 90s;
warm and humid tonight.
Forecast, C6

The Providence Journal

TUESDAY
JUNE 26, 2007

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Strawberry fields forever



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / STEVE SZYDLOWSKI

Christine Orellana, 10, of Attleboro, enjoys one of the true delights of summer in New England: fresh-picked strawberries like those collected yesterday at 4 Town Farm in Seekonk. At right, Monique Boivin, also of Attleboro, inspects her selections.

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The saga of the Sakonnet River Bridge

Some decisions had been made and some expenses shaved, but many questions, such as the ultimate cost of the span and the materials to be used, are up in the air.

BY BRUCE LANDIS
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — The replacement for the Sakonnet River Bridge will be built later and cost more than it was supposed to.

However, the state Department of Transportation's new director, Jerome F. Williams, says he has taken steps to cut the cost increases, so that the bridge can be built less expensively than it might otherwise have been.

The new bridge will, like the current rusting one, carry Route 24 from Tiverton across the Sakonnet River to Portsmouth. It will be built immediately south of the existing one. Williams said he hopes to advertise for bids in January and start construction in spring.

It will be the first major project to go out for bid since Williams, a former official in the state Department of Administration, took over as director of the DOT at the beginning of the year.

Hoping to encourage competition, the DOT is considering two versions of the bridge, one using steel as the primary material, the other concrete.

The agency said it estimated the cost of a new bridge at \$118 million in 2001 for construction using either material, plus allowances for



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / FRIEDA SQUIRES

Pile drivers are currently at work to determine how deep the steel piles will need to be sunk to support the new Sakonnet River Bridge.

engineering supervision and change orders during the project.

But Williams said that when he got to the agency, the estimated cost of a steel bridge had risen to \$189.5 million and a concrete one to

\$211.8 million, increases of 60 percent and 79 percent, respectively. He blamed the higher cost estimates on increases in the cost of build-

SEE **BRIDGE, A7**

Sheik's ties to Americans prove deadly



MCT / MOHAMMED AL DULAIMY

Sheik Fassal al Gaood, killed in a bombing yesterday, was a valuable U.S. ally.

A bombing in Baghdad kills Sheik Fassal al Gaood, a Sunni leader helping to flight al-Qaida in Iraq.

JOURNAL WIRE REPORTS

BAGHDAD — More than two years ago, Sheik Fassal al Gaood approached the U.S. military with what was then an unprecedented offer: his tribesmen were prepared to help American troops rout insurgents linked to al-Qaida in Iraq from Anbar province in western Iraq.

But the Sunni Muslim tribal leader and former provincial governor was rebuffed, he said recently. Discouraged and angry, he warned that the United States risked losing him as an ally.

The Americans eventually came around, and al Gaood proved good to his word and became an important ally.

He helped turn some of Anbar's most prominent Sunni tribes into a force in the war against

al-Qaida in Iraq's followers.

That partnership may have cost him his life: al Gaood and 11 other Iraqis were killed yesterday in a bombing at a Baghdad hotel where he and other tribal sheiks who've joined forces with the United States were scheduled to meet.

The bombing struck the heart of one of the rare bright spots for the American military. In recent months, U.S. military officers have since praised the group, repeatedly holding it up as a model for other Iraqi tribes, even though they privately worry that such vigilante groups will undermine the progress toward an inclusive, national Iraqi military.

At least three other Sunni sheiks from Anbar were also killed in the explosion yesterday, along with two Shiite sheiks from Diwaniya, in the south.

One hotel employee said the sheiks had just ordered tea when the bomber arrived, wearing tradi-

SEE **IRAQ, A5**

Grand plan for Newport withdrawn

The Procaccianti Group pulls out of a \$1.4-billion plan to convert the city's gambling venue into a world-class tourist destination.

BY STEVE PEOPLES
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

The Procaccianti Group has walked away from a contract to purchase Newport Grand for \$155 million and a related \$1.4-billion plan to transform the land surrounding the video slot parlor into a year-round world-class tourist destination.

The decision came less than three days after House Speaker William J. Murphy blocked legislation that would have extended tax relief for the gambling facility's new owner and provided additional freedom from local zoning. Murphy commended Procaccianti as being a "first-class" organization, but said last

week there wasn't time to properly shape the bill in the legislative session's final days.

"I am a little disappointed," state Lottery Director Gerald Aubin said yesterday. "I was excited about that whole proposal in that part of the state that is in need of some uplifting. We anticipated this large investment in the area. That is absolutely falling apart."

While downplaying Murphy's role in the process, Procaccianti spokesman Larry Izzzi said his organization was forced out of the deal because the tax-relief bill died. An escape clause in the contract allowed Procaccianti to back out and recover a \$5-million deposit if the legislation didn't pass.

The Cranston-based national hospitality company officially terminated the contract in writing late last week.

SEE **NEWPORT, A7**

Lynch coy over whether to sign tobacco bonds

The attorney general says he's being rushed to sign the \$174-million bond authorization to help cover the state budget.

BY C. EUGENE EMERY JR.
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Attorney General Patrick C. Lynch said yesterday he may not be ready by today's 3 p.m. deadline to sign a bond authorization needed for the state to tap tobacco money to plug holes in the state budget.

Then again, maybe he will be.

At issue is the attempt to raise \$154 million for next year's budget — and another \$20 million to finance shortfalls in this year's budget — by selling a portion of future payments from the tobacco master settlement, a 1998 agreement by tobacco companies and 46 states designed to recoup the societal costs of smoking.

It's the government equivalent of a reverse mortgage, with annual tobacco payments as collateral instead of a house.

Both the governor and the legislature are counting on that pulse of money.

Lynch, who must approve such bonding authorizations,

complained that he is being rushed. The problem: the tobacco money comes with strings attached.

"It's dramatically different from other bonds that I sign," he said. "This is the first time I've had to look at a bond along those lines."

As of yesterday afternoon, he said he and his staff had not had

SEE **LYNCH, A5**

Court loosens limits on campaign advertising

The ruling on the 2002 campaign finance law is among decisions that illustrate the influence of President Bush's appointments.

BY LINDA GREENHOUSE
and **DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK**
THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court yesterday took a sharp turn away from campaign finance regulation, opening a wide exception to the advertising restrictions that it upheld when the McCain-Feingold law first came before it four years ago. It was one of several rulings that pointed up the court's shift to the

right.

In a splintered 5-to-4 decision, Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. said that as interpreted broadly by federal regulators and the law's supporters, the restrictions on television advertisements paid for from corporate or union treasuries in the weeks before an election amounted to censorship of core political speech unless those advertisements explicitly urge a vote for or against a particular candidate.

"Where the First Amendment is implicated," the chief justice said, "the tie goes to the speaker, not the censor."

Consequently, Roberts said,

SEE **COURT, A5**



INSIDE TODAY

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GONE WITH THE WIND

Governor Carcieri's proposal to have 15 percent of Rhode Island's electricity usage generated by wind power suffers a setback in the final days of the General Assembly. **E1**

PREPARING FOR PUTIN

While some in Kennebunkport, Maine, are anxiously preparing for the upcoming visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin, others would just as soon do without the presence of President Bush's guest during the Fourth of July week. **A2**

REACHING FOR A RECORD

Roger Federer begins his campaign to match Bjorn Borg's five straight Wimbledon titles with a straight-set victory over Russian Teimuraz Gabashvili. **C3**

UP ON THE NEWS



They may yet to have gone through puberty but many young girls today are deeply immersed in the dirty laundry of their favorite celebrities — and you may be surprised at their reactions. **F1**