

Montgomery Advertiser

A GANNETT COMPANY

MONDAY • MARCH 14, 2011 • 75 CENTS

SINCE 1829

Coliseum's future uncertain



Mickey Welsh Advertiser

Alabama Agricultural Center executive director Bill Johnson, left, and Billy Powell, executive director of the Southeastern Livestock Exposition, take a look at Garrett Coliseum on Saturday. The SLE rodeo wrapped up at Garrett on Saturday.

Garrett still waits for funding source for renovation; officials consider privatization and possible closing

By Tim Gayle
tgayle@gannett.com

Garrett Coliseum executive director Bill Johnson sounds as if he's writing the obituary for the grand old lady as he discusses the often mentioned but never utilized architectural dreams for renovation.

"Our prayers have been for years that we would be in renovation soon," Johnson said. "All of a sudden, that has changed to desperation to keep the building open."

This time, his dire predictions may ring true. Gov. Robert Bentley has made it clear that tough budget cuts are on the horizon and that includes Garrett Coliseum.

In 1998, the antiquated facility received appropriations of approximately \$650,000, according to Johnson. While that doesn't begin to cover the cost of any renovations, it was enough to provide for the minor repairs that constantly crop up with a large facility of that age.

Thirteen years later, the



Photos by Mickey Welsh Advertiser file

Above, water drips through rusted rain gutters at the coliseum in March 2009. Left, ceiling leaks and damage to a wall also were visible inside.

appropriations are at \$400,000. When the seven-member staff needs to do any work on the property surrounding the arena, they usually bring the tools from home.

"I can't imagine there's anybody that has gotten along as long as we have with as little as we have and kept the doors open," Johnson said.

Next year, Bentley has allocated nothing, cutting Garrett Coliseum from the budget.

"That's correct," said John McMillan, commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Industries and a member of the Alabama Agricultural Center Board which oversees the coliseum. "Frankly, I've been so preoccupied with

all of the other problems I've got at the Department of Agriculture and Industries and Governor Bentley is appointing four members to the board out here. So we're just waiting to get the appointees and we'll start over looking at what our options are and try and figure out if there's a way to work

Future Page 7A

Second explosion hits plant in Japan

The Associated Press

▶ City struggles with size of disaster 6A

An explosion rocked Japan's Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant today. The blast was felt 30 miles away by Associated Press journalists in the coastal town of Soma, where residents fled the town for safety after being herded quickly through muddy, debris-strewn streets.

Japan's chief cabinet secretary said a hydrogen explosion occurred today at the facility's Unit 3.

The blast was similar to an earlier one at a different unit at the facility. Yukio Edano said people within a 12-mile radius were ordered inside following the blast.

Edano said the reactor's inner containment vessel holding nuclear rods is intact, allaying some fears of the risk to the environment and public. TV footage showed a massive column of smoke belching from the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant's No. 3

unit, about 125 miles north of Tokyo. The problems at the plant stem from failed cooling systems caused by damage from Friday's earthquake and tsunami. More than 180,000 people have evacuated the area, and up to 160 may have been exposed to radiation.

Near-freezing temperatures compounded the misery of survivors along hundreds of miles of the northeastern coast battered by the tsunami that smashed inland with breathtaking fury.

The prime minister said it was the nation's worst crisis since World War II.

One rare bit of good news was the rescue of a 60-year-old man swept away by the tsunami who clung to the roof of his house for two

Japan Page 7A

Japan injects \$183B into reeling economy

By Yuri Kageyama
The Associated Press

ing was scheduled for later today.

TOKYO — Japan's central bank injected a record \$183.5 billion into money markets as the Tokyo stock market nosedived today on the first business day since an earthquake and tsunami devastated the country's northeast and raised dire worries about the economy.

The Bank of Japan moved quickly to try to keep financial markets stable. By flooding the banking system with cash, it hopes banks will continue lending money and meet the likely surge in demand for post-earthquake funds. A one-day policy meet-

Tens of billions of dollars are expected to be needed to rebuild homes, roads and other infrastructure — requiring public spending that will add to the national debt.

"The impact on Japan's economy will be devastating," said Sheila Smith, senior fellow for Japan Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, a New York-based think tank.

Toyota Motor Corp., the world's top automaker, as well as Nissan Motor Co. and Honda suspended production at all their auto plants in Japan, starting today.

ASU fans welcome SWAC champs

By Tim Gayle
tgayle@gannett.com

Three dozen or so supporters were waiting outside the Dunn-Oliver Acadome when the sleeper bus pulled onto the Alabama State University campus, carrying the Southwestern Athletic Conference champions back from Texas.

"I expected them to win," said sophomore Sandriata Valentin of Mobile, one of a handful of students who were outnumbered by faculty and alumni. "They're an awesome team. They play hard, they showed that here in the Acadome. It's a wonderful thing, a great image for the school for them to win the SWAC. I just wanted to cheer them on."

Alabama State won its 11th game in the last 12 outings and avenged its only loss during that stretch by routing Grambling State 65-48 in the championship game Saturday night at Special Events Arena in Garland, Texas.

The win carries with it an automatic berth to the NCAA basketball tournament. The Hornets will face Texas-San Antonio on Wednesday.

"It feels good," said junior guard Kendrick Washington, who averaged 12.3 points in the three victories and was a huge spark in the opening-round win over arch-rival Ala-

bama A&M with a pair of 3-pointers. "Coach told me when I came here we were going to be working on some (championship) rings. It's just like he said."

Hornets coach Lewis Jackson said he was appreciative of the fan support for the players when they arrived after traveling all night on the bus.

Hornets focus on NCAA tournament 1B

"It's very exciting to have your fans here when you come back and see them standing out here, cheering for you and welcoming you back home," he said. "It's just overwhelming and it's fantastic for the players to see this."

"It just shows you who the real fans are at Alabama State, how the alumni supports you with all their heart and all their might," said Tramayne Moorer, voted the tournament Most Valuable Player. "I said (on Monday as the team was preparing to leave) I wasn't coming back without a championship, that we were the hottest team in the SWAC."

"We just came out and played hard and played as a team," said guard Tremaine Butler, who led the team in scoring in the tournament. "I feel like if we would have done that from the beginning, we would have been regular season champions."



Mickey Welsh Advertiser

Alabama State University basketball coach Lewis Jackson greets fans as the team is welcomed back to campus Sunday after winning the SWAC basketball tournament.



Vol. 184, No. 73
© 2011
The Advertiser Co.

TODAY'S FORECAST
High 77°, Low 54° Mostly cloudy
Complete forecast on 8A

INDEX	
Bridge.....	6B
Comics.....	2C
Editorial.....	4A
Horoscopes.....	6B
Legals.....	5B
Nation/World.....	6A
Obituaries.....	7A
Puzzles.....	6B
Sudoku.....	3C

Huntingdon Hawks news on your cell phone
Text MAHAWKS to 44636 (4INFO).

ROMEO & JULIET

Just Browse Our Cases Receive 2 Tickets
Compliments of
Marqurette's & Montgomery Ballet
April 8th or 9th Performances (No purchase necessary)

Marqurette's
EXQUISITE JEWELRY
334-270-0074
www.marquettes.com
Cornerstone at Vaughn & Taylor Roads