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OAKLAND BOARD AMENDS EBONICS RESOLUTION

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Page: 6A

Column: NATIONAL BRIEFS

The Oakland school board has revised its policy recognizing black English as a separate language, hoping to mollify critics who feared the wording implied students would be taught in Ebonics.

The revisions approved late Wednesday drop any suggestion that Ebonics is genetically based, and cut wording that implies students would be taught in both Ebonics and standard English.

The new version also retains a commitment of ``respecting and embracing the legitimacy and richness of the language patterns whether they are known as Ebonics,' African Language Systems,' Pan African Communication Behaviors' or other description."

Oakland officials insisted they were not backing away from their original goal: to train teachers to recognize Ebonics so they can help students make the transition to standard English.

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Members of Atlantis, Mir crews swap supplies

Astronauts and cosmonauts aboard the space shuttle Atlantis and Russia's Mir space station hustled Thursday to exchange food, clothing and other supplies as the two spacecraft circled Earth together for a second day.

The nine space travelers appeared likely to complete the massive swap well ahead of the shuttle crew's scheduled departure late Sunday. The amount of supplies moving between the two spacecraft should exceed 200 items, including more than three tons of dry goods and 1,400 pounds of water in portable containers.

``They are becoming routine," NASA Mission Operations Director Bob Castle said of the activities under way on the fifth of nine shuttle visits planned to Mir through mid-1998. ``We're trying hard to make them routine."

The largest category of cargo is the 3,700 pounds of food, clothing, electronic gear, film and gifts from the families of the cosmonauts.

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Deaths of infants linked to fatal fungus

ATLANTA - A black, slimy fungus that sprouted in water-damaged homes in Cleveland may have killed three infants and sickened 18 others by making their lungs bleed, the government said.

The fungus was known to cause internal bleeding in animals, but this is the first link to human bleeding, said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Between 1993 and 1996, the government said 21 babies in Cleveland were sick with pulmonary hemosiderosis, which made them bleed in their lungs and cough up blood. Three died.

The CDC believes the children got sick from inhaling a toxin produced by the fungus. All the children lived in old, rundown homes that had water damage from plumbing or roof leaks or flooding. Fungus found in those homes included one called *Stachybotrys atra*, which has been linked to internal bleeding in animals that ate moldy grain.

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Pentagon police officers fire on unarmed teens

WASHINGTON - Seven Pentagon police officers fired "about 20 shots" at two teen-agers suspected of trying to steal a minivan from a Pentagon parking lot, the Defense Department said Thursday.

"The officers believed there was reason to be threatened," said spokesman Kenneth Bacon, explaining why the officers fired at the youths who later were found to be unarmed.

One suspect was wounded in the head, the other in the abdomen. Both 15 years old, the boys were listed in critical but stable condition Thursday.

Bacon would not say why the officers believed they were threatened. A Pentagon spokesman said Wednesday the police believed they heard a gunshot after the van stopped, and published reports said officers saw a threatening gesture from the two individuals remaining in the vehicle.

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Mystery writer's death is ruled a suicide

CHICAGO - The hanging death of writer Eugene Izzi has been ruled a suicide, despite friends' suggestions that the author found outside the window of his high-rise office building was killed.

Dr. Mitra Kalekar, deputy chief of the Cook County medical examiner's office, said that Izzi, 43, had been taking an antidepressant and was seeing a psychiatrist.

The writer's death had grown into a mystery resembling one of Izzi's plots, after friends and family insisted weeks ago that his death must have been foul play. They said Izzi had received threats from an Indiana militia group.

When his body was found Dec. 7, Izzi was wearing a bulletproof vest and carried a set of brass knuckles, \$481 in cash and a can of disabling chemical spray. Police also found threatening messages in a note and transcripts of threatening phone calls in his pockets. But Kalekar said a transcript of an unpublished novel found on the computer disks led her to conclude Izzi took his life.

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