



### *Top Stories*

#### **Former Chilean president Pinochet dies at 91**

Former Chilean Head of State, General Augusto Pinochet, 91, has died today in Santiago de Chile's Military Hospital at 2:15 p.m. (1715 GMT).

#### **Male models win The Amazing Race**

Two male models have won the tenth season of CBS' hit show The Amazing Race. The models were awarded USD\$1 million. Each recieved USD\$500,000.

### *Featured story*

#### **Discovery docks with international space station**

The United States Space Shuttle Discovery has docked with the International Space Station as of 5:12 p.m. ET .

### *Wikipedia Current Events*

- An Ethiopian court finds exiled former president Mengistu Haile Mariam guilty of genocide.
- Leading climatologists warn that most of the Arctic ice will have melted by 2040 and the North Pole will be open water.
- The President of the Palestine Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, orders security forces to deploy across the Gaza Strip in response to the murder of a Fatah security chief's three sons.
- Police in Ipswich, UK are hunting a possible serial killer after five prostitutes are found dead within the last ten days.

#### **Student commits suicide at school near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania U.S.A.**

Shane Halligan, a 16-year old student in 11th grade, is dead after he shot himself once with an AK-47 at Springfield High School school located north of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and police searched the grounds for possible explosives. Police say a bag carried by the shooter tested positive for traces of explosives.

Halligan walked into the school and began to fire shots from his rifle into a hallway ceiling then shot himself according to the Springfield Township Police Chief, Randall Hummel. No other injuries to students have been reported and all students were safely evacuated to a middle school not far from the location of the shooting.

"[He died of an] apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound," said Hummel. Authorities located a suicide letter in Halligan's pocket.

The school does not have metal detectors, but according to Roseanne Nyiri, the superintendant of the high school, security at the school will "now be reviewed." Security cameras are on school grounds and police say they have video of the boy firing the gun into the hallway ceiling.

"We're all very much aware that even metal detectors have not deterred students from bringing guns into schools in the past," added Hummel.

According to Michael Delaurentis, 18 a witness and senior attending the school, the shooter was a "nice kid" and Delaurentis's father, also named Michael, described the shooter's family as "wonderful."

"It just makes you a little in fear of the future, and not just at this school, any school, because I don't think any school is 100 percent secure," said Delaurentis's father.

"I was walking to my class. I just hear 'Get down.' I heard shots fired into the ceiling and I saw smoke," said Delaurentis.

Police do not know why the boy shot himself or why he did it at school, but this is not the first time a weapon was brought onto school grounds.

Back in September, at the same school, a student brought a gun to show-off to other fellow students causing the entire school to be locked down.

#### **International response to demolition of Hare Krishna property in Kazakhstan**

The American Embassy in Kazakhstan has condemned the destruction by Kazakh riot police of eleven homes within a Hare Krishna village. The destruction took place on November 21st in the central Asian republic of Kazakhstan and has been termed unjust treatment of the religious group.

"The forceful eviction of homeowners in freezing

temperatures and the destruction of their possessions contradicted principles of due process and fairness," the US Embassy said in a December 7 statement.

The Embassy further urged authorities to cease "further aggressive actions" and instead seek a peaceful conclusion to ongoing legal disputes with Hare Krishnas concerning the land.

Officials from the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in the U.S. had previously called for an international response to the November 21 demolition of 13 homes, and a range of groups have condemned it, including the British Parliament and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The US State Department's 2005 International Religious Freedom Report cited instances of "continued local government and police harassment" reported by Hare Krishnas in Kazakhstan. It reported that over 50% of the country's population is historically Muslim but the republic includes congregations of Russian Orthodox, Baptists and other Christian and religious groups.

Ironically the original demolition of the Hare Krishna homes occurred on the same day President Nursultan Nazarbayev was in London for a meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair seeking his support for Kazakhstan's bid to be the OSCE chairman-in-office in 2009. In London, some 10,000 members of Britain's Hindu community protested the demolition of the Hare Krishna property in Kazakhstan.

This was not the first time Kazakh authorities have attempted to confiscate the Hare Krishna community's land. In April 2006,

Kazakh authorities had tried to bulldoze the homes, but retreated in the presence of journalists.

In an official statement issued after the demolition event, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent federal agency, expressed concern about the treatment of Hare Krishnas.

"Recent steps against the Hare Krishnas and members of other religious communities indicate that the government of Kazakhstan, regrettably, is moving in the wrong direction with regard to respecting the universal right to freedom of religion or belief," said Felice D. Gaer, chair of the Commission.

### **Convicted sex offenders in US targeted for on-line identity registration**

Virginia is poised to become the first U.S. state to require convicted sex offenders to report e-mail addresses and on-line identities to the state's sex offender registry.

Attorney General Bob McDonnell said Monday that he supports new reporting requirements of a legislative proposal expected to be introduced by Senator Ryan McDougle (Republican Party-Hanover County) for consideration by the Virginia General Assembly when it convenes in January. The legislation would help on-line social networking communities popular among youth groups, such as MySpace and Facebook, prevent sex offenders from using their sites.

"This legislation is an important recognition that the Internet has become a community as real as any other neighborhood and is in need of similar safeguards," officials of MySpace said in response to the announcement.

Chief security officer Hemanshu Nigam of the 125-million-user MySpace site said the law would be "a landmark moment in the history of Internet safety."

A U.S. national blacklist will be used by MySpace to ban registered sex offenders. A database called "Sentinel Safe", under development by Sentinel Tech Holding Corp., will be used to check national and state records. Nigam said, "Sentinel Safe will allow us to aggregate all publicly available sex offender databases into a real-time searchable form making it easy to cross-reference and remove known registered sex offenders from the MySpace community."

### **Australian Labor Party leader urges supporters to "take a cold shower" over poll results**

The newly appointed leader of the Australian Labor Party, the main opposition party in Australia, Kevin Rudd has urged his supporters to "take a cold shower" after the release of a Newspoll showing a jump in support for the ALP.

The poll showed that the ALP's two-party preferred vote has risen to 55 percent compared to the incumbent government's 45 percent. Mr Rudd is also gaining support as potential Prime Minister with his figures in a "preferred prime minister" poll published by The Australian being only 3 points behind John Howard at 36 percent. In the prior Newspoll, Mr Rudd's predecessor Kim Beazley had only 25 percent support.

Speaking during his "listening" tour in the Queensland city of Townsville, Mr Rudd said that the poll indicated a protest vote against the Howard government and was not an endorsement for him or the ALP.

"I think what you're seeing in these polls today is really a protest vote against Mr Howard about becoming more and more out of touch," Mr Rudd said. "I don't think at this stage the process represents an entrenched vote for me, or for the Labor Party."

Mr Rudd conceded that he would need to "work hard over the next nine months to earn the electorate's respect". The next election is expected to be held in late-2007 and will be called by the Governor-General at the request of the Prime Minister.

Mr Howard said he expected for the ALP to lead polls for months as the new leader goes through a "honeymoon period". Speaking on Southern Cross Radio, Mr Howard said "I knew that Labor would get a bounce in the polls. That was going to happen and it doesn't surprise me in the least bit. When you have a new leader, the new leader has a honeymoon. I would expect Labor to be comfortably ahead in the polls for several months and it won't be until well into next year that we'll get a better fix on how the Government and the Opposition are going."

### **New Zealand ex-politician gives valedictory speech**

Doctor Don Brash has today given his valedictory speech in parliament on his departure from New Zealand politics.

Dr Brash had only been in politics for four and a half years and in that time he had risen to the ranks of leader of the National party and only participating in one election as leader, narrowly becoming the opposition.

Dr Brash described being a member of parliament (MP) as:

"...A great privilege." And he said that "...I've had a fantastic opportunity..." "...I've had a lot of fantastic opportunities..."

He admits that he took a while to get the hang of the processes of parliament and the proceedings. He gave two examples, one when he went tried to get a haircut but was asked by his secretary, Anne Small, if he had gotten permission from the whips. And the other when he was confused why his office was located so far apart from that of the leaders even though he was ranked third in the party.

Dr Brash left his position as the Governor of the Reserve Bank and entered politics because he was worried about the direction the country was heading in, "...or perhaps more accurately not getting to." Dr Brash said: "Keeping inflation under control was very important, but it was not enough to lift living standards and prevent the exodus of tens of thousands of Kiwis across the Tasman and across the world." Dr Brash then listed a number of reasons on why he left the reserve bank for politics including the problems of: the welfare system, the schooling system, the hospital system, safety and property issues and law equality, "And those were the things that desperately needed to be done."

Dr Brash said that over his political careers he had regrets that he "...never made it into government [and] I didn't change a single law."

"I made some mistakes," Dr Brash said. Those mistakes included: "...like remaining silent when the National Party caucus decided, under previous leadership, that, had National been in Government, we would've supported Australia,

the United Kingdom and the United States in the invasion of Iraq, even though I had serious misgivings about the wisdom of that course of action."

Dr Brash said: "When I was approached to stand in the 2002 election, one of the people I talked to was David Caygill. He encouraged me to stand. He warned me that National was likely to lose the 2002 election, but he said that even in Opposition I might have some influence on the national discussion, on the national debate. And so it has proved to be."

"I even take some satisfaction on issues where I demonstrably failed."

Dr Brash announced: "Madam Speaker, I want to thank all those who've helped me over the last four and a half years."

Dr Brash then went on to thanks all those involved with his campaign and his colleagues. "I'm not sure whether I want to thank members of the Press Gallery or not! Sometimes I think I do, but at other times I'm not so sure! But I certainly respect most members of the Gallery, and have developed a lasting friendship with several," he said. He also gave thanks to his family and friends, he said that without their help and support he wouldn't have "survived."

Dr Brash left parliament by saying: "Let me end by wishing my successor, John Key, and his team every success in promoting those policies that will be of lasting benefit to all New Zealanders."

### **Male models win The Amazing Race**

Two male models (known as Tyler Denk, 29, and James Branaman)

have won the tenth season of CBS' hit show *The Amazing Race*. The models were awarded USD\$1 million. Each received USD\$500,000. Both are recovering addicts and are friends in the modeling scene, they reconnected after going through rehab.

The models competed in a race around the world against people from around the United States. After arriving at France's Caen Airport, one member of each team was required to skydive. After the task was finished, teams had to design clothes at a shop in Paris.

When they were finished, teams had to get a flight to New York City, Rob and Kimberly told the manager that they had to win \$1 million, he gave them a seat. Tyler and James also got on the same flight.

When the teams arrived in New York there first stop was at the Daily News building. The last stop was at Manhattan's Astor Park where they got their final clue. Tyler and James quickly got into a taxi cab and arrived at St. Basil Academy in Garrison, New York, they ran to the finish line where the host Phil Keoghan with all eliminated twelve teams waited for the winner. Rob Diaz and Kimberly Chabolla were in second and Lynn Turk and Karlyn Harris were in last.

"For James and I, we've been through so much together as a friendship and in our lives that, first, to accomplish yet another thing — that's gravy on top of the mashed potatoes," said Tyler Denk. "Another gift of life."

"We live our lives with such gratitude already that this was just one of those experiences that we would only get through sobriety,"

James Branaman said.

The *Amazing Race* season 11 is expected to start next year.

### Today in History

1545 - Counter-Reformation: The Council of Trent, an ecumenical council convoked by Pope Paul III in response to the growth of Protestantism, opened in Trento, Italy.

1862 - American Civil War: Union forces under Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside were decisively defeated in the Battle of Fredericksburg.

1937 - Nanking Massacre: Japanese forces under General Iwane Matsui captured Nanjing, China and began weeks of looting, burning, raping and killing.

1981 - Prime Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law in Poland, suspended Solidarity and imprisoned many union leaders.

2003 - Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was found hiding in a spider hole during Operation Red Dawn and captured.

December 13 is Republic Day in Malta (1974); St. Lucia's Day in Sweden

### Quote of the Day

We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race. We all share the same basic values.  
~ Kofi Annan

### Word of the Day

- knock on wood; v
- (idiomatic) An action taken or referred to ward off some misfortune that is discussed but has not happened yet.

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