



### Top Stories

#### Ahmadinejad sends letter to George W. Bush

Iranian government spokesman Gholam-Hossein Elham said that Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has sent a letter directly to US president George W. Bush proposing "new solutions for getting out of international problems and the current fragile situation of the world".



#### Tasmanian miners rescued

The two miners who had been trapped almost one kilometer beneath the surface in Beaconsfield, Tasmania, in a collapsed gold mine for 14 days have now been rescued.



### Featured story

#### March against new French copyright law

Protesters marched denouncing the new copyright bill, known as DADVSI. Opponents to the bill contend that the broad civil and criminal penalties that it enacts in order to fight illegal online copying of copyrighted works will in fact have a chilling effect on a variety of unrelated developments, especially in free software..



### Wikipedia Current Events

- The United Kingdom's Minister for Equality, Catholic Ruth Kelly, refuses to deny homosexuality is a sin.
- The Mogadishu Islamic Courts and the U.S. proxy Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism declare a cease-fire after 57 people are killed, and 103 are wounded, mostly civilians, in the Somalian capital Mogadishu.
- The world's largest annual trade show for the computer and video games industry, the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E<sup>3</sup>), is held in Los Angeles.
- Two Australian miners are rescued after 14 days trapped in the Beaconsfield mine collapse.
- The Estonian parliament ratified the European constitution, making Estonia the fifteenth EU country to do so.

#### Seniors take last-chance exit test while judge prepares to strike it down

Fifty James Logan High School seniors are scheduled to take the California High School Exit Exam today and tomorrow, while an Oakland judge is preparing to strike down the law requiring would-be high school graduates to pass the high-stakes test.

Alameda County Superior Court Judge Robert Freedman said Monday that he will make his final decision today at 2 p.m. PDT on whether to issue an injunction

against the enforcement of the law requiring the exam's passage, citing "equal protection" concerns.

The ruling would affect about 47,000 California high school seniors, and dozens at James Logan High School, who have yet to pass the exam and would be barred from being graduated if they don't.

Last week, state schools Superintendent Jack O'Connell released new statistics showing that 46.768 seniors, or 10.7 percent of the class of 2006, still haven't passed the test.

Sixty-one percent of those students are poor, and 44 percent are English learners.

Of the 50 James Logan students taking the test today and tomorrow, 35 speak English as a second language. Eight are special education students. Of the five black students taking the test, four are special education students. Of the three white students taking the test, two are new to the district and the other is a special education student.

One, an asian immigrant, has a 3.67 grade-point-average.

O'Donnell wrote the law requiring the test when he was in the state legislature in 1999.

In a statement to the press, O'Donnell said "Recognizing that today's ruling is not final, I intend to do everything in my power to

ensure that at the end of the legal day we maintain the integrity of the high school exit exam," O'Connell said.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said "delaying the exam's implementation does a disservice to our children by depriving us of the best tool we have to make sure schools are performing as they should be."

He said he was "disappointed."

The attorney who sued the state Feb. 8, Arturo Gonzalez of the San Francisco law firm Morrison & Foerster, "felt strongly that the state should not deprive a student of a diploma unless the state can say that every student has been fairly and properly prepared for that test," he said. "There is overwhelming evidence that students throughout the state have not been taught the material on the test. And many students have been taught by teachers not credentialed in math and English."

The suit, was brought on behalf of lead plaintiff Liliana Valenzuela, a Richmond High senior who maintains a 3.84 grade-point average and is ranked 12th out of 413 in her class. Valenzuela has passed the math portion of the exam, but not the part on English, which she speaks as a second language.

Gonzalez contends the test is unfair, particularly to english learners, because students who have failed the test repeatedly are more likely to attend overcrowded schools with less-qualified teachers.

Judge Freedman said he was persuaded by that argument, but wanted to give the state a chance to change his opinion.

He asked lawyers on both sides to come prepared to talk about how conditions in the schools can be equalized.

Gonzalez urged seniors who still need to pass the test to keep going to classes and studying. "It is absolutely critical for students to understand that even if the order is made final, only those students who passed their classes will get a diploma," he said.

### **Australian "3 CDMA" customers have 90 days to move to 3G**

Hutchison, the company which operates the "3" mobile network in Australia has announced that it's 2G CDMA customers will have 90 days to migrate to their UMTS based 3G mobile telephone network or be without service. Hutchison said that customers who were under contract and wished to leave would be able to do so without penalty.

In February, Hutchison rebranded their CDMA service from Orange to 3 CDMA to coincide with its 3G network's company name. Hutchison has been offering their CDMA customers special deals to tempt them into moving to their 3G network and has so far migrated around 200,000 users voluntarily.

It is believed that the migration will cost AU\$145 million but will save the company around AU\$70 million per year by not having to operate two separate networks.

Kevin Russell, CEO of Hutchison said that customers are looking to get more from their mobile telephone and that customer demand for 3G services is strong. "Customer demand to move to 3G has been very strong," he said.

"It is clear that customers want more from their mobile service,"

"With a critical mass of our 2G customers now using our 3G service, the time is right to commence plans to close our 2G network" said Mr Russell.

Paul Budde, an independent telecommunications analyst said that some customers might not wish to migrate because of the inferiority of 3G handsets to those used on the CDMA network.

Another hurdle may be that UTM 3G networks have similar coverage to GSM network cells (base stations), which have around 35 Km range of coverage. CDMA by comparison has a 90 Km range.

Hutchison was the first telecommunications company to launch a 3G network in Australia, however it only operates in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, The Gold Coast, Adelaide, Perth and Canberra. If users go outside these areas they roam onto Telstra's 2G GSM network.

Telstra has announced plans to build a AU\$1 billion 3G network nationwide and will decommission its CDMA service around 2008. At present Telstra has entered into a sharing deal with Hutchison to use the "3" network while its network is rolled out.

Optus and Vodafone have also announced plans to build a 3G network in co-operation with each other nationwide.

### **Beckett: no plans for Iran**

Newly appointed British Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett, today confirmed that there are no plans for military action in Iran. Beckett has been speaking at a meeting in

New York to discuss international policy concerning Iran with her counterparts from France, Germany, Russia, China and the US.

Speaking on BBC Radio she said, "it's not anybody's intention to take the course of military action". Beckett refused, however, to rule out action as 'inconceivable' in the way that her predecessor Jack Straw had.

*"What people are concerned to do is to get Iran to recognise the strong view and the clear will of the international community that they should comply with the IEAE [International Atomic Energy Agency] board. You're inviting me to tread down the path of talking about military action - I'm not going to do that. Everybody expresses their views, their stance, in their own way. The way that I choose to express it is that it's not anybody's intention to take the course of military action. That I think is simple and straightforward and clear."*

Tony Blair, speaking in a monthly press conference, said that the change of Foreign Secretary would not change policy "one iota".

### **Third Australian miner laid to rest**

Today, the day that saw the rescue of trapped miners Brant Webb and Todd Russell in Beaconsfield, Tasmania, their colleague Larry Knight, 44 was farewelled at a funeral service in Launceston. Knight was killed when a small earthquake triggered a rockfall killing Knight and trapping Webb and Russell.

Mr. Knight was driving a telehandler which had a small cage attached to its lifting arm that Mr. Webb and Russell were

inside when the rockfall occurred. Mr. Knight had been a miner for the past five years.

Mr. Knight's funeral was held at St John's Anglican church in Launceston and was attended by over 700 mourners including Tasmanian Premier Paul Lennon, Beaconsfield Mine manager Matthew Gill and Todd Russell. It is unknown whether or not Brant Webb attended the service, but it has been reported that he told doctors he intended to.

Mourners were told that Mr. Knight was a laid-back man and fitted the expression "Happy as Larry Well". One of Knight's friends since high school and member of christian motorcycle club "The God's squad", Chris Brooks, said that Mr. Knight had become more content with life and focused on his children in recent years. Mr. Brooks said that Mr. Knight will be "missed deeply".

Mr. Knight's daughter, Lauren, who lives in Queensland read a letter she had written to her father for his birthday three years ago.

"You're a wonderful, caring, understanding and forgiving father, a long-standing friend, my solid rock and inspiration," she read.

According to Ms. Knight, her father kept the letter in the back of a clock for "safe keeping".

The God's squad played a major role in the funeral service. On the way to the cemetery, they provided an honour guard for the hearse, led by someone on Knight's own Harley Davidson.

**Bush announces food aid to Darfur, AU faces fund crisis**  
President George W Bush has

announced US emergency food shipments to Darfur, a province of Sudan. He has asked Congress to approve \$225m in aid. Sudan and the biggest rebel group signed a peace deal last Friday to end the three year old civil war, claiming more than 200,000 lives.

Condoleezza Rice, US secretary of state will address the UN Security Council to help speed up the deployment of UN peacekeepers to the Darfur region.

"She's going to request a resolution that will accelerate the deployment of UN peacekeepers into Darfur," President Bush said. "We're now working with the UN to identify countries that contribute those troops, so the peacekeeping effort will be robust."

The Government of Sudan had previously denied UN deployment. But, after the signing of the peace treaty, they have expressed their keenness on the deployment of UN peacekeepers.

**AU lacks fund**  
So far, there are around 7,000 African Union peacekeepers in Darfur, but they have failed to play any significant role to control the violence in the region. They are facing a serious shortage of funds and man-power. It had been two months since any soldier in the peacekeeping forces were paid, Nigerian envoy to the African Union confirmed yesterday.

Ambassador Sam Ibok, Nigerian envoy to the AU said, "There have been some cash flow problems, but that has been resolved now and troops will be paid in the next week or so. "

**Chad welcomes treaty**  
Chad, Sudan's neighbouring state, welcomed the signing of the

Darfur Peace Agreement between the Sudanese government and the main faction of the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement. Chad broke off diplomatic relations with Sudan on 14 April, a day after an attack on N'Djamena by rebel forces from Sudan. Also, Chad withdrew its delegation from African Union-brokered peace talks for Sudan's troubled western Darfur region citing Sudanese aggression. Currently, there are more than 200,000 Darfur refugees.

Foreign minister Ahmat Allami said, "Chad welcomes the signing of the Abuja peace deal on Darfur between the warring Sudanese parties after a long period of negotiations."

Libya announced today that it would resume effort to normalize bilateral relations between Chad and Sudan. A Libyan official said a tripartite summit would be held soon.

### **Australian Budget for 2006-2007 released**

The Australian Budget (Appropriation Bill No. 1) for 2006-2007 was released by the Australian Liberal Party-Australian National Party coalition government treasurer, Peter Costello (Higgins, Liberal).

Costello noted the resilience of the economy against natural disasters and terrorism, and through "disciplined and prudent management" the Government was able to "repay Labor's debt" of quoted 96 billion dollars of net debt and the Government was now "debt-free".

Costello noted that the Government budget was in "surplus for the ninth time" with a forecast surplus of 10.8 billion.

Costello announced "new investment in physical infrastructure and research infrastructure". The AusLink program is to receive an additional 2.3 billion, an "increase of nearly 20 percent", and noted that the Budget would allocate "800 million to accelerate duplication of...the Hume Highway", and "270 million dollars to RailTrack" in the development of the north-south rail corridor.

Costello noted the Government's commitment to the health of the Murray River system by a "new injection of 500 millions to the Murray-Darling basin commission" for a "range of capital works and improvements".

Costello also announced funding for health and medical research, noting an increase in funding for the NHMRC to a base funding of 700 million dollars a year, a "fivefold increase", sixty-five additional fellowships for researchers, and 235 million dollars for "physical infrastructure".

#### Tax reform

Costello announced in regard to tax reform a "new comprehensive tax reform plan" "another installment in income tax reform", a "major improvement in business tax" and a "plan to simplify and streamline superannuation" "most significant change in nearly 20 years"

Costello remarked that if one could reduce the tax burden, one "should aim to do so", and thus announced he would "reduce marginal tax rates" at the other end of income tax scale, and would increase tax-free thresholds.

On superannuation reform,

Costello proposed to "sweep away the current raft of complexity" and "increase retirement incomes". The core of the plan is the "proposal to exempt Australians age 60 or over from any tax" on particular superannuation arrangements.

#### Assistance to families

Costello announced changes in family assistance payments. The Family Tax Benefit payment is now available to those earning under AUD\$40,000. The limit on the number of subsidised after school hour places would be removed.

Furthermore, Costello noted that "an additional 1000 to be paid this financial year to over 1000 people eligible for the carer payment".

#### Defence

Costello announced that 10.7 billion dollars would be allocated to the Australian Defence Force, and announced 2.2 billion would be spent to acquire C-17 heavy lift aircraft.

On intelligence, Costello announced an increase ASIO staffing to 1800 and improvements to its technical capabilities, and a further 125 million to enable increased operations for ASIO.

Costello also said that 389 million dollars would be allocated over four years to combat illegal fishing.

#### Conclusions

Costello concluded by forecasting that Australia's economy would grow to a "trillion dollar economy" and that the Budget would "build opportunities for the future".

Processing of accompanying bills then begun by Parliament.

The Federal Australian Labor Party Opposition will have a right-of-reply tomorrow.

**Varanasi bombings suspect shot in Kashmir**

The main suspect in the 7th March bombings in Varanasi, was shot dead by Indian security forces in Handwara area of North Kashmir early this morning. Abu Zubair, an operative of the Pakistan-based terrorist group Harkat-ul-Jehadi-Islamia was gunned down in a joint operation involving Jammu & Kashmir State Police Special Task Force and the Indian Army.

" On specific information, Zubair was killed in a fierce encounter in Handwara " said Nitish Kumar, a police official, adding the man was considered to have played a leading role in the Varanasi attacks. Kumar said Zubair came from the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and was attempting to flee to Pakistan.

The twin blasts in the Sankatmochan temple and the Cantonment Railway station of the temple city of Varanasi on March 7, had left close to 20 dead and nearly 100 injured.

**Today in History**

1503 - Christopher Columbus and his crew became the first Europeans to visit the Cayman Islands.

1857 - The Sepoy Rebellion broke out in colonial India, threatening the rule of the British East India Company.

1869 - The First Transcontinental Railroad of North America was completed with a golden spike ceremony.

1924 - J. Edgar Hoover became director of the U.S. Bureau of Investigation.

1940 - Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain of the United Kingdom resigned and formally

recommended Winston Churchill as his successor. May 10 is Mother's Day in various countries, Constitution Day in the Federated States of Micronesia.

**Quote of the Day**

"The Truth lies not in the Yes and not in the No, but in the knowledge and the beginning from which the Yes and the No arise."  
~ Karl Barth

**Word of the Day**

replete; *adj*

Definition

1. Abounding in something.
2. Filled to the point of bursting.

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