



Top Stories

Legislative Assembly election results declared in 5 Indian States

State Assembly election results declared in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Pondicherry

Explosives stolen from a California mine, partially returned

Some of the nearly 700 sticks of dynamite that were stolen from Gold Mountain Mine Company in Big Bear City, California has been returned to a fire department in Riverside, California. At least 500 pounds of dynamite and a 30-pound bag of ammonium nitrate are still missing.

Featured story

Last American survivor of the Titanic disaster dies

Lilian Asplund, the last American survivor of the Titanic, has died in her home in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. She was 99 years old.

Wikipedia Current Events

- A grizzly-polar bear hybrid is found on Banks Island in Canada's Northwest Territories.
- Baidu Baike, a collaborative online encyclopedia, is launched in People's Republic of China by Baidu.com, modelled on Wikipedia but heavily self censored. Wikipedia is largely inaccessible without a proxy in China.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The United States National Security Agency is reported to operate "the largest database ever assembled in the world", containing a record of all calls (domestic and international) placed through AT&T, Verizon and BellSouth. No personal names, addresses or other personal information are being collected. Qwest Communications refused to provide customer records, citing the need for a warrant.
- Kentucky governor Ernie Fletcher (R) is indicted on three misdemeanor counts of conspiracy, official misconduct and political discrimination for hiring, promoting, demoting and firing state employees based on political loyalties.
- The New York Yankees lost to the Boston Red Sox, in a close 5 to 3 game, and so the Red Sox won the three-game series.

Explosives stolen from a California mine, partially returned

Some of the nearly 700 sticks of dynamite that were stolen from Gold Mountain Mine Company in Big Bear City, California on May 3, has been returned to a fire department in Riverside, California. An unknown individual placed two plastic tubs of the dynamite in front of the fire department, which prompted streets around the department to be shut down and an elementary school was put on lockdown while the bomb squad examined the

package. At least 10 houses near the scene had to be evacuated. The dynamite was then removed without incident.

At about 11:00 a.m. PDT today an individual passing by the fire department called 9-1-1 to report suspicious packages left in front of the department.

"There's still more missing, and we want the person who left the packages to come forward. Whoever turned this in did the right thing. This person turning in this dynamite [is] a very good sign that perhaps he or she is willing to cooperate," said ATF spokesman John D'Angelo.

This crime is "a very big deal when you consider the damage one stick of dynamite could cause. In excess of 500 pounds of explosives — that's a large amount," added D'Angelo.

At least 500 pound of explosives and at least 30 pounds of ammonium nitrate are still missing and authorities are still offering a reward of \$25,000 for any information leading to an arrest and conviction.

Authorities do not believe the theft is related to terrorism, but in 1995, Timothy McVeigh used ammonium nitrate to blow up the Oklahoma City Building which killed 168 people.

AEK Athens fans damage ferry-boat in Greece

AEK Athens fans ruined and

plundered the ferry "Ierapetra", during the route from Heraklio, Crete, to the port of Rafina in Attica. More specifically, about 700 AEK supporters went on board after the end of the Greek soccer cup final, between Olympiacos and AEK which took place in Crete. The victory of Olympiacos over AEK, with a 3-0 score, caused irritation within the supporters of AEK which caused damages in both the stadium and the ship.

The Prosecutor ordered a preliminary inquiry into the incidents that took place onboard Ierapetra. During the trip, a group of youths started breaking everything for no apparent reason. They caused extensive damages to the passenger lounges and the bars, and a crewmember was injured, while they responded to the crew's pleas with cussing. A Greek police officer was injured in the leg by a flare, while a crewmember was also injured. As the owner company of the ship, Dane Sea Line of Piraeus, estimates the damages to the ship come to 150,000 euro. The Greek Media has accused the administration of Greek police and the Ministers of Public Order and Shipping of not preventing the events.

Australian Parliament hears reply to Budget

The Australian House of Representatives heard the traditional right-of-reply to the Budget released May 9, from the Australian Labor Party, led by Kim Beazley (Labor, Brand), plus Budget replies from minor parties in the Australian Senate.

While the Budget is politically popular, having as one of its main features significant tax reform, Beazley focused on the omissions in the Budget, such as the failure

to address a skills shortage.

Opposition reply

Beazley opened by stating that "This budget fails middle Australia and mortgages our kids' future", and continued by stating that "after ten long years, they deserve a break" from the Howard Government.

Beazley introduced the key idea of his Budget reply by speaking directly to middle Australia, "Tonight I seek a binding agreement between us... Australia is counting on you to do the next round of heavy lifting... relying on you to drive a new wave of economic prosperity... under a Beazley labor government, when you put in, you get back".

Beazley contrasted that idea by criticising the Treasurer, saying that after five budgets without a decent tax break, which was affected already by "soaring petrol prices", likening him to a poker machine with a payout of only "ten bucks".

Beazley's commented solicited applause from the galleries, and continued sporadically through his reply, which focused on five points: new childcare centres at school, giving "parents the incentive to work without killing family life", and announced 200 million dollars for new childcare centres, placed "where childcare shortages mean they're needed most". students shouldn't have to pay for training in trades, and pledged to "get rid of tafe fees for traditional trades", to "train Australians first, train Australians now". Beazley announced payments of "AUD\$800 per year for up to four years to apprentices", "AUD\$1200 per year for up to two years for childcare workers", and a payment of

AUD\$2000 to students on the completion of their trade. no unfair dismissals. Beazley reiterated his plan to "tear up this government's extreme industrial relations laws" and to put in place a new system "to protect working Australians", "protecting both sides", and "resolving claims" no foreign apprentices: "three hundred thousand Australians have been turned away from tafe" and Beazley would "abolish foreign apprenticeship visas" real broadband: Beazley announced under a Labor government, he would "invest in a joint venture with telecommunications companies to build a super-fast computer network" and bring Australia's networking up to world standards.

Beazley also announced the founding of an independent expert body on infrastructure, and a "Building Australia" fund to invest in infrastructure.

In his conclusion, he stated his "unshakable faith in the Australian people", and criticised the Government's failure to "deal with climate change now", the Government's mishandling of foreign debt, rising up to "half a trillion dollars" -- Beazley likened Costello to Wile. E. Coyote, with an anvil about to drop on his head.

Beazley welcomed the tax cuts, but noted the influence of rising oil prices and student debt. Beazley also noted that he would not have spent the money on the Iraq war and would not have paid money to Saddam's regime, referring to the AWB scandal.

Beazley's speech ended in further applause.

Minor parties

Australian Democrats

Senator Lyn Allison (Australian Democrats, Victoria), the Leader of the Democrats, was the first to speak in the Senate on the Budget.

Allison stated that the Budget was developed through the eyes of "political strategists" and was developed with "little interest in the social, economic, and environmental mess left behind".

Allison criticised the Government, stating that "manufacturing can't compete against cheap imports", criticised size of the trade deficit and foreign debt, noted the lack of the Budget to address high petrol prices, noted that bankruptcies are at their highest, and high household debt, saying that "you won't read about them in this budget".

Allison argued that "surplus should have been invested in the future", to address climate change, student debt which was "burdening generations with personal debt", and strongly criticised the Government in regard to its failure to fund education, saying it was "an act of vandalism".

Allison said that the Budget was a Budget "for buying votes, not for the long-term future of the nation".

Allison continued to describe how the Government had lost its environmental credentials, stating that the "environment in much better hands when the Democrats held the balance of power".

Allison responded to the Budget allowances for transport infrastructure, saying that the Budget "ignoring public transport" and that freeway funding was not

sustainable.

Allison argued that the income tax cuts introduced in the Budget were "rewarding those on the highest incomes the most". In response to the mental health provisions in the Budget, she stated that more must be done on mental health, smoking, obesity related disease, and said that the Treasurer's "generosity was not extended to the PBS".

She noted how the Government was "cynically failing indigenous Australians", describing a Government scheme of an assistance payment to indigenous Australians which was based on attendance at schools, and that the Government had revised the total amount of payment downward based on the expectations that indigenous Australians will not attend schools.

Ellison concluded by stating that "The Democrats are committed to what we know to be the priorities for a sustainable future for all Australians, well beyond a Costello next decade and most definitely beyond the next election."

Australian Greens

Senator Christine Milne (Tasmania, Australian Greens) presented the Australian Greens budget reply speech.

She begun by describing how the Howard Government had said they had "delivered rivers of gold and manna from heaven", and that the Budget message was such that "people were prompted to rejoice and be glad to spend, spend, spend".

Milne went on to say that Australia had become "two nations...one that is fixated on the present and cannot see what the problem is

and the other that can see the problem and the huge risks for our children, grandchildren and future generations."

Milne noted that the capacity of the environment to provide and fuel economic growth by traditional means "is in doubt". She went on to criticise the squandering of a "a minerals boom which has delivered corporate profits to the Treasury", stating that the money should have been spent on "nation-building".

Milne went on to criticise Australia's interest in nuclear power and criticised Australia's export of uranium, and noted the impact of salinity and climate change, and called for the establishment of a "climate change disaster fund".

Milne responded to the AusLink funding proposed by the Government Budget, by also criticising the lack of development in public transport. Milne also echoed Ellison's criticism of the Government's treatment of its indigenous population, stating "If we cannot address Aboriginal disadvantage in an economic boom time, when can we address it?"

Milne concluded by stating "the Greens' vision for Australia and the values we hold mean we would not squander the surplus on a spending spree. We do not support the tax cuts or superannuation windfall for high-income earners." and reiterated the points of view that the Greens felt needed addressing.

Family First

Stephen Fielding (South Australia, Family First Party) was the final Senator to speak on the Budget in the Senate.

He criticised the lack of support for low and middle income earners, stating "The government claims this is a budget for families, but the big winners are the high-income earners", and reiterated his earlier calls for reduction in fuel price by "10c a litre".

Fielding noted that Family First supported the fact that more families would receive benefits, but called for a greater increase in the benefit rather than "the child-care rebate, which only goes to parents of children attending formal child care".

Fielding concluded by noting that "Families do benefit from this budget and will welcome it. But, for the average Australian family, this budget will not be the bonanza the government would like us all to believe it is."

Marxists retain West Bengal, regain Kerala

In recent assembly elections in 5 states of India, the results are declared today.

Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led United Front won 235 out of the total 294 assembly seats in West Bengal. West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has scored a thumping victory in Jadavpur, winning by a margin of over 58,000 votes.

"It is our victory. All credit goes to the people," Bhattacharjee told reporters.

Veteran CPI(M) leader and previous Chief Minister Jyoti Basu hailed the ruling Left Front's "march to power" in West Bengal for the seventh successive term as "unprecedented in parliamentary history". Basu was Chief Minister of West Bengal from 1977 to

2000.

Tamil Nadu is likely to have its first coalition government headed by DMK leader M Karunanidhi after Chief Minister Jayalalithaa is voted out of power. The DMK-led front won in 162 out of 230 assembly seats in Tamil Nadu. And for the fifth time, DMK chief M Karunanidhi is all set to become the chief minister of the state.

In Kerala, The Left Democratic Front is victorious in 98 seats out of 140 constituencies. The UDF, which came to power last time with 99 seats, could only manage only 41 seats.

Assam is heading for a hung assembly, whereas in Pondicherry, a Union Territory of India, Indian National Congress-led Front won 20 of 30 seats.

Legislative Assembly election results declared in 5 Indian States

The ruling Left-Front Party in the Indian state of West Bengal retained power in the state after winning 204 out of 294 State Legislative Assembly seats. The Left-Front is currently in the lead in 26 other constituencies where counting is in progress - an indication that the party may win 230 seats.

In Tamil Nadu, the Democratic Progressive Alliance (DPA) led by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) has won 156 seats and is expected to win 160 by the time the counting process is complete. The DPA will then have a clear majority over it's closest rival, an alliance led by the ADMK, which has won only 64 seats out of 234 Assembly seats.

The Left Democratic Front has won 95 out of the 140 seats in the

Kerala State Legislative Assembly, beating it's rival the UDF by 42 seats, thereby securing the majority.

In Assam, the Indian National Congress has won 37 seats in the 126 seat Assembly, and is expected to end with a tally of 60 seats by the end of the day, thereby beating the AGP, which has managed to get 38 seats. This implies, however, that the Congress has not achieved the majority required (64 seats out of 126 is the minimum) to form the State Government. The Congress will now have to form a coalition with other parties to get the required number of seats.

The DPA has won 21 out of 30 seats in the Legislative Assembly of the Union Territory of Pondicherry, thereby securing a majority over the ADMK, which managed to get only 6 seats.

Fight Continues, 100 dead in Somalia

Mogadishu, capital of Somalia is witnessing a heavy fighting over the past four days. Almost 100 people have died and 200 have been wounded in the clashes, as health officials said yesterday. The battle between the Islamic Court Union and the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism has centered on the northern neighborhood of Sii-Sii. Many of the casualties are civilians caught in the crossfire. There was a temporary truce, but that did not last long.

Islamic militia leader Sheikh Sharif Ahmed called a unilateral truce on Tuesday in response to appeals from those affected by the violence. But his opponents said the truce was called because of a lack of ammunition. The warlords' alliance spokesman Hussein Gutale

Rageh said they would only accept the ceasefire if their rivals withdrew from territory they have occupied during the fighting.

The fighting started late on Sunday, when an alliance of warlords attacked the vehicle of a group allied to the Islamic courts, according to eyewitnesses.

This is the second round of the city's most serious fighting in a decade. In March 2006, clashes between the two sides killed at least 90 people.

The United Nations has appealed to both sides to halt the clashes. UN special representative for Somalia, Francois Lonseny Fall, appealed today for the rival militias to end the hostilities, saying they had created fear and chaos for civilians caught in the crossfire.

" The indiscriminate use of heavy machine guns, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and artillery in and between urban areas is unacceptable," said Francois Fall.

Somalia has not had an effective national authority for 15 years after the ousting of longtime dictator President Siad Barre in 1991. A U.N.-backed transitional government has based itself in the central city of Baidoa, but has so far failed to assert itself elsewhere.

Islamic fundamentalists have portrayed themselves as an alternative capable of bringing order and peace, but they have not hesitated to use force and have allegedly linked up with al-Qaeda terrorists. The Islamic courts have restored order to some parts of the city by providing justice under Sharia - Islamic law. The courts say the warlords

alliance is a pawn of the United States.

Last week, Somalia President Abdullahi Yusuf accused the US of funding the coalition of warlords. The US government says it does support efforts to restore stability to Somalia but refuses to give details on who it backs and how. The alliance of warlords recently created the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism. It has an anti-terror task force based in nearby Djibouti. It accuses the Islamic courts of sheltering foreign al-Qaeda leaders.

ICANN rejects .xxx top-level domain name proposal

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) today rejected the creation of a .XXX top-level domain name in a 9-to-5 vote. The .XXX domain would have been created for use by websites that offered pornography. Supporters of the proposal, which would have created a new sponsored top-level domain (sTLD), say that it would make it easier to recognise and filter pornographic websites. Opponents suggested that the domain wouldn't be used by all sites, as registration would be voluntary, and that it would legitimise pornography.

Current sponsored top level domains include .coop, used by cooperative associations, .museum for museums, and .travel for travel agents, airlines, and other travel-related sites. .post, for postal services, is also currently under consideration.

Today in History

1551 - National University of San Marcos, the oldest university in South America, was founded in Lima, Peru.

1881 - Tunisia became a French protectorate.

1885 - North-West Rebellion: Louis Riel and the Métis rebels were decisively defeated in the Battle of Batoche by Canadian forces under Major-General Frederick Middleton.

1926 - A general strike by the trade unions in the United Kingdom ended after nine days.

1958 - A formal agreement on the North American Air Defense Command was signed.

May 12 is Buddha's Birthday in Thailand and Vietnam (2006), International Nurses Day

Quote of the Day

"Duty, Honor, Country — those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be.

They are your rallying point to build courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope becomes forlorn."

~ Douglas MacArthur

Word of the Day

eminently; *adv*

Definition

1. In an eminent manner; prominently or loftily.
2. To a great extent; highly; very.

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