

NEWS

National and world news in brief

By Patrick Webster
assistant managing editor
paw175@psu.edu

O'Brien to visit Finland

NEW YORK: When Conan O'Brien first noticed that he looked exactly like the president of Finland, he probably didn't expect it to turn into a major news event with international political consequences. Instead, his talk show has become a major international news event.

Stemming from jokes that his show was popular in Finland only because he closely resembled their president, Tarja Halonen, O'Brien soon started making regular segments, jokingly comparing the two and highlighting the wonders of the Finnish countryside.

"Why do I support Tarja Halonen? Because she's got the total package: a dynamic personality, a quick mind, and most importantly: my good looks," O'Brien told the Associated Press in an interview last month.

When the time came for Halonen's re-election campaign, O'Brien began airing fake commercials endorsing Halonen in Finnish during segments of his show, which airs three days later in Finland. In an odd twist of fate, his timing could probably not have been any better, as the resulting publicity and popularity of the show may have been what boosted Halonen to a close victory in the polls. Now all that remains is a runoff election against her main opponent and O'Brien may have made an impact on international politics by installing his first national leader based on popularity alone.

"Once I conquer Finland, I'll head south through the Baltics and on to Belarus," O'Brien joked. "Soon, all the world will find me mildly amusing."

O'Brien left for Finland on Thursday and will be taping several segments showing that they are not in fact the same person, and also doing several brief interviews. He said that he looks forward to meeting his double in person.

The airing of O'Brien's late-night talk show will resume on Feb. 28, after network NBC completes its coverage of the 2006 Winter Olympic Games.

UN Security Council received Iran notification

UNITED NATIONS: The Security Council of the United Nations received on Tuesday the formal notification from the General Assembly that action should be taken against the continuance of Iranian nuclear research.

While Iran continues to claim that research is only being done to further national goals of reliable nuclear power, a peaceful endeavor, several nations including the United States, France and Germany have united in an effort to express concern over possible nuclear weapons research.

Iran broke UN seals on several storage sites and nuclear research items last month in what it said was a legal effort to improve nuclear power production. Now that the issue has been raised in the UN, that matter is for the Security Council to decide.

"The process has begun," said a U.S. spokesman for the UN.



Source: CNN.com, Yahoo! News

Former FEMA Chief Brown threatens to talk

WASHINGTON: The former chief of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Michael Brown, has threatened to testify openly before Congress about communications with the White House regarding Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent relief disaster unless President Bush provides him with legal defense and support.

Brown made his statements in a written letter after the Bush Administration refused to release documents to the special congressional commission regarding Bush's role and directives regarding the federal disaster relief effort, claiming national security issues and executive privilege protected Bush from having to release them. The documents have been legally summoned by the commission.

"Unless there is specific direction otherwise from the president, including an assurance the president will provide a legal defense to Mr. Brown if he refuses to testify as to these matters, Mr. Brown will testify if asked about particular communications," Brown's lawyer, Andrew W. Lester wrote. "Brown's desire is that all facts be made public."

Sen. Joe Lieberman said that now that Brown is no longer an advisor to the President, there is nothing that can legally be done to prevent him from testifying against the administration.

"I see no basis for him to refuse to answer any of our questions, and I hope the White House will not try to direct him not to answer our questions," Lieberman said. "He now has to answer every question the committee puts to him truthfully."

White House and administration officials have been steadily refusing to testify or appear at the official congressional investigation, and have declined to answer even seemingly innocent questions about meeting times and topics discussed by certain government officials.

Brown gave the White House a deadline of Wednesday at noon for a response. His lawyers said that that deadline came and went without any response from the administration.

Lester said that his client is now "between a rock and a hard place," and that, lacking any support from the Bush Administration, "Mr. Brown is going to testify before Congress. If he receives no guidance to the contrary, we'll do as any citizen should do - and that is to answer all questions fully, completely and accurately."

Bird flu spreading rapidly in Africa

ABUJA, Nigeria: World Health Organization officials are concerned about the rapid spread of the avian flu through Africa, which is spreading much faster than anticipated.

The bird flu has proven resistant to all forms of containment as it spread around the world and threatens a possible deadly mutation to a form that makes it easily transmittable between humans.

"The federal government is doing everything to contain the disease within the three centers that have been located," said Tope Ajakaiye, a spokesman for the Nigerian government.

"We have been saying for a while that were the disease to get to Africa, it's a continent where most countries have very weak veterinary infrastructure," Alex Thiermann, special adviser to the director general of the World Health Organization told the Cable News Network in a recent interview. "And we know from our experience in Eastern Europe and in Southeast Asia that the rapidity to which the disease can be fought, and how quickly we can eliminate it ... is very directly related to the quality of the veterinary infrastructures."

Attempts to stop the spread of the avian flu have so far led to the slaughter of over 140 million birds worldwide, as health officials continue to search for an effective method of containment.

Dobbins stair "case" solved

By Keith Richard Golembiewski
staff writer
krg5023@psu.edu

A staircase is under construction between Dobbins and the Behrend Apartments that will allow students from the top of campus to access Dobbins. New walkways are under construction as well. The new paths will support increased traffic on campus. Academic facilities on the Behrend campus will nearly double with the addition of the REDC. This will result in more students that will be on the upper side of campus, giving students the opportunity to stop by Dobbins for lunch, instead of Brunos. Al Vogan, the Assistant Director of Food Services explains, "More kids will be up here, more going to the REDC or Junker Center. A lot more traffic during lunchtime will increase the chances of a student stopping through."

Since the center of campus is moving, Dobbins is expecting more traffic, and to accommodate this, Dobbins will be remodeled. The project is estimated at a little over \$6 million. Because the lower level of Dobbins is mainly storage, it will be transformed.

This will utilize all of the unused space to expand Dobbins. "The entrance on the north side of the building you will come in and go up an elevator to the lower level and be able to walk through the building. The lower level will have IT support for computers... also, there is going to be a conference room which can seat about a dozen people and a

meeting room which will seat up to fifty to seventy-five people," said Vogan. The dining area will receive a makeover, which includes new bathrooms and food stations. The wall in the dining room by the current apartment-side entrance will be expanded south toward the stairs. This will accommodate the bathrooms and food areas.

Two new food stations will be opened, one similar to Panera Bread and the other will offer coffee. The renovations will speed up service and offer students more selection.

"We are going to reconfigure in the renovation so that we have five smaller woks which we can be cooking for three to five people at the same time," explained Vogan. The salad bar will be moved from the center of the serving area and the outside of the serving area, freeing up space to ease the flow of traffic.

When renovations took place eight years ago, the back of the building was not updated, so there is equipment that is constantly breaking down. This causes high expenses because no parts are available, and custom fabricated parts are needed.

Dobbins is expecting some new equipment to help with the higher demands. The project is on an indefinite hold because of another project Penn State is working on. The new children's hospital in Harrisburg is installing updates. All major Penn State projects are on hold until the hospital is completed.



Mike Sharkey/THE BEHREND BEACON

The new stairwell behind Dobbins is designed to thin out high traffic areas by offering a different route to classes.

Classifieds

"I do not serve what you worship; nor do you serve what I worship. You have your own religion and I have mine."

~The Koran

Janet Neff Sample Center
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