

NEWS

National and world news in brief

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American journalist released in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq: American journalist Jill Carroll, held hostage by Iraqi insurgent forces since Jan. 7, was released on Thursday by her captors.

Carroll claimed that she was treated "very well" for the entirety of her time in captivity. "They never said they would hit me. They never threatened me in any way," she said in a TV interview after her release. "They allowed me once to see TV. They also allowed me once to read the paper, but it wasn't enough to know what's going on in the outside world. I was allowed to move in a small space."

Carroll said that Thursday began as any other day in captivity, until one of her captors entered the room and told her that she would be released. They then loaded her into a vehicle that took her to the front office of the Iraqi Islamic Party, a Sunni political group working with the new Iraqi government. She was left with a note that instructed whoever was there to help her. After she was identified, officials at the office moved her deeper in the party compound for protection and made a phone available to her so she could call first the Washington Post, then the United States embassy in Iraq.

Coworker Natasha Tynes was confident that Carroll would be able to pick up her life where she left off.

"Finally, our prayers have been answered," Tynes said. "The fact that she's released now is the best news, and I know that it might be hard for her now after what she went through, but with her personality - and she's someone who's easygoing and someone who can adapt to changes - I'm sure she can get over what happened to her, and I'm sure she can lead a very normal and happy life." Carroll was the last American journalist being held hostage in Iraq.

Powerful cyclone lands on Australian coast

PERTH, Australia: An enormous Category-4 tropical cyclone with winds reaching 155 miles per hour slammed into the northwest Australian coast Thursday, causing the evacuation of thousands and disrupting regional iron and oil shipping.

The storm has caused work to stop at several oil fields, rigs and iron ore shipping facilities, which is putting a big dent in Australia's economy.

Of more concern to local residents, however, is the probable damage to their homes and businesses. Many Australians in the region have spent the past week boarding up and preparing their homes for the extremely powerful storm heading their way. Several coastal areas were completely evacuated due to fears that the storm would produce several feet of storm surge, threatening to wipe out coastal communities.

The cyclone, however, has missed making a direct hit on several nearby towns and shipping centers.



Source: CNN.com, Yahoo! News

More than a quarter of schools fail NCLB standards, reports show

WASHINGTON: Department of Education reports show that 27 percent of all schools in America failed to make adequate improvements according to the No Child Left Behind Act, up from 26 percent in 2004.

Spokesmen for the Department of Education insist that there is no cause for alarm with the latest numbers.

"This is just one piece of data we look at," said Chad Colby, a spokesman for the Department of Education said Wednesday. "This isn't a trend indicator in proficiency."

Officials also claim that it is difficult to determine the level of success for the whole program because each state uses its own tests and standards to determine and define what levels of proficiency are acceptable.

"Each state has its own standards; each state has its own tests; each state has its own definition of what it means to be proficient," said Joel Packer, a representative of the National Education Association.

Another issue that concerns some members of the Department of Education is that some states are gradually making their tests easier to cope with NCLB guidelines, which in many cases do not differentiate between advanced students and those with learning disabilities or those living in poverty. The overall result is a steady lowering of education standards around the country.

Ross Wiener, who is a policy director at the Education Trust, a Washington-based education research group, said that the basic reasons behind some schools doing poorly in the first place have not been addressed at all, and the NCLB methods of punishing those schools makes it worse by cutting funding. Almost all of the lowest-rated schools in the country are in poverty-stricken areas that pull in little money from property and other taxes, and further cuts in federal subsidies as punishment for not attaining arbitrary goals only exacerbates the problem.

"We have not taken a lot of steps that could dramatically improve student achievement," Wiener said.

French students protest new labor bill

PARIS, France: Thousands of French students and youth have taken to the streets last week to protest a new bill before parliament that would change the labor laws.

The new law, proposed by French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin "to help younger workers get jobs," would make it legal for businesses to fire anyone under 26 years old for any reason or no reason for the entire two first years of their employment with a company.

Many younger workers and labor unions disagree, fearing that instead business will turn that population into a source of cheap labor to be fired and rehired every two years to minimize expenses and pay for experience.

The Constitutional Court, the highest court in France, decided Thursday that the law does not illegally discriminate against workers of a certain age and agreed with the Prime minister that it would actually help young workers, leading to yet another round of student protests.

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Commencement

Some students want to bring more than eight friends and family members to graduation this Spring at The Tullio Arena, but will not be able to. While it seems that eight is a lot for one person. Simon points out that "LECOM had their graduation ceremony there, and they filled the house." LECOM had a graduation class roughly one-third the size of Behrend's this year, which is roughly 400. The move to a larger venue

is also good for the school, according to Simon. "Needing somewhere larger is a good thing. It's breaking tradition to expand, which is good for the school,

it means we're successful."

A key difference this year is the reception area, which will be in the Tullio Arena as well. Half of the floor will be split among the graduating class and the reception tables. The only exception is the business class, which has its reception in the second floor boxes, possibly due to the large number of participants. The venue allows for a much larger stage as well. Previously, the stage in the Junker Center was 10 feet by 40 feet. This year it has been drastically increased to 28 feet by 48 feet and is the standard stage the Tullio Arena uses to host events. The arena will also be much more decorated than previous ceremonies, considering the large allotment for space.

The Commencement Speaker this year is Behrend professor Dr. Charles Yeung. Dr. Yeung is a professor in the engineering department. This is another reason Seraina Naef would like two ceremonies. "Two days would allow two speakers, which at least gives the chance to hear from a professor you know."

Commencement is scheduled for Saturday, May 13 at noon. Doors open at 11:15 a.m. The Tullio Arena is located at 809 French St. and is part of the Civic Centre Complex. Luckily the ceremony, being held on a Saturday, means all street parking meters will be inactive, which allows for more parking. This combined with the 8th Street. Parking ramps and Civic Center Parking should allow for enough space for all the families and students.

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Police and Safety

3/24/2006

Resident had her vehicle vandalized while parked in the South Apartment Lot.

3/25/2006

Resident had vehicle vandalized overnight while parked in Ohio Hall Lot. Also found two other vehicles with same vandalism.

3/28/2006

Residents in Tiffany Hall stated someone threw something at their window and broke it.

3/28/2006

Complainant reported that a rock had been thrown at his Toyota Celica and Ford Escape between 1330 hours and 1400 hours today as they sat in Niagara Hall Lot.

Classifieds

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

Mohandas Gandhi, civil rights leader (1869-1948)

Janct Nctf Sample Center
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Dear Students and Faculty Members,

For the past three years, the Student Government Organization (SGA) has been my life. It has been my heart, soul and passion. I never knew how fast three years could pass by, as they did here at Penn State Behrend. I remember the first time that I came here and visited, the first thing that drew me to this place was the people, everyone was so warm and compassionate, and that's how I knew I wanted to be here. I emailed the SGA president at that time and asked how I could be involved, and shortly thereafter I was elected as a SGA freshman senator, and that's how my voyage began with this organization. I wanted to be involved with SGA because I wanted to make a difference, in fact that is one of the same primary reasons why I became an RA. Some people thought that being both involved in SGA and an RA was conflicting; however, to me they both had the same purpose to help others and to get others involved. Over the past three years, I have put student activities first and academics second. While it should have been the other way around, I knew that being involved in student activities would make me a more developed person and would help prepare me for my future. There were several times that I sacrificed my health, academics and friends to serve the students and the college; however, I do not regret it one bit, because it made me a stronger, more open and confident person.

Over the past couple of weeks, it has been quite a journey. I knew before entering the race that there would be a possibility that I may not be here next year; however, I felt that the strength of an organization is when there is competition, so after talking to several different people in my life who I admire, I was told that unless I had a definite opportunity in my hand, that I should not let go of this organization. Thus, two hours before petitions were due, I made my decision to run. After that, there were several different controversies that surrounded my ticket. Before I go any further, I need to thank my running mate Ross Zambanini for showing patience and perseverance during these times. I am sure you will be successful in all that you do; congratulations on your new venture. Secondly, I must thank from the bottom of my heart those who supported us within and outside of SGA. Your comments and courage kept our ticket going. Thank you for fighting for what you thought was right. I truly appreciate all of your words of wisdom and inspiration; those words will remain with us forever. Honestly, I must say that I am happy that there was controversy in SGA Senate on both sides. It showed that the Senate was passionate about student issues and that they care about being involved. It showed that we are doing our organization justice.

The Thursday after the debate, I received a letter notifying me that I was accepted in to one of the best programs that I was interested in pursuing. Unfortunately, this is not a program that I would be able to defer. This is and in fact was one of the hardest decisions I have ever had to make in my life; one was connected to what had brought me this far, and the other was choosing an option that would make me successful in life. I was unaware of what I should do. I contemplated the issue and asked many of those who are very close to me and usually do advise me on such hard issues, and they told me that I had a once in a lifetime opportunity for graduate school, and that I should leave. I was still uncertain if I was making the right choice. However, after discussing this with my running mate and thinking this through very carefully, I decided that it is my time to leave Penn State Behrend. I have tried giving Penn State Behrend my all; however, it is time that I now start focusing on my academic career. While I would love to stay at Behrend forever and be involved with the Student Government, being Student Government President is not a job I can have for a lifetime. However, the experience that I had being involved in the Student Government along with being Vice-President has taught me skills that I will take and learn from for a lifetime. I am proud to say that my Penn State Behrend experience and education has taken me this far and has gotten me the opportunity that I have today.

I am confident that SGA will be fine next year, and that the next leaders will fight for the students as stated in their platform. They both possess leadership qualities, and I am confident that with the help of returning members and of new ideas that the students will present, SGA will be strong next year.

It is with this in mind, that I Deepti Soni with my running mate Ross Zambanini are withdrawing from the 2006-2007 SGA Presidential/Vice Presidential race.

Sincerely,
Deepti Soni