

FREE

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO
4 6 17 29 31
Meganumber: 8
Jackpot: \$33 Million

FANTASY 5
10 15 18 19 26

DAILY 3
Daytime: 4 1 3
Evening: 6 3 4

DAILY DERBY
1st: 07 Eureka!
2nd: 05 California Classic
3rd: 03 Hot Shot

RACE TIME: 1:42.60

NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

According to Transportation Security Administration officials, New Jersey psychiatrist Esha Khoshnu, in a stopover in Phoenix en route to a professional meeting in San Diego in February, got "mouthy and snippy" with Mesa Airlines agents who wanted to examine her luggage, reportedly saying, "(Even if) I had a bomb, you wouldn't find it." Agents, following TSA protocol, detained her, causing her to miss her flight, and her luggage, loaded onto another flight, was eventually detonated on the tarmac at Lindbergh Field in San Diego.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 118th day of 2005. There are 247 days left in the year.

On April 28, 1945, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci, were executed by Italian partisans as they attempted to flee the country.

In 1967, heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali refused to be inducted into the Army, the same day Gen. William C. Westmoreland told Congress the U.S. "would prevail in Vietnam."

In 1974, a federal jury in New York acquitted former Attorney General John Mitchell and former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans of charges in connection with a secret \$200,000 contribution to President Nixon's re-election campaign from financier Robert Vesco.

THOUGHT OF THE DAY

"The world does not require so much to be informed as reminded."

HANNAH MORE

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Police crack open opium ring

SM man dubbed as 'boss of bosses' in international ring

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN LA — Authorities on Wednesday arrested a Santa Monica man who they say was the head boss of an international opium ring which brought millions of dollars worth of drugs to Los Angeles.

Mehrdad Lari, 47, was arrested at his home on the 300 block of 11th Street shortly after 6 a.m. for

possession with intent to distribute opium. His wife, Marjan Sarshar, 47, of Santa Monica, was also arrested at their home, located between San Vicente Boulevard and Georgina Avenue, for loan fraud. Mehdi Ilkani, 58, of Santa Monica, was arrested on Bentley Street in the Ocean Park neighborhood. Ilkani was booked on money laundering charges and is considered by authorities to be a mid-level opium distributor.

Authorities allege Lari bought and sold millions of dollars worth of drugs to various mid-level opium distributors throughout Los Angeles from 2001 to as recently as March, according to an affidavit filed with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Lari allegedly purchased opium from Gholam Hassan Nasserijafar, who supplied the drug organization even after he was arrested in December of 2003 by the German State Police, according to the affidavit.

A DEA special agent had been investigating Lari and several individuals involved in the ring since 2003. The U.S. Attorney's Office, which is prosecuting the case, allege the money laundering and opium distribution ring involved more than a dozen people, with Lari being described as the "boss of the bosses."

Also arrested on Wednesday for possession with intent to distribute opium was Lari's employ-

See OPIUM, page 5



David Hume Kennerly/Special to the Daily Press

Teachers, public school supporters and students prepare to take to the streets in front of the Santa Monica Civic Center on Wednesday, en route to Sacramento to protest Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's education cuts.

School supporters hit road

Education advocates are turning up the heat on Schwarzenegger

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — Santa Monica parents, students and school representatives have begun a counterattack to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's education cuts.

More than 100 local public education advocates joined thousands more from across California on Wednesday, demanding Schwarzenegger restore Proposition 98 funding and make the failing public school system a top priority. Two coach buses departed from the Civic Center for the two-day rally entitled

"Caravan for Kids," which included a pit stop at Schwarzenegger's office in Los Angeles Wednesday, to be followed by a planned statewide protest on the Capitol steps in Sacramento today.

Santa Monica public education advocacy groups — such as the Community for Excellent Public Schools and the Santa Monica-Malibu PTA — sponsored the local event and have been an integral part in organizing the statewide effort, organizers said.

A recent report published by the RAND Corp., a Santa Monica-based international

See CARAVAN, page 8

Students tired of taking a hike

BY RYAN HYATT
Daily Press Staff Writer

MAIN STREET — Hundreds of college students decked out in graduation caps and gowns they fear they may never get to wear marched to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's Santa Monica restaurant on Wednesday to protest tuition hikes.

More than 300 California State University college students and faculty members marched from the Victorian House on Main Street to Schatzi's, a restaurant owned by Schwarzenegger, to protest three years of budget cuts, rising tuition costs and slashed course offerings for the California State University school system. Students from Cal Poly, Long Beach, Bakersfield and Northridge all participated in the protest.

Just a few hours earlier, and a few blocks away, local school advocates headed for the steps of the State Capitol building in Sacramento to protest Schwarzenegger's cuts to public education. (See related story.)

Members of the California Faculty Association, the teachers union which helped organize the event, said Schwarzenegger intends to slightly increase the CSU budget next year, but another \$181 million is needed

See PROTEST, page 8



Ryan Hyatt/Special to the Daily Press

College students march on Main Street Wednesday to protest Gov. Schwarzenegger's increases on tuition fees.

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PTA gets political in name of school funding

CARAVAN, from page 1

think tank, said California's K-12 school system has fallen from its position as the national leader it was 30 years ago to near the bottom of the rankings, above just Mississippi and Louisiana. CEPS member Rebecca Kennerly said after the local school district earlier this month secured an annual \$6 million contribution from the Santa Monica City Council for the next

five years — to offset the local impact from the state budget crisis — CEPS members have begun to focus their attention on the statewide educational financing crisis.

"We recognize funding the schools is not supposed to be a local responsibility," Kennerly said. "This is an issue that needs to be taken up at the state level."

"Caravan for Kids" organizers said they hope their efforts will prompt Schwarzenegger to make good on a

promise made last year to increase public educational funding, protect Proposition 98 school money and develop a 10-year plan to restore the greatness California's schools once enjoyed.

Calls to Schwarzenegger's office seeking comment on the state's public school budget were not returned.

Despite the \$6 million annual subsidy, plus many more millions in other funding each year by City Hall, local school officials have said that four years of educational budget cuts on the state level have cost local schools nearly \$9 million in lost services and personnel, resulting in a reduction of administrators, staff, faculty, and the support for programs. Event organizers said the problem is worse for schools without local support.

Maria Rodriguez, president of the Santa Monica-Malibu PTA Council, said her group has done everything it can to drum up local support, and that the PTA has a responsibility to all children in the state of California — many of whom belong to schools that have not had the same level of local support as the Santa Monica-Malibu school system.

"Santa Monica has initiated this movement statewide," Rodriguez said. "It used to be enough to bake cookies and throw a carnival. Right now, we're raising millions of dollars and it's still not enough to support our schools. We're just covering the basics, and that's not enough. We want excellent public education in California again."

Rodriguez said the California PTA has typically shied away from political issues, but the continuing crisis of public education has prompted its members to act.

"We are one million strong in California, and we're going to show our power," Rodriguez said.

Kathy Stanton, a West Los Angeles resident participating in the rally, said she and her husband attended public schools growing up and would prefer to put their 6-year-old son in public schools, but they are not good enough.

"I would love to be able to put our son in the public schools," Stanton said. "It is more diverse, not as much of a filtered experience. The problem is, I hear kids don't even get textbooks in some schools these days."

"What happens to all of these students whose parents can't afford to pay for the private schools?"

Students take to streets in protest of tuition hikes

PROTEST, from page 1

to begin repairing damage caused by failed state support since Schwarzenegger took office.

"The governor is committed to not raising taxes — except on our students," said Lillian Taiz, CFA vice president for Cal State Los Angeles, who explained that Schwarzenegger has overseen tuition increases for the last three years. "The governor needs to realize we are graduating the state's future police officers, firefighters and nurses, and we can't do that without state support."

California State University students said there has been a 110-percent increase in tuition for graduate students and 90-percent hike for undergraduate students during the Schwarzenegger administration. They contend that for every 10-percent increase in tuition, it prevents 2 percent of the poorest college students from being able to afford higher education. Another 8-percent hike in tuition fees is expected next year.

"We're creating a generation of uneducated people who don't understand the government, how to vote or how to think critically," said Amir Mertaban, a third-year international marketing major at Cal Poly. "We're creating zombies, which I think is what the governor must want."

The governor's office was unavailable for comment.

Todd Lininger, a third-year Cal Poly geography student, said he has been able to pay for his college education through the G.I. Bill, having served four years in the Marines.

"I have \$50,000, and I'm trying to stretch it as far as it can go," said Lininger, who hopes to attend a graduate school in California. "The priorities in this country are so wrong ... all of this money going to fight the war in Iraq ... and that's coming from a Marine."

"We need to be able to provide more affordable education, not less."

Measure "S" Senior Exemption from Parcel Tax

On June 3, 2003, the voters of Santa Monica and Malibu approved Measure S, a 6-year parcel tax at \$225 per panel which contains a provision to exempt senior citizens who:

- are 65 years old by June 30
- own and occupy their property
- annually apply for exemption

A RENEWAL FORM WILL BE SENT IN MAY TO ALL SENIORS WHO HAVE PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR & RECEIVED THE EXEMPTION. THE FORM MUST BE COMPLETED, SIGNED & RETURNED BY 7/31/05.

First time applicants:

- Call (310) 450-8338, ext. 269 to request an application to be sent in May
- print out the application from our website at: smmusd.org
 - click the Senior Exemption
 - Application for Senior Exemption

Completed & signed applications must be returned, along with required proofs of age and property ownership, to: Santa Monica-Malibu USD, 1651 16th./Santa Monica, CA 90404-3891, ATTN: Dawn, postmarked by July 31, 2005.

Community Health Festival
Saturday April 30, 2005
11 AM - 3 PM
Santa Monica Pier

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Saturday, April 30, 2005
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