

World watch
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Exit The Strong Man

MALAYSIA Pugnacious Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad stepped down last week after 22 years in office and, as ever, the 77-year-old went out swinging. Despite weeks of international criticism sparked by remarks that were widely seen as anti-Semitic, Mahathir has remained unrepentant.

The furor, which included what President George W. Bush said was a personal rebuke when the two met at a summit in Bangkok (something Mahathir denied), began when the former physician told a group of Islamic leaders meeting in Kuala Lumpur that "Jews

MEANWHILE IN THE U.S. ...

Spell of the Phoenix

The latest Harry Potter book has had an unexpected effect on young fans. Pediatrician Howard J. Bennett, writing in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, reported an outbreak of headaches among children reading *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Bennett attributed their ailment — which he dubbed "Hogwarts headaches" — to the eight-hour reading sessions the young enthusiasts put in as they plowed through the 870-page tome. Fortunately, the symptoms clear up a day or two after the patient finishes the book.

prakash singh/afp

control the world by proxy." Instead of backing down, Mahathir hit back at his critics, telling reporters that the storm of complaints simply proved his point that "arrogant" Jews did indeed control the world.

Don't expect retirement to mellow the man. Mahathir had a warning for his detractors at his last press conference before handing power to Abdullah Ahmad Badawi: after he stepped down, the world could expect him to be "even be more irresponsible not being the Prime Minister, people won't take notice of what I say, so I'll be more free to say nasty things." —
By Simon Elegant

Sick Ship Sails

GREECE A British cruise ship carrying 430 passengers suffering from a highly contagious form of gastroenteritis sailed for Gibraltar after being refused permission to dock at the Greek port of Piraeus. Greek authorities did permit two British doctors carrying emergency medical supplies to board the *Aurora*, which was carrying a total of 1,900 passengers and more than 800 crew. The vessel was only days into a tour of the Mediterranean when the virus struck.

Miner Threat

RUSSIA Rescuers saved the final 11 miners trapped for six days in a shaft 800 m underground by drilling a 50 m "tunnel of hope" from an adjacent mine in record time. Twenty-five of the 71 men who were in the mine when it was flooded by an underground lake had earlier managed to make their own way to the surface. Thirty-three more were rescued after two days and one was found dead. The search for the remaining miner was called off. President Vladimir Putin called for an urgent review of safety in the notoriously dangerous industry.

Russia: Putin's Challenge

Shackled Press

ZIMBABWE A Harare court released on bail four directors of the country's only independent newspaper. The four were arrested after police closed down the Daily News — which is critical of President Robert Mugabe's government — for operating without a license on the day it resumed publishing after a six-week ban. The judge will rule later in the month on whether the directors should be prosecuted for publishing the paper illegally.

Archive: Zimbabwe in TIME

No End in Sight

COLOMBIA Church mediators said that a deal had broken down on the release of seven foreign tourists held hostage by left-wing rebels. The National Liberation Army (NLA), which has been holding the tourists since mid-September, wanted to release them individually, while the government insisted they all be liberated together. The NLA promised earlier to let the first hostages go this week.

A Burning Issue

U.S. Firefighters hoped to take advantage of cold weather and fog to bring under control the blazes that ravaged huge swaths of southern California for most of the week. The wildfires have killed 20 people, scorched 3,000 sq km of land and destroyed more than 2,800 homes. At week's end, the flames had receded from most of the major communities under threat. California's outgoing governor, Gray Davis, said the costs of the firefighting operation could exceed \$2 billion, making this the state's most expensive natural disaster ever.

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