



CHILENEWS

No. 21 – September 13, 2001

Did You Know?

Chilean rodeo arose from the need to separate cattle. Two riders on horseback struggle against a steer. The goal is to stop the animal at a pre-established point in a fenced-in area stuffed with hay and covered with a cloth, inside the “half-moon.”

Manjar is a very thick and sweet mixture of milk, sugar and vanilla. It can be used to fill pastries...or eaten by the spoonful!

The *rewe* is a tall tree trunk with carved out steps where the *machi* –the Mapuche shaman– gets in touch with her peoples’ divinities, renews her strength, energy and wisdom and neutralizes spirits that cause disease and evil. The *rewe* is considered sacred by the Mapuche.

22% is the drop in child and juvenile poverty in the past ten years.

Working Tour

President Ricardo Lagos went on a tour of Europe to reaffirm Chile’s interest in completing a general agreement with the European Union, and to foster closer ties and enhance Chile’s presence in the new international debates on economic issues.

The agenda included visits to Portugal, the United Kingdom and Belgium and it was marked by political and trade meetings.

In Portugal, President Lagos met with President Jorge Sampaio and Prime Minister Antonio Guterres. He visited the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (known as “The Observatory”), where he signed an agreement on the fight against drugs. He also had breakfast with a group of major Portuguese entrepreneurs.

From there he traveled on an official visit to the United Kingdom, the main destination for Chilean exports to Europe. He met with Prime Minister Tony Blair and with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Jack Straw, and they offered “strong support” for the subscription of an agreement with the European Union.

The next stop was Brussels, where President Lagos met with Prince Phillipe and Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt. He also had a working meeting with the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, who manifested the intent of reaching a technical agreement with Chile before December, 2001.

Due to the recent events in the United States, President Lagos cancelled the last stage of his tour which involved a working visit to Sweden and participating in the Summit of Progressive Leaders. The latter was cancelled for security reasons. President Lagos condemned the attacks against New York and Washington and sent a letter to President George W. Bush expressing solidarity and condolences, stating that “we should not and must not abandon the fight against terrorism. Fighting this scourge is an international responsibility.”

Millionaire Investment in Infrastructure

President Ricardo Lagos took with him to Europe a portfolio of projects amounting to almost four billion dollars to offer it to foreign investors. This is “the biggest opportunity for private investment opened up in Chile to date.”

Facts

Chilean fresh fruit exports grew 13% compared to the previous season, reaching a historic record of 1,637,000 tons.

On August 31, a Chilean company (Faenadora Super de Lo Miranda) became the first plant certified in Latin America to export pork to the European Union.

Chile builds 85,000 houses each year.

Sesma, the Metropolitan Environmental Agency, signed an agreement with NASA to monitor in Chile processes involving the depletion of the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect.

All large and medium sized Chilean companies have access to the Internet to carry out their work.

The plans include roads, bridges, airports, dams, city roads, metropolitan railway sections, jails, over 8,500 housing units and schools, to be built over the next two years.

In his tour, President Lagos showed investors the suitable conditions available in Chile: inflation controlled at under 4%, the lowest nominal interest rate in the last 30 years, an exchange rate favorable to exports, fiscal and external accounts in order, and an economy that is growing despite economic turmoil abroad.

Historic Agreement on Military Spending

After three years of negotiations, Chile and Argentina subscribed an agreement to match their military spending. The agreement opens up a new stage of trust and transparency on a continental level and allows detailed knowledge of funds allocated to the military budgets of both nations.

The document “Standardized Common Methodology to Measure Defense Spending”, prepared with help from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Eclac), establishes three successive categories for measuring spending: purchases, operations and welfare.

After this “historic understanding” with Argentina, Chile continues with its policy of transparency on military spending. Last weekend the first concrete step was taken to begin negotiations with Peru. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Defense of both countries agreed to establish a Permanent Bi-National Security and Defense Committee to set in motion the procedure to match expenses and eradicate anti-personnel mines along the common border between both countries.

Against Discrimination

Chile presided over one plenary session of the Third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance which took place in Durban. As the host country, South Africa asked Alejandra Krauss, the Chilean Minister for Planning and Cooperation, who represented Chile at the Conference, to preside over the meeting at which non-governmental organizations presented their views.

Minister Krauss also spoke with Mary Robinson, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who requested that Chile “continue to be present in issues that are so important for Chileans and for the world in general, such as the struggle against poverty and disability.” She emphasized the progress that Chile has made in human rights matters, such as the project to appoint an Ombudsman and the elimination of the death penalty.

During her talk at the Conference, Minister Krauss asked, in *mapudungún*, the language of the Mapuche people, to “overcome the iniquity of discrimination and thus build a free, fair and egalitarian world for all, with no exclusions.”

Quotes from President Lagos

“As coordinator of the Rio Group, Chile will foster all possible efforts to contribute – with everything within our reach – to eradicate the political madness of terrorism from the international arena.”

In a letter of condolence sent to
President George W. Bush. September 11

“In Chile we have been able to harmonize the value of justice with the value of sovereignty. We have shown that it is possible to do justice and – at the same time – respect sovereignty. I believe that this is crucial and it is what was at stake.”

On his european tour. September 11

“If we dare propose such an ambitious package of projects at a time when the international economy is not experiencing its best moments, it is because we believe that Chile offers sufficient conditions of safety and reliability so as to feel confident that foreign investors will continue to chose Chile.”

During the Seminar “Investment Opportunities
in Infrastructure and in Real Estate.”
Santiago, September 7

“When we talk about reforming health care [it is because] we wish to establish a solidararian system. As I've said before, a young person who usually has no health problems, makes health care payments and finances the health care needs of an older person, probably his/her own grandfather. This is what a solidararian country is about.”

August 27

Chile reaffirmed its commitment to the core values of the Conference: “Our challenge is to develop and share a view of the future and, in order to build it, we must look to the past and acknowledge that memory is a collective human right.”

Training for Workers

It is known as The Workers' University. It was founded by the Society of Jesus in 1984. The underlying idea is that “education is the only effective means to improve productivity and raise the income levels of the poorer people.”

At present, the Popular Training and Further Education Institute, Infocap, its official name, provides education free of charge to 630 low income workers. This figure will rise to over 900 workers thanks to newly inaugurated facilities.

At the dedication ceremony, President Ricardo Lagos undertook to support the idea of the Director of the Infocap Foundation, the Jesuit Priest Felipe Berríos, of building two additional institutes in the regions.

Construction, gastronomics, and hair styling are some of the trades taught at Infocap. Another peculiar feature of this university is that its teachers and around 500 university students who work there receive no payment for their services. The help of the young students fulfills another goal established by Infocap: to create a place for Chileans from the poorer segments and those who are preparing to become professionals to have a chance to get to know each other.

The Poetry Train

A poetry and cultural festival will commemorate the 28th anniversary of the death of Pablo Neruda and the 30th anniversary of the year when the Poet was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. This is coupled with another milestone: the 150th anniversary of the first Chilean railroad. Next September 23, an old fashioned steam engine from 1900 will once more travel the route that Neruda, as a child, used to tour with his father, who was a railroad conductor.

Poets, artists and writers will make the 300 kilometer-long journey separating the cities of Parral and Temuco, in southern Chile, in three railroad cars, swaying to the rhythm of old trains and Neruda's verses. Around 300 passengers will travel on the routes that the Chilean bard traveled in his childhood, revisiting the places that appear time and again in his work. Dozens of commemorative acts will be held in town squares, universities, schools and town halls when the Poetry Train passes through, leaving in its wake a trail of steam and verse.

Overheard

“Chile is a country that has always asserted its claim to democracy. Therefore, at this stage of our bilateral relations we want to state that we hope they will continue to progress as they have up to now.” “We want to assure Chile of our full support for relations to move forward with the European Union and for them to gradually increase in scope and strength.”

Jorge Sampaio, President of Portugal.
Lisbon, September 9

“We addressed all aspects of relations between the European Union and Chile in a common spirit of progressing, in terms of our trade agreements and in fulfilling our work agenda. We believe it is possible to reach a technical agreement by December and conclude it by May.”

Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission. September 12

“Relations between the European Union and Chile are splendid and will be even more so in the coming months. We have a considerable agenda of negotiations and we are certain that, in the next six months, we will be able to have these negotiations culminate in an agreement.”

Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Policy of the EU.
September 12

Agenda (Presidential Tour)

- ✂ September 9-11: State Visit to Portugal. Lisbon
- ✂ September 11-12: Official Visit to the United Kingdom, London
- ✂ September 12-13: Working Visit to Belgium and the European Union, Brussels

Q & A

“Fiestas Patrias”

What is celebrated on September 18?

It is the national festivity. It commemorates the date, in 1810, when a citizen’s assembly decided to establish the first independent governing body.

However, the struggle for independence went on. At the Battle of Chacabuco, on February 12, 1817, General Bernardo O’Higgins – the Liberator of Chile – defeated the Spaniards. On April 5, 1818 he confirmed, at the Battle of Maipú, victory over the scarce royalist troops that were still resisting and thus consolidated Chilean Independence.

And on September 19, the achievements of the Chilean Army are commemorated with a military parade.

How do Chileans celebrate?

Spring begins in September in Chile, so the “Dieciocho” is a colorful and cheerful festivity. *Ramadas* are the center of all celebrations. They are light shelters built for the occasion which were originally built with branches (*ramas*), hence their name. People gather there to eat and dance. The *cueca*, Chile’s traditional dance, has given over its place of privilege to tropical music, particularly *cumbias*. Parks and squares fill up with people selling flags and colorful paper windmills while children and grown ups fly kites.

What do Chileans eat?

Empanadas are the typical dish. They are individual pies, covered in dough and filled with *pino*, consisting mainly of finely chopped onion and meat. Traditional *empanadas* are baked in a clay oven, preferably heated with pinewood. However, at present, gas or electric ovens are more practical. *Empanadas* can also be fried.

Barbecues are another traditional staple at “Dieciocho” celebrations. Kebabs – known in Chile as *anticuchos* – play a major role in barbecues. They consist of alternate pieces of meat and sausage, which are put on spits and grilled.

Good Chilean wine goes with the food and festivities and – very importantly – *chicha*, a tangy tasting fermented grape juice, similar to cider, is also drunk.

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