



Top Stories

Ma Ying-jeou becomes President of Republic of China

Ma Ying-jeou was sworn in on Tuesday as President of the Republic of China, also known as Taiwan. In his inauguration speech he wished for a positive relationship with China, avoiding conflict but also resisting reunification.



Credit:Jiang (PD)

Oil price reaches new high

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Signs of ancient hydrothermal vents found on Mars

The Spirit Rover, one of two planetary rovers operated by NASA on the planet Mars, has made an important, though unintentional discovery on the red planet. A wheel which has been inoperable on the rover, has been making large gouges in the soil of Mars where ever it goes and has turned up nearly pure silica believed to be from ancient



Top Stories

hydrothermal vents.

Swedish men suspected of nuclear plant sabotage released

Two Swedish men that were arrested for being suspected of sabotaging the Oskarshamn Nuclear Power Plant in Sweden, have been released from police custody. Both men were arrested on Wednesday after traces of Acetone Peroxide, or TATP, generally a high-yield explosive, were found on a plastic bag.



Nuclear power plant in Oskarshamn, Sweden. Credit:Daniel Kihlgren (CC-BY-SA)

Wikipedia Current Events

Weld County Tornado: One person is killed and at least 100 are injured in Weld County, Colorado after a tornado tore through the county. Colorado Governor Bill Ritter has declared a state of emergency and activated the Colorado National Guard in the affected region.

- Two civilians and a Lithuanian soldier are killed as an Afghan protest over the Koran shooting outside the Chagcharan Airfield in the Ghor Province of Afghanistan turns violent.
- The death toll from the 2008 Sichuan earthquake rises to 51,151 with 29,328 still missing.
- The President of Georgia Mikheil

Wikipedia Current Events

Saakashvili claims victory for his United National Movement party in the Georgian legislative election, 2008 with the Opposition claiming that the vote had been rigged.

Signs of ancient hydrothermal vents found on Mars

The Spirit Rover, one of two planetary rovers operated by NASA on the planet Mars, has made an important, though unintentional discovery on the red planet. A wheel which has been inoperable on the rover, has been making large gouges in the soil of Mars where ever it goes.

Scientists say they can confirm that images from the planet taken in May of 2007 at Gusev Crater, show that a white substance in the soil that was turned up as the rover moved along its path is Silicon dioxide or silica. Scientists at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York who made the discovery, have determined it to be nearly 90 percent pure. They also say the only way for the substance to be present there is if there was an abundance of water present on the planet sometime in its past. The water would have been superheated and coming up through hydrothermal vents or even hot springs which scientists say would have been similar to ones already present at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming.

Hydrothermal vents are fissures

with superheated water and gases venting from the planet's surface. The vents are usually found around highly volcanic areas at the bottoms of seas and oceans. To this day, these vents or evidence of them have only been found on Earth.

"On Earth, the only way to have this kind of silica enrichment is by hot water reacting with rocks. Home Plate came from an explosive volcanic event with water or ice being involved. We saw where rocks were thrown into the air and landed to make small indentations in the soft, wet ash sediment around the vent," said Dr. Steven Ruff of Arizona State University (ASU) in Arizona, one of the authors of the announcement of the findings published in Science.

The finding has led to more questions about Mars and whether or not it once had life present on it, where and how much.

"On Earth, hydrothermal deposits teem with life and the associated silica deposits typically contain fossil remains of microbes. What we can say is that this was once a habitable environment where liquid water and the energy needed for life were present," said another author of the report, Dr. Jack Farmer also from ASU.

Ruff also states that much of the area Mars already searched seems to be covered with silica. "It's not just the soil in a trench in one place. It's a broader story of outcrops that extend 50 meters [about 150 feet] away from Home Plate. It's not a small scale, modest phenomenon."

Spirit is the first of two rovers which landed on Mars in January of 2004. The second rover is

Opportunity and both are still operating nearly 20 times longer than NASA has expected.

19 Kenyans arrested for 'witch' killings

Authorities in western Kenya have arrested 19 suspects in connection with a spree of recent mob killings. Earlier this week 11 elderly people had been burned on suspicion of witchcraft. The 8 female and 3 male victims were aged 80 to 96 according to BBC News.

Belief in witchcraft is widespread in the Kisii District of Nyanza Province and attacks against purported witches had happened before, but this week's attacks targeted an unusually large number of people.

"You may find that they [the individuals arrested] could not have been involved directly in the killing, but if you have evidence that they were involved in war cries, then they will have another offence of inciting."

—Charles Owino

Police launched an investigation into the incident and have deployed additional personnel to guard the area to prevent revenge attacks. Approximately 300 young men were reportedly responsible for the attacks. According to deputy police spokesman Charles Owino, those who can be proven to have had direct involvement in the killings would be charged with murder.

Indiana Jones returns to the screens

The new film about the fictional character Dr. Henry "Indiana" Jones Jr. played by Harrison Ford premiered worldwide on May 22, four days after the opening of the 61st Cannes Film Festival in France.

The film is about the fictional mystery surrounding the crystal skulls, which do exist in reality, but are considered fakes by some sceptical scientists. "Some of them are quite good, but some of them look like they were produced with a Black & Decker in someone's garage", Professor Ian Freestone of Cardiff University said, arguing that the ancient Aztecs or Mayans might not have had instruments with modern tool capabilities for the task.

The film was directed by Steven Spielberg and produced by George Lucas (Lucasfilm).

Alongside Ford, the film features stars Shia LaBeouf and Cate Blanchett. The latter of the two was 'butched up' for the role of the Soviet agent, the main villain in the film.

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull was rated PG-13 and runs 2 hours and 3 minutes. The film budget was US\$185 million and it will need to gross US\$400 million or more at theatres to make a profit for Paramount Pictures.

The previous film of the franchise was released in May of 1989 - 19 years ago.

Swedish men suspected of nuclear plant sabotage released

Two Swedish men that were arrested for being suspected of sabotaging the Oskarshamn Nuclear Power Plant in Sweden, have been released from police custody. Both men were arrested on Wednesday after traces of Acetone Peroxide, or TATP, were found on a plastic bag. TATP is also an organic peroxide which is sometimes used in making

household cleaning chemicals.

"Both men have been cooperative but they deny any wrongdoing and waived the right to legal counsel. There was no legal ground to hold them any longer," said Swedish police in a statement to the press. The police also noted that an investigation is ongoing.

The unnamed men, in their 40's and 50's, were arrested after security officials at the plant discovered traces of the explosive substance on a plastic bag inside a bag one of the men was carrying. Both men were contractors hired to do welding work in the plant which is owned and operated by Oskarshamnsverkets Kraftgrupp OKG.

Security detected the material on Wednesday during what was described by CNN as a "routine" security check. Authorities were called to the plant along with the bomb squad, who sealed off parts of the plant. Police believe it was on one of the man's hands when it rubbed off onto the bag, but no bomb was found on the premises after an extensive search.

TATP is "very unstable, very sensitive to both friction and shocks," said Swedish Defense Research Agency expert, Svante Karlsson. A small amount could cause serious damage to someone handling the material which is described as 'Mother of Satan'. Would-be 'shoe bomber' Richard Reid used the substance in an attempt to blow up American Airlines flight 63 from Paris, France to Miami, Florida in 2001. The same substance was also used in the July 2005 bombings in London, England.

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NYMEX/WTI: \$130.83/barrel \$.02 (.02%)
ICE/Brent: \$129.93/barrel \$-.68 (-.52%)
00:00, 23 May 2008 (UTC)
Prices displayed in U.S. dollars.

The U.S. average retail price for regular gasoline also recently increased to a new all-time high, with the price going up 6.9 cents to 379.1 cents per gallon. This was the eighth consecutive week for the US average price to increase. Air France-KLM recently said that they would be challenged by the rising oil price. American Airlines has announced thousands of job cuts.

In addition, the U.S. has seen the cost of food rise significantly, an issue which food manufacturers and retail stores blame on the high price of fuel required for transportation. For example, CNN.com reports a 16.7% increase in the cost of hamburger buns, a staple item for many U.S. families.

First supernova seen during explosion breakout

Astronomers have for the first time watched a supernova explosion break out of the surface of the parent star. Previously only the remnants after an explosion have been found. The new object, SN

2008D, is in another galaxy.

Alicia Soderberg, a Hubble and Carnegie-Princeton Fellow at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey, explained the significance: "For years we have dreamed of seeing a star just as it was exploding, but actually finding one is a once in a lifetime event... This newly born supernova is going to be the Rosetta Stone of supernova studies for years to come."

Observations were being made of a different supernova in galaxy NGC 2770 when Soderberg noticed a new X-ray ray source had appeared. A burst of X-rays is produced when the explosion of a supernova reaches the surface of the exploding star. Because the SWIFT orbiting telescope was being used, which provides images as they are received, there was no delay in getting the images and an alert was sent to other major telescopes.

Other observers who joined the watch were the 3.5-meter telescope at the Apache Point Observatory in New Mexico, the Chandra X-ray Observatory, the Gemini North telescope in Hawaii, the Hubble Space Telescope, the Keck I telescope in Hawaii, the 200-inch and 60-inch telescopes at the Palomar Observatory in California, and the Very Large Array in New Mexico.

The primary task of SWIFT is rapid detection of gamma ray bursts, and because of their short duration the observatory requires constant monitoring. The observations of galaxy NGC 2770 were being done while the satellite was not busy with its major task.

Rail strike begins in France

Transport workers in France began

a strike on Thursday to protest changes in the state's pension system. Almost 300,000 people took part in marches. Public transport was reported as being hobbled by Associated Press. Union officials say that 700,000 people took part in the work stoppage, which also reduced postal deliveries and even normal programming on state-run radio.

2008 UEFA Champions League Final: Manchester United vs. Chelsea F.C.

British football clubs Manchester United and Chelsea today competed in the first ever Champions League final containing only English clubs. The UEFA Champions League is a large European football tournament, where the highest ranked teams from many countries compete. Manchester United won 6-5 on penalties.

The match started off slowly, with the first goal being scored by Cristiano Ronaldo for Manchester United. The goal was scored at 19:11 UTC.

Claude Makelele and Paul Scholes were both given yellow cards in the 22nd minute due to a collision in air which resulted in Scholes receiving treatment for a small injury.

A goal scored just before half time, by Frank Lampard, put both sides at an equal position for the start of the second half. The goal was scored from a free kick which was taken as a result of a foul by Rio Ferdinand in the 44th minute. Ferdinand got a yellow card as a result of the incident.

Alex Ferguson, Manchester United Manager
Image: Austin Osuide.

In the first few minutes of the second half, Manchester United were awarded a free kick due to a foul by Ballack, which resulted Ronaldo falling to the ground.

At the mid point in the second half a BBC commentator predicted that changes would be made to the Manchester squad. "Fergie [Alex Ferguson, Manchester United manager] remains impassive on the United bench, but surely he can't leave it too much longer before making a change? His team are being over-powered at present," he said.

Drogba aimed to give Chelsea a lead with a shot in the 79th minute, which hit the left hand post.

A late substitution resulted in Paul Scholes being taken off and Ryan Giggs being brought on for Manchester United,

Lou Pearlman sentenced

Lou Pearlman, the American music mogul behind Backstreet Boys and N'Sync was sentenced on Wednesday to 25 years in prison on charges of money laundering, conspiracy and making false claims in bankruptcy court. He received the maximum sentence for swindling US\$300 million from investors. He can have his sentence reduced if he is able to reimburse the victims.

Today in History

1430 – Hundred Years' War: Joan of Arc was captured at the Siege of Compiègne.

1498 – Girolamo Savonarola of Florence was executed for heresy, uttering prophecies, sedition, and other crimes.

1533 – The marriage of Henry VIII of England and his first wife Catherine of Aragon was annulled.
1568 – The Dutch Revolt broke out

when rebels led by Louis of Nassau invaded Friesland at the Battle of Heiligerlee.

1873 – The North West Mounted Police, the forerunner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, was established to bring law and order to and assert Canadian sovereignty over the Northwest Territories.

1934 – American criminals Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow were ambushed and killed by police on a desolate road near their Bienville Parish, Louisiana hideout outside the Town of Gibsland.

May 23 is Lag Ba'omer (Judaism, 2008)

Quote of the Day

Genius will live and thrive without training, but it does not the less reward the watering-pot and pruning-knife. ~ Margaret Fuller

Word of the Day

toboggan n

1. A light sled, originally flat-bottomed and with no runners.
2. (southern US) A winter hat.

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