



Top Stories

Former Chilean president Pinochet dies at 91

Former Chilean Head of State, General Augusto Pinochet, 91, has died today in Santiago de Chile's Military Hospital at 2:15 p.m. (1715 GMT).

Male models win The Amazing Race

Two male models have won the tenth season of CBS' hit show The Amazing Race. The models were awarded USD\$1 million. Each recieved USD\$500,000.

Featured story

Discovery docks with international space station

The United States Space Shuttle Discovery has docked with the International Space Station as of 5:12 p.m. ET .

Wikipedia Current Events

- Former GAM rebel leader Irwandi Yusuf is elected governor of the Indonesian province of Aceh in elections that are part of a peace deal ending the civil war.
- Former Prime Minister of Fiji Sitiveni Rabuka is cleared of two charges of mutiny in relation to the mutinies of the 2000 Fijian coup d'état.
- Archaeologists working for the Vatican have found the tomb of Paul of Tarsus.
- United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan strongly criticizes the United States, in particular the Bush administration, for straying

Wikipedia Current Events

from multilateralism and human rights, in his final speech.

- The Holocaust conference gets underway in Iran to examine whether the Holocaust took place or not.
- Traces of polonium-210 are found in a flat in Hamburg, Germany, on objects touched by former Russian spy Dmitri Kovtun a day before he met poisoned ex-spy Alexander Litvinenko in London.
- Hamas gunmen try to assassinate Baha Balousheh, a security chief associated with Fatah, but instead shoot and kill his three children in the Gaza Strip. The assassination attempt may have been a revenge attack for the attempted assassination of Interior Minister Sayid Seyam of Hamas.
- The Space Shuttle Discovery successfully docks with the International Space Station with the crew to spend a week rewiring the space station.

4 Year-Old Suspended from Kindergarten

A 4-year old kindergartener, attending La Vega Primary School in Waco, TX, was suspended November 10 after hugging a teacher's aide and rubbing his face in her chest.

The La Vega school district sent a letter to the student's father, who flipped after learning of his son's "inappropriate physical behavior

interpreted as sexual contact and/or sexual harassment". He has since filed complaint against the district.

The record has since been changed to "inappropriate physical contact".

District employees state that there are no guidelines about student/teacher contact in the handbook; however, it does state that "inappropriate physical contact" will result in a discipline referral.

The school district would not comment on specific details, citing student privacy laws.

Discovery docks with international space station

The United States Space Shuttle Discovery docked with the International Space Station today at 5:12 p.m. ET. After a two-day journey, the space shuttle reached the space station for a weeklong stay to rewire the orbiting lab, install a new addition and rotate out a crew member. Astronaut Sunita "Suni" Williams will live for six months at the space lab, replacing German astronaut Thomas Reiter of the European Space Agency..

An hour earlier the orbiter did a slow back flip so that crew members at the international space station could photograph its mid section for any signs of liftoff damage. This has been a routine procedure since the Columbia tragedy in which the space shuttle Columbia sustained damage on

liftoff leading to it's desentegration in the atmosphere. There appeared to be no problems with the heat shield so commander Mark Polansky continued the docking process.

As the space station came into view of Discovery, Williams told Mission Control: "It's beautiful."

Mission Control responded: "I don't know what kind of creature comforts you're going to have, but you're going to have a room with a view."

A \$11 million extension will be put into place on Tuesday during the first of the mission's three spacewalks. Astronauts plan to rewire the space lab, switching it from a temporary power source to a permanent one, during the two other spacewalks.

Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk receives Nobel Prize

Orhan Pamuk, a prominent, post-modern writer whose work is translated into more than 40 languages, received the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Pamuk was an admired writer in Turkey until the events in 2005, when lawyers of two Turkish professional associations brought criminal charges against him for "insulting Turkishness" after the author's controversial statements regarding the disputed Armenian Genocide of 1915-1917. He claimed, and repeated his claim, that...
"one million Armenians and 30,000 Kurds were killed in Turkey."

Even though the charges were dropped on January 22, 2006, his Nobel Prize reception continues to provoke mixed feelings of pride and anger among Turks. On the other hand, as Pamuk intended,

the criminal case brought international attention to freedom of speech in Turkey.

In his Nobel speech, he defined literature as:...

"what a person creates when he shuts himself up in a room, sits down at a table, and retires to a corner to express his thoughts – that is, the meaning of literature. ... When a writer shuts himself up in a room for years on end, with this gesture he suggests a single humanity, a world without a centre."

He talked about his father's strong influence on him, his own authenticity anxieties and identity crises as a Turkish writer, the global nature of literature, and the politics of writing:...

"What literature needs most to tell and investigate today are humanity's basic fears: the fear of being left outside, and the fear of counting for nothing, and the feelings of worthlessness that come with such fears; the collective humiliations, vulnerabilities, slights, grievances, sensitivities, and imagined insults, and the nationalist boasts and inflations that are their next of kind ... Whenever I am confronted by such sentiments, and by the irrational, overstated language in which they are usually expressed, I know they touch on a darkness inside me. We have often witnessed peoples, societies and nations outside the Western world – and I can identify with them easily – succumbing to fears that sometimes lead them to commit stupidities, all because of their fears of humiliation and their sensitivities. I also know that in the West – a world with which I can identify with the same ease – nations and peoples taking an excessive pride in their wealth, and in their having brought us the

Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and Modernism, have, from time to time, succumbed to a self-satisfaction that is almost as stupid."

Kucinich to run for U.S. president

American politician of the Democratic party, Dennis Kucinich, plans to run for president in 2008 the five-term congressman's spokesman, Andy Juniewicz, said Monday. Kucinich ran in 2004 and was last in nearly every primary and caucus of that year.

Kucinich began his political career as a Cleveland city councilman and later as the youngest person ever elected mayor of the Midwestern city.

The congressman made his decision to run, according to a written statement, because he felt his own party's leadership was not aggressive enough in opposing the Iraq war.

Kucinich, 60, is a staunch opponent of the Iraq war. He has advocated cutting off funds for the war, saying that voting for money to maintain or expand the war is incompatible with a position of opposition to it.

He also co-chaired the Congressional Progressive Caucus and is a self-described "Wellstone Democrat." He has been praised as "a genuine progressive" by Ralph Nader and in 2003, Kucinich was the recipient of the Gandhi Peace Award.

Kofi Annan appeals for cooperation and leadership from USA

UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan delivered his farewell address today at the Truman Presidential Museum & Library, Independence,

Missouri. He reminded his audience of the far sighted leadership provided by President Harry S Truman in championing the United Nations in its early years. Annan went on to offer five lessons, every one of which led him to conclude that "such leadership is no less sorely needed now than it was sixty years ago".

The lessons he had learned while in office were that the security of everyone is linked to that of everyone else and that we are all responsible for each other's welfare; that security and development ultimately depend on respect for human rights and the rule of law; that governments must be accountable for their actions in the international arena, as well as in the domestic one; and that, only by working together through the United Nations, can security, welfare and development be achieved.

In the course of his speech, Kofi Annan referred to America as being in the vanguard of the global human rights movement but he warned "that lead can only be maintained if America remains true to its principles, including in the struggle against terrorism".

He concluded his address saying "More than ever today Americans, like the rest of humanity, need a functioning global system through which the world's peoples can face global challenges together. And in order to function, the system still cries out for far-sighted American leadership, in the Truman tradition. I hope and pray that the American leaders of today, and tomorrow, will provide it.

Afterwards, he was asked why he had chosen in his farewell speech to make such a pointed attack on America. He replied, sharply, that

"An appeal for cooperation and leadership should never be seen as an attack". This remark was greeted with applause from the audience.

Samuels Jewelers to be acquired by a DTC sightholder

A major purchase transaction is being prepared in the diamonds' industry: Samuels Jewelers started a discussion with a sightholder from Diamond Trading Company (DTC). The latter is to acquire the majority part of retailer's shares.

There is still not much information about this particular sightholder, except for the fact that it is based in India. The present majority shareholder of Samuels Jewelers is DDJ Capital Management. The representatives of the company do not give any information concerning the potential buyer.

Randy McCullough, the President and CEO of Samuels Jewelers, stated that it would be a great opportunity for the retailer to start a partnership with a DTC sightholder, thus Samuels would be able to re-capitalize its balance sheet, to acquire newer inventory and guarantee itself stable growth in the future.

As for Samuels Jewelers, which is officially called "Samuels, Schubach and Samuels Diamonds", possesses a network of 97 jewelry stores in 18 US states since October 1 this year. The incomes of the retailer at the end of the previous year are estimated to be around \$100,000,000.

The current shareholder of Samuels Jewelers, DDJ Capital Management, is a company, which specializes itself in private equity and debt financings. This managing firm began its activity in

1996 and since then has grown to operate capitals of 79 institutional clients (estimated in approximately 3 billion dollars).

Fizzy drinks out of New Zealand schools from 2009

An agreement signed between the New Zealand government, Frucor Beverages Ltd, and the Coca-Cola Amatil (New Zealand) has secured that both full sugar fizzy drinks and energy drinks that are made by those two companies will not be sold in secondary schools coming into effect 2009.

The agreement was completely voluntary and is a world first as it was directly negotiated with the companies and the government.

It has been estimated that the agreement will remove around 1,105,000 litres of fizzy drinks from schools. That amount of fizzy drinks has about 118,000 kilograms of sugar. When one secondary school in Auckland introduced healthier drinks they saw around half a tonne of sugar removed.

Steve Maharey, minister of education, said: "The agreement will see the removal of 1.1 million litres of full sugar beverages from schools over the next three years. I welcome the industry's recognition that action is needed on this issue. This agreement is a strong step forward that will support the work we are doing to ensure schools and communities can provide healthier alternatives for their students."

Pete Hodgson, minister of health, said that the agreement is what can happen when both government and industries work together. "I thank Coca Cola Amatil and Frucor for their leadership on this issue," Pete Hodgson said.

"Today's agreement is a major step forward for the Food Industry Accord and shows once again what can be achieved when we reach for cooperative, rather than regulatory solutions.

Diet drinks will remain on sale that contain artificial sweetener, Aspartame. And in 2007 the government will recommend water and low-fat milk in early childhood centres and high schools. But there is a lot of controversy surrounding Aspartame which many consider to have serious long-term health effects. If there is only a choice between water, milk or soft-drink, nearly all kids would choose the latter.

The government has also announced a new programme called Mission-On that will promote nutrition and physical activity and will also try to improve the quality of food that children will be subject to in schools. It will also try and decrease the amount of advertising unhealthy food companies are given.

Mr Hodgson said: "This agreement forms only a small part of what will be necessary to address this challenge, but shows that the government and the food industry are serious about playing our part."

Mr Hodgson has confirmed that regulation will now not happen and has said that regulation would have been too costly and too slow to implement.

Frucor Beverages Ltd and Coca-Cola Amatil are the only companies that provide drinks to schools.

Canadian Liberals show strong lead, says poll

The Liberal Party of Canada, the

official opposition party of Canada, is currently ahead of the Conservatives according to a poll by Ekos Research Associates published in the Toronto Star and Montreal's La Presse Saturday.

The Liberals lead with 40% and the Conservatives, who were elected in January, with 34%. Trailing both is the New Democratic Party NDP with 10% and Bloc Québécois and the Green party each with 8%.

Support for the Liberals increased by eight points since October. This is the highest Liberal support in the 40 percent mark since former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien stepped down as prime minister and party leader three years ago.

The Tories dropped down two points. The Conservative party, led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, received 36.3 per cent of the vote and 124 seats in the House of Commons when they were elected in January. This election ended 12 years of the Liberal government.

The Conservatives have 124 seats in the House of Commons, Liberals 102, Bloc Québécois 51, and NDP 29. There are now also two independent MPs in the House.

"What is troubling for the Conservatives is an underlying trend over many months of rising dissatisfaction with the direction of government, combined with utter disappointment with its efforts on the environment," Frank Graves, the polling firm's president said. "At the same time, the preoccupation with ethics and accountability that drove the Tories' success in January (when Prime Minister Stephen Harper won an election) has largely dissipated."

Four per cent of those surveyed said the Conservatives are the best party to deal with environment issues. The Green party were the most trusted with 35% and the Liberals in third with 31%.

"There is a shock result here for the NDP," Graves said. "Nationally, the Greens are within sight of the NDP...These are the first clear indications we have that the New Democrats could find themselves squeezed into irrelevance in a painful grind between the Liberals and the Greens."

When asked which leader who makes the best PM the poll found people preferred Harper over newly elected Liberal leader Stéphane Dion. When asked "Who best understands the concerns of people like you?" residents in the Conservative Western Canada preferred Harper. Dion rated higher in Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada. Outside Quebec and Atlantic Canada, Harper is seen by Canadians as the leader with the "best vision for the future of the country."

In Ontario, the Liberals lead stands at a strong 46.9%. Conservatives at 37.4%, the NDP at 9.1% and the greens 6.6%.

The Liberals lead in every province except oil-producing Alberta, which is lead by the Conservatives, and Quebec at 26.1%, where the separatist Bloc Quebecois is leading with 34.7%. The Conservatives have 18.3% in Quebec, the Greens have 12.1%, and the NDP 8.8%.

It is expected that the next federal election will be held in 2007.

Former Chilean dictator Pinochet dies at 91

The former Chilean dictator,

General Augusto Pinochet, died yesterday in a military hospital in Santiago de Chile.

Pinochet died at 2:15 p.m. (1715 GMT), surrounded by his family. A brief announcement by the hospital said Pinochet's condition had worsened suddenly following a heart attack on December 3. Earlier in the week he was reported to be recovering from the heart failure.

In 1973 Augusto Pinochet took power in a US-assisted coup against Chile's democratically elected president, Salvador Allende Gossens, who died in the first hours of the military takeover. His rule of terror, which he maintained by silencing all opposition, lasted 17 years and produced a national trauma that has still not fully healed.

A few hours after the dictator's death, the Chilean government spokesman, Ricardo Lagos Weber, announced there would be no state funeral or national mourning. But the government authorized the flying of flags at half-mast on military buildings, and Pinochet's funeral will be performed with military honors. Chile's president, Michelle Bachelet, will not attend.

Within hours of the news yesterday, thousands of people gathered at Plaza Italia to celebrate the ex-dictator's death. There was a jubilant carnival atmosphere in the streets as people merrily waved flags, sang songs or drank champagne. Later on, there were reports of clashes with police firing water cannon and tear gas at the crowd.

A smaller group of right-wingers mourned Pinochet's passing outside the Military Hospital, clutching pictures of the dead

dictator. "It is very sad, because it is as if we were left orphans," one Pinochet supporter told the press.

But many of Pinochet's opponents are angry because of his impunity during his lifetime. "What saddens me is that this criminal has died without having been sentenced", said Hugo Gutierrez, a human rights lawyer.

During Pinochet's iron-fist rule, thousands were killed or disappeared, and in later years his image was further marred by reports that he had stolen large amounts of money held in foreign bank accounts and that he had been engaged in cocaine smuggling.

Accused of dozens of human rights abuses, the ex-dictator was never tried for these offences on the pretext of his frail health, despite repeated international attempts to take him to court.

Today in History

1531 - The Apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe: Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin saw the Blessed Virgin Mary outside of modern-day Mexico City.

1897 - Belo Horizonte, the first planned city of Brazil, was inaugurated.

1901 - Guglielmo Marconi received the first trans-Atlantic radio signal, from Poldhu Wireless Station in Cornwall, England to Cabot Tower in St. John's, Newfoundland.

1915 - President Yuan Shikai of the Republic of China reinstated the monarchy and declared himself Emperor.

1964 - Jomo Kenyatta became the first President of the Republic of Kenya.

December 12 is Independence Day in Kenya (1963).

Quote of the Day

Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to my conscience, above all liberties.

~ John Milton in *Areopagitica*

Word of the Day

inchoate; adj

1. Recently started but not fully formed yet; only elementary or immature.

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