



Top Stories

Kangaroos escape in France

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World's cheapest car launched in India, will go on sale in April

The world's least expensive car, the Tata Nano, has been launched in India. It will go on sale in April, and will start delivery in July. The automobile costs only 100,000 Indian rupees, or just under US\$2,000.

FedEx jet crash lands in Tokyo, burns

On Monday, a FedEx McDonnell Douglas MD-11 cargo jet flying from Guangzhou, China to Narita, Japan crashed while landing at Narita International Airport near Tokyo before 7 a.m. local time. The plane landed during high winds, and bounced twice before flipping over and bursting into flames.

Obama considers 'comprehensive' exit strategy from Afghanistan

US President Barack Obama said that he is seeking a "comprehensive exit strategy" from the Afghanistan war during an interview on 60 Minutes.

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losing a confidence motion in the Chamber of Deputies.

- France's government will compensate victims of nuclear testing in Algeria and French Polynesia.
- Japan defeats South Korea to win the World Baseball Classic.
- Michael Misick resigns as Premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands, due to alleged corruption.
- South Africa denies Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso a visa to attend a peace conference in Johannesburg.
- The United Kingdom's Retail Prices Index reaches zero percent for the first time since 1960.
- Sixteen militants and eight Indian Army soldiers are killed in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara District.
- Italy jails Tuninter Flight 1153's two pilots for ten years for praying before ditching into the Mediterranean Sea.
- China blocks access to the YouTube video-sharing website.
- The United States announces a plan to increase security along its border with Mexico.
- Immaculata University discovers a mass grave of 57 Irish immigrants in East Whiteland Township, Pennsylvania.

cages in an Australian theme park, letting the kangaroos loose.

"When we arrived on Saturday morning, five pens had been broken open, their padlocks were smashed and the perimeter fence was torn in several places," said Carole Masson, the owner of the park which is located in Carcassonne.

A massive search was organized by firefighters, police and gendarmes. So far 12 kangaroos have been found. Five of them had remained within the park.

There is a concern that the marsupials will make their way onto a freeway, and become a risk to themselves or drivers.

In October of 2008, in the same park, hunting dogs managed to get loose. They later attacked and killed 44 of the park's kangaroos.

IDF soldiers' account of Gaza incursion sparks new war crimes investigations

During a seminar with students at the Mechinat Rabin in Oranim, Israeli veterans of the 2008–2009 Israel–Gaza conflict revealed accounts of the deaths of unarmed civilians. This has prompted new allegations of war crimes and a review and investigation into the rules of engagement within the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

There are two accounts in which fears of war crimes have been raised. In one, an Israeli commander ordered the killing of

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Czech Republic Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek resigns after

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an old woman walking down a road and coming within 100 metres of an IDF position. There was no warning that a perimeter existed, no attempt was made at a warning and no attempt was made to ascertain as to whether the old woman posed a threat.

In a second account a woman and her two children were killed by a sniper when she was ordered to leave a building being occupied by Israeli soldiers. The commander of the unit commandeering the building however failed to inform a sniper placed on a roof top and the three were killed according to standing instructions issued to the sniper.

In addition to specific cases, the veterans spoke of a general contempt towards the Palestinians, and disregard for their lives. One squad leader speaking at the military academy said that the attitude of those both above and below was that "...we should kill everyone there [in...Gaza]. Everyone there is a terrorist." With his immediate commanding officer advocating the clearing of buildings by shooting all within without warning.

An Israeli spokes person speaking to the BBC said that the incidents spoken of were well known within the brigade responsible and that any actions that took place were within its rules of engagement, however in response to the accusations the Military Advocate General of the IDF, Brigadier General Avichai Mendelblit has instructed the Israeli Military Police Investigation unit to investigate the allegations.

Ehud Barak Minister of Defense

Talking to Israel Radio Israeli Minister of Defense Ehud Barak

said that the IDF is "...the most moral army in the world" though individual exceptions may have occurred, and that these would be investigated.

Others in Israel whilst not denying that these incidents might have occurred speak of lack a context in which they have been reported.

Internationally the accusations are not seen as individual soldiers being responsible for war crimes but that war crimes may have been committed by the Israeli military as a whole, that its rules of engagement were drafted and implemented in such a way that they failed to sufficiently distinguish between combatants and civilians.

In response to the allegations Richard Falk, the UN special rapporteur for human rights in the Palestinian territories, said that the Geneva Conventions required that there had to be a clear distinction between military targets and the civilian population and that "...If it is not possible to do so, then launching the attacks is inherently unlawful and would seem to constitute a war crime of the greatest magnitude under international law..."

If it is to have indeed failed to protect the lives of Palestinian civilians then the Israeli military not only violated international law but its own moral code of conduct as outlined in its tenet of purity of arms.

Obama considers 'comprehensive' exit strategy from Afghanistan

United States President Barack Obama is seeking a "comprehensive exit strategy" from the Afghanistan war.

During a 60 Minutes interview, Obama said, "There's got to be an exit strategy. There's got to be a sense that this is not perpetual drift."

In February Obama said that 17,000 more troops would be sent this year before the August elections to supplement the 36,000 American troops already deployed in Afghanistan.

Obama stated that the U.S. Mission in Afghanistan is "making sure that al-Qaeda cannot attack the U.S. homeland and U.S. interests and our allies. That's our No. 1 priority." Options for a strategy include improving Afghan-Pakistani relations, while rebuilding Afghanistan's economy.

"I found a very encouraging symmetry of views between our NATO allies and other troop-contributing countries and the United States," Richard Holbrooke, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan stated.

"In the past, the United States government stove-piped it, they had an Afghan policy and a Pakistan policy. We have to integrate the two and I hope the rest of the world will join us in that effort," said Holbrooke.

Obama also said that "the complexities of Afghanistan are matched, maybe even dwarfed, by the complexities of the economic situation. There needs to be a way to withdraw from Afghanistan and place the focus on economic growth. We may need to bring a more regional diplomatic approach to bear. We may need to coordinate more effectively with our allies. But we can't lose sight of what our central mission is."

European allies have stated they

have exit plans for the next three to four years. Hamid Karzai, the Afghan President says that although he supports the idea, he urges that there is no need for any "quick fixes".

EPA proposes using Clean Air Act to fight global warming

Washington, D.C. - The Environmental Protection Agency may have a new tool in its arsenal to fight global warming. The agency has submitted a proposal to the Obama administration which aims to list carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses as pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

The policy had previously been proposed to and rejected by the Bush administration, which said it was the wrong tool to be using. The proposal lists the negative effects of global warming, including longer and hotter heat waves, increased flooding, and the increased spread of diseases due to warmer weather.

EPA administrator Lisa Jackson has previously suggested declaring global warming a health threat, and that the agency could use the 1970 Clean Air Act to use to combat it.

Environmental groups applauded the finding, with the director of Clean Air Watch, Frank O'Donnell, calling it "a green-letter day for the environment."

One of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce vice presidents, William L. Kovacs, said if the the proposal is put into effect that it "will be devastating to the economy."

It is unclear whether the Obama administration will go along with the proposal. White House spokesman Ben LaBolt commented that "The president has made clear

that to combat climate change, his strong preference is for Congress to pass energy security legislation that includes a cap on greenhouse gas emissions." No specific timeline has been given for when a decision would be made.

An upcoming conference in Copenhagen, Denmark will focus on drawing up a new international global warming treaty, which the United States plans to attend, a clear reversal from the Bush administration's non-participation in the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

Youth charged with murdering Northern-Irish police officer

Police in Northern Ireland have charged a 17 year old youth with the murder of police officer Stephen Carroll (48) last month, while four others are still being held. Two others were released earlier on Monday, after being questioned for a week.

The youth is also charged with membership of the Continuity IRA and possession of a firearm, according to a spokeswoman for the police in Belfast. He is to appear in court in Lisburn today. He also faces charges for collecting information of use to terrorists.

Responsibility for the shooting had been claimed on behalf of the North Armagh Battalion of the Continuity IRA in a coded message to Belfast media. The murder was widely condemned by political parties in Northern Ireland, the rest of the UK and Ireland.

TV late night show host David Letterman marries girlfriend of 23 years

David Letterman, host of the late night American television show Late Show with David Letterman, has married his girlfriend of 23 years, he told studio audience

during a taping of his show on Monday.

Letterman, 61, announced he and Regina Lasko, with whom he has a five-year son, were wed in a courthouse ceremony in Choteau in Teton County, Montana last week, near the ranch they own together.

"They say, 'Well, why did it take you so long to get married?' and, of course, the answer honestly is we wanted to make sure we had the prenup just right," Letterman joked.

Letterman and Lasko began their relationship in 1986. Their son, Harry, was present for the ceremony. The late night talk show host previously swore off marriage after his 1977 divorce with Michelle Cook.

"I secretly felt that men who were married admired me ... like I was the last of the real gunslingers," Letterman said during his Monday show, where he made the announcement shortly after congratulating Bruce Willis for getting married last week.

Letterman told the audience he nearly missed the ceremony because his truck became stuck in mud two miles from their house. The ceremony was delayed one hour while Letterman walked back in 50 mile per hour winds to get his car.

"And the whole way, I'm thinking, 'See ... you try to get married and this is what happens,'" he said.

Fargo, North Dakota, prepares for record flooding

Fargo, North Dakota is preparing itself for what could be its worst flood ever. Hundreds of high school and college students

worked with two hundred National Guard soldiers Monday on the task of filling over a million sandbags in the effort to stave off the rising Red River. Classes at North Dakota State University were canceled in order to lend the assistance of its students and faculty.

The threat of further rainfall has increased the flood risk, with the river now predicted to crest as high as 52 feet, over twice that of its lowest flood stage. An emergency levee south of town is also being hastily constructed. Three machines capable of filling 15,000 sandbags an hour are being used around the clock to keep up with demand.

Temporary dikes from Louisiana are being flown in. The dikes, 4 foot high interlocking containers filled with sand, were used during Hurricane Katrina. In Emmons County, several dozen homes were evacuated on Sunday, and families in the town of Beulah, North Dakota have also been forced to leave ahead of the rising waters.

The current scenario is a reminder of the record 1997 flood which inundated the Red River Valley. Fargo constructed a levee system following the disaster to help prevent future flooding. Up to 6000 homes are currently at risk, with many communities farther downriver also preparing for flooding.

The American Red Cross has sent over 20,000 prepackaged meals, along with cots and blankets. Its volunteers around the country have been put on standby, ready to travel to North Dakota if necessary.

All eyes are currently on the skies, as the fate of many communities will be determined largely by how

much rain and snow falls over the next week.

Japanese ship escapes after pirates open fire in Somalia

A cargo ship owned by a Japanese company has escaped an attack by pirates off the coast of Somalia. The ship outran two pirate boats that opened fire on her yesterday.

The ship, owned by Mitsui O.S.K. Lines and flagged in the Cayman Islands, came under attack at around 4 p.m. Somali time (UTC+3) as gunfire came from two small pirate boats. The vessel, with a crew of eighteen from the Philippines, suffered light damage to its front and windows were broken.

The Jasmine Ace was en-route from Sharjah, United Arab Emirates to Mombasa, Kenya. The 126.75m car carrier had loaded with 377 used cars in Sharjah on March 17.

The ship sped up to try and outrun the high-speed boats, and began to zig-zag as an evasive manoeuvre. The pirates chased for forty minutes but finally gave up. Nobody was injured in the attack.

Piracy is rife in Somalia. Japan sent two destroyers earlier this month to combat piracy in the region, joining an international task force. Indian cargo ship MSV Al Rafiquei was hijacked on Saturday and the ship and the sixteen Indians on board were released on Sunday. Pirates seized the crew's mobiles as well as five barrels of petrol and twenty of diesel. The crew were also assaulted up by their captors.

World's cheapest car launched in India, will go on sale in April

The world's least expensive car, the Tata Nano, has been launched

in India. It will go on sale in April, and will start delivery in July. The automobile costs only 100,000 Indian rupees, or just under US\$2,000.

"We are at the gates offering a new form of transportation to the people of India, and later I hope other markets as well," said the chairman of the auto firm, Ratan Tata, calling the vehicle a "milestone."

"From the drawing board to its commercial launch, the car has overcome several challenges," Tata said. "I hope it will provide safe, affordable four-wheel transportation to families who till now have not been able to own a car.

"This was never conceived as the cheapest car, but as providing transport to those people who never owned a car," Tata said. "Driven mainly by the change in demand that we see elsewhere in the world, we suddenly felt we had a product that could be of considerable interest as a low-cost product in western Europe, eastern Europe, the UK and even the U.S."

The Tata Nano is a four-door vehicle, and is 3 metres long, 1.5 m wide, and 1.5 m tall. It is equipped with a 33 bhp, 624 cc engine at the rear. No radio, airbags, power steering, or air conditioning are available in the basic model, although upgrades are available. The Nano Europa, a slightly larger European version of the car, is expected in 2011.

According to Ravi Kant, the managing director at Tata Motors, the first 100,000 people to receive a Nano would be chosen from the initial orders by a ballot.

An auto analyst for Bombay's

Angel Broking, Vaishali Jajoo, predicted that the Nano will add only three percent to Tata's revenues even if it can sell a quarter of a million such cars per annum.

"That doesn't make a significant difference to the top line," Jajoo said. "And for the bottom line, it will take five to six years to break even."

Environmentalists say that the car will exacerbate traffic problems already rife in India, and help increase pollution levels. Tata, however, stated that its vehicle is the least polluting car in the country.

"Twilight" DVD sells 3 million copies in first day

The DVD edition of the vampire romance-fantasy film Twilight sold more than 3 million copies on the day of its release, making it one of the top-five bestselling first-day DVD releases in the last two years.

The movie — based on Stephenie Meyer's novel of the same name — was released as a two-disc special edition DVD March 21. The 2008 film earned almost \$380 million in worldwide sales during its theatrical run.

Nearly 6,000 stores around the country held midnight events to mark the home release of the film, which Wal-Mart said was the most pre-ordered DVD in the store's history.

Media reports said it was unclear whether Blu-Ray discs were factored into the 3 million amount.

Among the other recent films with best-selling first-day DVD releases were Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End, The Dark Knight, Harry Potter and the Order of the

Phoenix and Transformers.

"We are incredibly appreciative that Twilight fans came out to once again support this film at our midnight events across the nation," Steve Nickerson, president of Twilight studio Summit Home Entertainment, said in a press statement.

"With such successful first-day sales, it is apparent that our fans remain passionate about the Twilight saga and want to own a piece of the Edward and Bella story they have come to love," Nickerson said.

Today in History

1306 – Robert the Bruce was crowned King of Scotland at Scone near Perth.

1409 – The Council of Pisa, an unrecognized ecumenical conference of the Roman Catholic Church held in Pisa that attempted to end the Western Schism, opened.

1634 – Lord Baltimore, his younger brother Leonard Calvert, and a group of Catholic settlers founded the English colony of Maryland.

1655 – Dutch astronomer Christiaan Huygens discovered Titan, the largest natural satellite of the planet Saturn.

1802 – France and the United Kingdom signed the Treaty of Amiens, temporarily ending the hostilities between the two during the French Revolutionary Wars.

1807 – The Slave Trade Act became law, abolishing the slave trade in the British Empire.

March 25 is Feast of the Annunciation in Western Christianity; Struggle for Human Rights Day in Slovakia; Independence Day in Greece (1821)

Quote of the Day

Freedom is the very essence of life, the impelling force in all intellectual and social development, the creator of every new outlook for the future of mankind. The liberation of man from economic exploitation and from intellectual and political oppression, which finds its finest expression in the world-philosophy of Anarchism, is the first prerequisite for the evolution of a higher social culture and a new humanity.

~ Rudolf Rocker ~

Word of the Day

incendiary adj

1. Capable of causing fire.
2. Intentionally stirring up strife, riot, rebellion
3. Inflammatory, emotionally charged.

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