

Top Stories

Many dead in Egyptian resort blasts



A string of at least three explosions in Egyptian resort towns in the Sinai early Saturday morning has left at least 88 people dead and over 200 more wounded.

Man shot on London Underground unconnected to bombing, says Scotland Yard



Scotland Yard has issued a statement saying that the man shot yesterday by police in a London Underground station was "not connected" to Thursday's bombings and called the incident "a tragedy"

Man shot on London Underground unconnected to bombing, says Scotland Yard

Scotland Yard has issued a statement saying that Jean Charles de Menezes, the 27 year old man Brazilian electrician shot yesterday by police in a London Underground station was "not connected" to Thursday's bombings and called the incident "a tragedy". A day earlier, the police commissioner said the man was "directly linked" to Thursday's attacks.

The police statement reads:

"We are now satisfied that he was not connected with the incidents of Thursday 21st July 2005. For somebody to lose their life in such circumstances is a tragedy and one that the Metropolitan Police Service regrets."

The man had been followed by police when he left a flat that had been under surveillance. The man did not obey instructions from police as he ran onto a Tube train at the station. Eyewitness accounts told of how the dead man "was wearing a large coat, unusual for the time of year", but he didn't seem to have "any guns or anything like that; I didn't see him carrying anything. I didn't even see a bag to be quite honest."

Mark Whitby, apparently the closest eye witness said; "He half-tripped, was half-pushed to the floor. The policeman nearest to me had the black automatic pistol in his left hand, he held it down to the guy and unloaded five shots into him."

The shooting is being investigated by the Metropolitan Police Service's Directorate of Professional Standards and the Independent Police Complaints Commission, which investigates all fatal police shootings.

Brazilian Government "Shocked and Appalled"

The Brazilian Government "looks forward to receiving the necessary explanation from

the British authorities on the circumstances which led to this tragedy" and have dispatched their foreign minister Celso Amorim to London in order to get an explanation from the British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw.

Capitol Hill Democrats hold informal hearing on Plame leak



United States Capitol building

Democrats on Saturday turned over their radio broadcast to a former CIA agent and Republican, Larry Johnson, who accused President Bush of flip-flopping on his pledge to fire anybody on his staff involved with the Valerie Plame leak.

Johnson, a participant in yesterday's Democratic hearing on Capitol Hill, said "We deserve people who work in the White House who are committed to protecting classified information, telling the truth to the American people, and living by example to the idea that a country at war with Islamic extremists cannot focus its efforts on attacking other American citizens who simply tried to tell the truth."

House and Senate Democrats held a highly partisan hearing Friday where four retired U.S. intelligence officials aired views that were critical of the Plame leak itself, and then critical of Bush administration and Republican efforts to minimize damage caused by the controversy.

Former CIA case officer, Jim Marcinkowski, testified that the current administration policy of setting a criminal standard for dismissal was too high, and that Bush should take action on those persons involved. "Each time the political machine made up of prime-time patriots and partisan ninnyes display their ignorance by deriding

Featured story

Space Shuttle Discovery launch scheduled for Tuesday



NASA has announced that the Space Shuttle Discovery is due to blast off on Tuesday 26 July at 10.39 am EDT.

Wikipedia Current Events

- British police admit that the man killed yesterday by undercover officers had no connection to the suicide bombings or attempted bombings of previous days and weeks. Scotland Yard has described the killing as a "tragedy". The victim, Jean Charles de Menezes, 27, was Brazilian.
- Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) introduced a Congressional Resolution of Inquiry which, if passed, will require the White House and the U.S. State Department to "transmit all information relating to communication with officials of the United Kingdom between January 1, 2002, and October 16, 2002, relating to the policy of the United States with respect to Iraq."

Valerie Plame as a mere paper-pusher, or belittling the varying degrees of cover used to protect our officers, or continuing to play partisan politics with our national security, it's a disservice to this country," he said.



Representative Henry Waxman

The hearing was not an official proceeding of Congress. Democratic lawmakers organized it after Republican leaders in congressional committees with jurisdiction in these matters rejected their request for a legislative oversight hearing. Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA), the ranking minority member of the House Committee on Government Reform, said "A special standard seems to apply to Karl Rove: There will be no questions asked, and no accountability."

Meanwhile, a Vermont native Dennis Morrisseau, 62, plans a Republican run for a soon to be vacated seat in the House of Representatives. Bernard Sanders (I-Vt) will leave the post in his run for a Senate seat. Central to Morrisseau's bid is his pledge to bring articles of impeachment against George W. Bush.

Space Shuttle Discovery launch scheduled for Tuesday



NASA has announced that the Space Shuttle Discovery is due to blast off on Tuesday 26 July at 10.39 am EDT.

The news that the 43 hour countdown will be restarted on Saturday comes after the successful resolution of the problems that forced the aborting of the previous launch

attempt.

The countdown includes 28 hours of scheduled "hold time" bringing the total time period up to Tuesday.

The launch had been scrubbed previously due to a faulty main fuel tank sensor which was suffering from electromagnetic interference. Engineers fixed the problem by improving the electrical grounding of the system to reduce interference.

Inter Milan cancels tour of England due to safety concerns

The Italian football team Inter Milan have cancelled their tour of England, where they were to play the English teams Crystal Palace, Leicester City, Portsmouth, and Norwich City. The four matches were due to take place between 25 July and 31 July.

The cancellation of the tour has come days after a failed bomb attack on London. Only one match — the game against Crystal Palace — was to have been played in London.

Inter Milan confirmed in a statement that the attacks on London compelled the club to cancel their tour of England, saying that: "Football takes a step back because of increasing serious events which touch the sensitivity of everyone. For this reason, and given the situation, the club has decided to cancel the team's tour of England."

The cancelled matches

25th July against Leicester
27th July against Crystal Palace
29th July against Norwich
31st July against Portsmouth

So far, the Leicester and Norwich websites have confirmed that tickets sold for the games against Inter will be refunded.

According to the Crystal Palace official website, officials at the club are "saddened and angered" at Inter's decision.

Execution of two gay teens in Iran spurs controversy

International controversy erupted after Iranian officials executed two gay teenagers who were originally reported to be convicted of homosexuality, however later reports released by the Iranian government

after international furor claimed the conviction was for the rape of a 13-year-old boy. The two were hanged July 19.

Only the age of one of the two executed teens was officially released to the public. He was 18. The other, according to the Iranian Student's News Agency (ISNA) was aged 17. In the original report by the ISNA it was said that the two were found having sex together when they were both 16. It also reported that they were held and beaten for fourteen months before the execution.

The UK-based gay rights group, Outrage! claims the report issued later by the government of Iran is a "smokescreen" to justify killing homosexuals. And one media outlet, Direland, has blasted the media holdings of Rupert Murdoch that includes Fox News Channel and The Times newspaper for publishing the subsequent Iranian government issued allegation of rape as matter of fact without mention of the previous stories before international condemnation bearing no such accusations.

According to Iranian newspapers, the two boys were given 228 lashes for their other convictions of theft, disrupting public order and public drinking before they were hanged in Edalat ("Justice" in English) Square in the Iranian city of Mashhad. The executioners, fearing reprisals, wore masks and anti-riot forces were mobilized to prevent outbreaks of public protests.

Photos of the execution released by Iranian Students News Agency showed the two teens crying in the truck driving them to the gallows in Justice Square, located in the northeastern region of the country.

Iran has been under fire by international human rights groups for executing teenagers in the past, including the 2004 execution of Atefeh Rajabi, a 16-year-old girl convicted of having sex before marriage. Medical reports, not allowed in the court, had stated that she was mentally ill.

Like many other Islamic countries, Iran enforces the religious sharia law, which allows for the execution of children, including girls aged nine or older and boys 15 and older.

Iranian officials have complained that the

media has emphasized the teens' ages. Deputy Ali Asgari said, "Whatever sentence is decreed by an Islamic penal system must be approved, unless proven otherwise... Instead of paying tribute to the action of the judiciary, the media are mentioning the age of the hanged criminals and creating a commotion that harms the interests of the state... Even if certain websites made a reference to their age, journalists should not pursue this. These individuals were corrupt. Their sentence was carried out with the approval of the judiciary and it served them right."

Both teens were convicted by Court No. 19 under sharia law. The teens are identified only as "M.A." and "A.M." Those found having homosexual sex in Iran may face death by either hanging, stoning, cutting in half by a sword, or dropping from a tall building or cliff.

An ISNA report said the couple acknowledged having sexual relations with each other but said they were unaware of laws against homosexuality.

Another report, by Iran In Focus, claimed that the two were hanged not for gay sex, but rather for sexually assaulting a thirteen year old boy at knife point. Neither the original Iranian Student's New Agency nor an additional report from the National Council of Resistance of Iran had this allegation, said the United Kingdom based Outrage. Direland Press has noted that the accusation of rape in reports came days after international outrage and detailed reports by other Iranian news agencies. They suggest the recent report is a ploy of the Iranian government to justify its actions.

"The allegation of sexual assault may either be a trumped-up charge to undermine public sympathy for the youths -- a frequent tactic by the Islamist regime in Iran -- or it may be that the 13-year-old was a willing participant but that Iranian law ... deems that no person of that age is capable of sexual consent and that therefore any sexual contact is automatically deemed in law to be a sex assault," said OutRage!'s Peter Tatchell.

"This is just the latest barbarity by the Islamo-fascists in Iran," Tatchell remarked. "The entire country is a gigantic prison, with Islamic rule sustained by detention

without trial, torture and state-sanctioned murder."

Tatchell told reporters that according to Iranian human rights activists, more than 4,000 lesbians and gay men have been executed in Iran since the ayatollahs seized power in 1979. He said an estimated 100,000 Iranians have been executed in Iran since that time.

Reports also indicated that three other gay Iranian teenagers are reportedly being hunted by police, but they are said to have gone into hiding.

OutRage! requested the international community see Iran "as a pariah state" and to "break off diplomatic relations, impose trade sanctions, and give practical support to the democratic and left opposition inside Iran."

The United Kingdom has a policy of constructive engagement with Iran, as does France and Germany, primarily directed at the resolution of the Iranian nuclear crisis.

European Union officials have been holding a human rights dialogue with Tehran, but last year the a report by Human Rights Watch said that violations had increased since 2000.

In the Unites States, the Human Rights Campaign has called for U.S. Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice to condemn the executions.

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Today in History

1847 – Brigham Young led the first group of Mormon pioneers into Salt Lake Valley, then part of Mexico.

1911 – In the Peruvian Andes, Hiram Bingham re-discovered Machu Picchu, "the Lost City of the Incas".

1927 – The Menin Gate war memorial in Ypres, Belgium was unveiled.

1929 – The Kellogg-Briand Pact, renouncing war as an instrument of foreign policy, went into effect.

2001 – Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, the last Tsar of Bulgaria when he was a child, was sworn in as Prime Minister of Bulgaria, becoming the only monarch in history to regain political power through democratic election to a different office.

July 24 is Pioneer Day in Utah

Quote of the Day

"Thro' many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home." ~ John Newton

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