



### Top Stories

#### Aljazeera airs new audio tape by Osama Bin Laden

Aljazeera has aired a new tape by al-Qaeda's leader Osama Bin Laden and the United States says the tape is authentic. In the tape Bin Laden says, "the blockade which the West is imposing on the government of Hamas proves that there is a Zionist crusaders war on Islam."

#### Oil prices surge over \$75 a barrel to a record high

Crude oil prices surged to a new record of over \$75.00 a barrel on Tuesday closing at a price of \$75.17. In Europe, Brent crude oil rose to \$74.59 a barrel.

### Featured story

#### PBS show asserts greenhouse gases, atmospheric pollutants dimming future

"Dimming the Earth", aired by Public Broadcasting Service, presented research by some leading scientists regarding the complex and chaotic systems of our global climate and the effects that human activity is having on it.

### Wikipedia Current Events

•The Hungarian Socialist Party wins with a plurality of the votes and will therefore continue to govern in coalition with the Alliance of Free Democrats; it also becomes the first re-elected government of Hungary since the end of the Cold War.

### Wikipedia Current Events

•Elections in the Solomon Islands: Beijing begins to evacuate ethnic Chinese from Solomon Islands following Anti-Chinese riots during the election protests that destroyed the Chinatown.

•Cyclone Monica, a Category 5 cyclone on the Australian scale, threatens Australia's Northern coast. The Bureau of Meteorology has warned of "dangerously high tides" that may cause "extensive flooding" along part of the coast and ordered the sounding of emergency sirens in the Gove Peninsula. Alcan, the world's second-biggest aluminum producer, has warned customers of potential interruptions to supplies on contracts from its Gove refinery.

•A silent march through Brussels, Belgium, takes place with 80,000 participants, following the murder on April 12 of a teenager, stabbed at rush hour in Brussels Central Railway station.

#### Swazi King says political parties are no longer banned

King Mswati III, of Swaziland has said that political parties are no longer banned under the country's new constitution that came into force in February.

King Mswati III is the absolute monarch of Swaziland, a small landlocked country in southern Africa. Political parties have been banned by Mswati's father, King Sobhuza II in 1973. A new constitution was brought into

effect by royal decree in February by King Mswati, which proclaimed the right to freedom of association and freedom of speech but did not explicitly lift the ban on political parties.

In an interview with the news agency Agence France-Presse (AFP), King Mswati said, "The old constitution had actually written that we banned political parties but these days when you read our new constitution, our new constitution allows the freedom of rights," adding that "There is nothing which says we ban parties."

This week marks the 20th year of Mswati's ascension to the throne. He has been criticised for his lavish lifestyle, while ruling over a country struggling with unemployment, poverty and the world's highest HIV infection rates. A pro-democracy movement has been active in the country since its independence from British colonial rule. In the last few months, there have also been firebombings of government offices and official residences, and members of a banned pro-democracy group, the People's United Democratic Movement have been arrested on treason charges.

In the AFP interview, the King also spoke against using violence to bring about change in the country, and said that "doors are wide open" to those who wanted to convey a message. He also expressed hope of international assistance in overcoming the

challenges facing the country.

### **Aljazeera airs new audiotape by Osama Bin Laden**

Aljazeera has aired a new audio tape it says contains the voice of al-Qaeda's leader, Osama bin Laden. The tape is 11 minutes and 26 seconds long and is believed to have been made after March 14, 2006.

According to Aljazeera, in the tape, Bin Laden talks about the "situation in Iraq, Palestine and Sudan" and says that the isolation of the Hamas-led Palestine is a "war by crusaders and Zionists against Islam."

"I say that this war is the joint responsibility of the people and the governments. While the war continues, the people renew their allegiance to their rulers and politicians and continue to send their sons to our countries to fight us. The war goes on and the people are renewing their allegiance to its rulers and masters. They send their sons to armies to fight us and they continue their financial and moral support while our countries are burned and our houses are bombed and our people are killed," said bin Laden.

"The blockade which the West is imposing on the government of Hamas proves that there is a Zionist crusaders war on Islam. I have sworn to only live free. Even if I find bitter the taste of death, I don't want to die humiliated or deceived. The war is a responsibility shared between the people and the governments. They do not want a truce unless it is from our side only. They insist on continuing their crusader campaign against our nation and to loot our wealth," he added.

Bin Laden also talked about Sudan saying, "I call on mujahedeen and their supporters, especially in Sudan and the Arab peninsula, to prepare for long war again the crusader plunderers in Western Sudan. Our goal is not defending the Khartoum government but to defend Islam, its land and its people. The politicians of the West do not want dialogue except for the sake of dialogue to drag us on, for them to gain more time. They want an armistice that is observed only by us."

The United States has since said that they believe the tape is authentic.

"We just heard from the intelligence community that they believe it's authentic," said Scott McClellan, spokesman for the White House.

"We are continuing to take the fight to the enemy abroad and making it difficult for them to plan and plot against Americans. The al Qaeda leadership is on the run and under a lot of pressure. We continue to take all terrorist threats seriously and that is why we are acting on all fronts doing everything within our power to prevail in the war on terrorism," added McClellan.

Aljazeera last aired an audiotape in January by bin Laden, where he promised new terrorist attacks in the U.S. but also offered the U.S. a "long-term truce."

### **US Congress drafting bill that may affect Internet freedoms**

The United States Congress is currently drafting a bill known as the Communications Opportunity, Promotion, and Efficiency Act of 2006 that would revise and update the 1996 Telecommunications Act. Currently phone and cable

lobbyists who own the broad band networks are calling on the federal government to permit them to operate Internet and other digital communications services as private networks. The bill as it now stands states that certain classes of Internet providers "may not unreasonably" impair, interfere, restrict or limit applications or services. Consumer advocates and some large Internet companies are concerned that this change will result in a loss of what is being called network neutrality, and are demanding specific language in the bill to address it. Three weeks ago, the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications rejected an amendment to the bill that would have strengthened provisions for network neutrality. The amendment was defeated by a vote of 28 to 8.

Representative Fred Upton from Michigan, chairman of the Telecommunications and the Internet Subcommittee, describes the bill as a way to "ignite the marketplace - unleashing great advances in technology and delivering to consumers a variety of new services at a lower cost that were once never even imagined. Every consumer in the nation with a telephone, television and access to the Internet will be better for it - the wave of the future is now."

Michael Copps, a FCC Commissioner, said recently, "This Internet may not be the one we know in the future there are threats to it out there... Entrenched interests are already jockeying to constrain the openness that has been the Internet's defining hallmark."

A recent poll done by The Consumer Federation of America

(See source 5) shows that the Internet has taken on an important role in the daily life of Americans. With two-thirds reporting it is important for personal communications and researching products, over half said it is important for getting news and, about 40 percent cited online banking, e-commerce, and retrieving government information as significant ways in which they used the internet. They expressed a great deal of concern about discriminatory practices of communications network operators.

The revision of the 1996 Telecommunications Act was proposed by House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Joe Barton, R-Texas, and U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush, D-Ill., in late March and went on to the full committee on April 5.

### **Michael Schumacher breaks Formula One record for most poles**

Bologna, Italia - Michael Schumacher has set the Formula One pole record. "Schumi" won the pole position at the San Marino Grand Prix. The pole position was the 66th for Schumacher. The previous record was held by Ayrton Senna. Senna won his F1-career 65 pole positions between years 1984-1994. Schumacher has been racing in the F1-series since 1991. Senna won 40% of his pole attempts (161 races) compared to Schumacher's 28% (235 races so far). This new pole record reawakened the affection for Senni who died in 1994 on the fifth lap at the same race, the San Marino Grand Prix, a race won by Schumacher who was also champion the same year.

### **South Thailand election reruns hit by violence**

Thailand's troubled southern province of Narathiwat saw the driver of an election official shot dead in the hours immediately leading up to today's by-elections. The attack, shortly after 6 a.m. local time (2300 UTC), saw the 41 year old driver instantly killed and a woman passenger hospitalised from injuries sustained in the attack.

Thailand's three southernmost provinces have been the centre of an insurgent campaign that has left over 1000 dead in the last two years, the predominantly Muslim region overwhelmingly rejected the Thai Rak Thai party candidates who stood unopposed in the April 2 general election forcing by-elections in an effort to fill the country's lower house of parliament before it is due to reconvene on May 2. Rules laid out in the country's constitution require that any candidate standing unopposed must receive votes from 20% of the eligible electorate to be elected. With the major opposition parties continuing their election boycott, there is some doubt if the full compliment of 500 MPs will be elected by the May 2 deadline.

According to the Thai News Agency, there are by-elections in 40 constituencies spread over 17 provinces, despite voting being compulsory, turnout is expected to be low as this is the third set of elections since the start of the month.

### **Nagin, Landrieu advance to runoff in New Orleans mayoral election**

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin and Louisiana Secretary of State Mitch Landrieu will most likely face each other in a May 20 runoff election

for mayor of New Orleans.

With all 442 precincts reporting from elections on Saturday, Nagin has reportedly received 41,489 votes (38%), leading all candidates but falling short of the majority needed to avoid a runoff. Landrieu received 31,499 votes (29%); Ron Forman, 18,734 votes (17%). All three are Democrats.

Nagin, 49, was first elected in 2002 on a platform of fighting government corruption, but he has since become better known for leading the recovery effort in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. At the same time, he has come under criticism for certain remarks, such as asserting that New Orleans would remain a "chocolate city" with an African-American majority.

Nagin said that he was "humbled by the support from this community," and called on New Orleanians to "bring this city together ... it's time for black and white, Hispanic and Asian, everybody to come together for one New Orleans. It's time for us to stop the bickering."

Landrieu, 45, brother of U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and son of former New Orleans mayor Moon Landrieu, said, "Tonight, we take the second step on this journey back home, and I ask all New Orleanians to join with me in this march as we proclaim to America that New Orleans will be rebuilt."

Forman pledged to "work day and night with either Mitch or Ray to rebuild this city."

A special challenge in this election was bringing together New Orleans residents displaced by the catastrophic flooding in the aftermath of Katrina. It is

estimated that nearly six out of every ten residents still registered to vote in New Orleans live outside the city.

Polling was held at 76 polling stations (compared with 262 four years ago) and ten satellite stations were opened throughout the state for absentee voting. Civil rights groups challenged the plan, and instead advocated for polling stations to be setup in Houston and Atlanta where many displaced residents now live. The plan was rejected by state officials and federal courts, citing legal questions.

### Today in History

1800 - The U.S. Library of Congress was founded.

1916 - Easter Rising: The Irish Republican Brotherhood started a rebellion in Ireland.

1967 - The Soyuz 1 spacecraft crashed in Siberia, killing cosmonaut Vladimir Komarov.

1980 - Eight U.S. servicemen died in Operation Eagle Claw, a failed attempt to rescue the hostages in the Iran hostage crisis.

1990 - The Hubble Space Telescope was launched by the Space Shuttle Discovery in mission STS-31.

April 24 is Genocide Remembrance Day in Armenia, Republic Day in the Gambia.

### Quote of the Day

"The end of man is knowledge but there's one thing he can't know. He can't know whether knowledge will save him or kill him. He will be killed, all right, but he can't know whether he is killed because of the knowledge which he has got or because of the knowledge which he hasn't got and which if he had it would save him."

~ Robert Penn Warren

### Word of the Day

lollygag; *v*

Definition

1. To fall behind through lack of effort.

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