



Top Stories



US: North Korea helped Syria build reactor

In a briefing today, the US Congress was told that North Korea helped Syria build a nuclear reactor that was subsequently bombed by Israel. It could have consequences for the six-party talks with North Korea.

Earth Day 2008 marked in various ways

Earth Day was marked a few days ago. It is a tradition started by United States Senator Gaylord Nelson with the first Earth Day in April 1970. Earth Day Canada was started in 1990.

China, France attempt to repair relations in wake of protests

After anti-France protests were held in major Chinese cities over the weekend, China and France are now attempting to smoothen relations. China has discouraged the actions of the "radical" protesters, and French President Nicolas Sarkozy sent a letter to a Chinese Olympic athlete who has gained national fame in China following a controversial incident in the Paris Olympic torch relay.

Republic of Molossia hosts state visit

The Republic of Molossia, a [redacted] micronation located in Nevada, held its first ever [redacted] official state visit this week with

Grand Duke Paul of the Grand Duchy of Greifenberg, another micronation. Several issues were discussed, ranging from the current state of the intermicronational world to the near dormant League of Small Nations.

Wikipedia Current Events

The United States claims North Korea helped Syria build a nuclear reactor at a site destroyed by Israeli forces in September 2007.

- Final results in the Nepal Constituent Assembly election show that the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) won double the number of seats of the next largest party.

US Senate unanimously passes genetic nondiscrimination bill

In a unanimous 95-0 vote Thursday, the United States Senate passed a bill that would forbid employers and health insurance companies from discriminating against someone based on information learned through genetic testing.

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, described by Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy as "the first major new

civil rights bill of the new century," will now be sent back to the House of Representatives, where it could be approved as early as next week. President George W. Bush, who would have to sign the bill for it to become law, has voiced his support for the legislation.

The bill forbids employers from firing, refusing to hire, or other otherwise discriminating against employees based on genetic information, such as a family history of a hereditary disease. It also makes it illegal for employers to request genetic information of an employee or the employee's family.

Health insurance companies are also addressed in the bill, which forbids them from requesting genetic information or using such information to set premium rates or determine enrollment eligibility. However, insurance companies would still have the right to base one's health coverage on the actual presence of a genetic disease.

"Americans can now be confident that their genetic information cannot be used by health insurers or employers in harmful or hurtful ways." —Kathy Hudson, director of the Genetics and Public Policy Center

"For the first time we act to prevent discrimination before it has taken firm hold and that's why this legislation is unique and groundbreaking," said Maine Senator Olympia Snowe, who

sponsored the bill along with Sen. Kennedy and Sen. Mike Enzi. Snowe fears the threat of discrimination may discourage people from undergoing genetic testing, which can help to diagnose a wide range of diseases and lead to lifesaving therapy.

Kathy Hudson, director of the Genetics and Public Policy Center, reports that 92 percent are worried that information gained in genetic testing may be used against them. "After a very long wait," she says, "Americans can now be confident that their genetic information cannot be used by health insurers or employers in harmful or hurtful ways."

One part of the bill addresses this concern. "Federal legislation establishing a national and uniform basic standard is necessary to fully protect the public from discrimination and allay their concerns about the potential for discrimination," the bill reads, "thereby allowing individuals to take advantage of genetic testing, technologies, research, and new therapies."

Oklahoma Senator Tom Coburn initially blocked Senate action on the bill, warning that it could potentially lead to excessive lawsuits against employers and insurers. But after changes were made to the bill to ease his concerns earlier this week, he supported the legislation and allowed the Senate to vote on it. "We certainly improved the bill from a liability standpoint," said Coburn, an obstetrician.

Similar bills were unanimously passed by the Senate in 2003 and 2005, but in both years the bill stalled in the House. The current bill was passed in the House of Representatives a year ago by a

420-3 vote. A genetic nondiscrimination bill was first introduced 13 years ago by New York Representatives Louise Slaughter, who says the House will "get it out to the White House as quickly as we can."

Republic of Molossia hosts state visit

On April 22, President Kevin Baugh of the Republic of Molossia, a micronation located in Nevada, announced that his country hosted its first ever official state visit the day before.

Grand Duke Paul of the Grand Duchy of Greifenberg, another micronation, arrived in Molossia at 9:39 AM MST (Molossian Standard Time) on Monday. He spent much of the day with President Baugh discussing the current state of the intermicronational community, as well as the League of Small Nations, a near dormant organization dedicated to the prosperity of all land-claiming micronations.

Besides the meeting itself, President Baugh took Grand Duke Paul to nearby Virginia City, Nevada, for lunch. Following this, both returned to Molossia where the meeting continued. The visit officially ended late in the afternoon. Some time later, Grand Duke Paul returned to Molossia for an informal dinner. He returned to his country the next day.

The Republic of Molossia and Grand Duchy of Greifenberg are not recognized by any major countries or international organizations. However, both are by other micronations.

In March, Wikinews held an interview with President Baugh.

Earth Day 2008 marked in various ways

April 22 was Earth Day. It is a tradition started by United States Senator Gaylord Nelson with the first Earth Day in April 1970. Earth Day Canada was started in 1990.

In Central Park, New York, the "Green Apple festival" marked the event. In Buenos Aires an "an entertainment event with an awareness component."

An earth fair was also held in Catalunya, Spain. The earth day website says that "the theme for this year's edition is the Fight Against Genetically Modified Organism which Poison the Planet."

Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, also held an event to mark the day. This event is similar to an event last year that marked last year's earth day.

There were also events to mark the day in Caracas, Venezuela. The Earth Day website said "youth groups from Universities will make a vow as Citizens of the World and will launch Beja Contest 2008," in its description of these events.

There were also events in Chicago. According to the Earth Day website, Lincoln Park Zoo hosted some of these events.

Events in Tokyo, Japan also marked the day. The Earth Day website says that the "booth and Event Area within Yoyogi Park" hosted the event.

Other places across the world also marked the day. The Earth day website says that "Earth Day 2008 is expected to be the biggest yet, From Tokyo to Togo, to our flagship event on the National Mall in Washington, DC and 7 other

U.S. cities, we will be galvanizing millions of people around the world behind a Call for Climate, our global warming action theme. "

Jim Connaughton, the chairman of Council on Environmental Quality for the US government, described Earth Day and explained how it was founded. Below is his description:

"On April 22, 1970, 20 million people across America celebrated the first Earth Day. It was a time when cities were buried under their own smog and polluted rivers caught fire. Now Earth Day is celebrated annually around the globe. Through the combined efforts of the U.S. government, grassroots organizations, and citizens like you, what started as a day of national environmental recognition has evolved into a world-wide campaign to protect our global environment—a campaign that truly is now a part of our daily lives, not just a one day event every year.

Earth Day has become a great tradition in our country. It's a day that reminds us that we must be good stewards of our natural resources. To the President, Earth Day is a reminder that we can't take our land and resources for granted. The President and Mrs. Bush believe we have responsibilities to conserve what we have, and work to make it better."

Connaughton also described what George W. Bush is doing to mark the event: "The President is in New Orleans, Louisiana hosting Mexican President Calderon and Canadian Prime Minister Harper for the North American Leaders Summit. They took time out their schedule today to join New Orleans Mayor Nagin for a tree

planting ceremony to commemorate Earth Day. The President planted a Shumard oak tree as a reminder of our global duty to protect the environment. New Orleans lost about 250,000 trees to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita – about 50,000 of those trees were in public spaces like Lafayette Square. Replanting trees is vital not only to recovery of the city's character, but also its environment."

US claims North Korea helped Syria build reactor bombed by Israel

Members of the United States Congress were briefed today on United States intelligence that alleges that North Korea has been taking part in proliferation with Syria by helping them build and use a nuclear reactor located in the Syrian desert.

According to news reports, citing sources familiar with matter, members of Congress viewed a video purporting to show North Korean workers at the Syrian plant. The plant was destroyed in a airstrike last September by Israeli F-15Is of 69 Squadron IAF.

The video allegedly also shows that the reactor core design is identical to that of North Korea's Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center reactor.

In a statement released to reporters the US government said, "We are convinced, based on a variety of information, that North Korea assisted Syrian covert nuclear activities both before and after the reactor was destroyed."

Syria has remained quiet over the incident and the area was bulldozed and the building later rebuilt around January. They have also disallowed international

inspectors to visit the area, giving rise to suspicions that the Syrians are covering up something.

"We are convinced, based on a variety of information, that North Korea assisted Syrian covert nuclear activities both before and after the reactor was destroyed."
—US statement to reporters

The Syrian ambassador to the United Kingdom, Sami Khiyami, has dismissed accusations by the United States that it is helping to build a reactor there that could produce plutonium. "This has nothing to do with North Korea and Syria. They just want to exert more pressure on North Korea. This is why they are coming up with this story." Khiyami said.

He added, "The cooperation between North Korea and Syria has nothing to do with [building] a nuclear facility. Cooperation is mainly economic."

The Syrian ambassador to the United Nations, Bashar Jaafari, concurred by saying, "There was no Syria-North Korea cooperation whatsoever in Syria. We deny these rumours." Syria itself has denied cooperation with North Korea and is suggesting the video has been faked.

According to the The New York Times, there are suggestions inside the United States State Department, that the release of this video is an attempt by hardliners inside the Bush administration, including Vice President Dick Cheney, to undermine the six-party talks over North Korea's nuclear program.

"Making public the pictures is likely to inflame the North Koreans," one senior administration official said off the record. "And that's just

what opponents of this whole arrangement want, because they think the North Koreans will stalk off," he added.

"This has nothing to do with North Korea and Syria. They just want to exert more pressure on North Korea. This is why they are coming up with this story."

—Sami Khiyami, Syrian ambassador to UK

Christopher R. Hill, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and the US negotiator in the six-party talks, believes the Syrian incident is a sideshow and that the more important issue is to stop North Korea from producing more plutonium and give up what it has.

Dick Cheney's office and other conservatives have said that a proposed deal, negotiated by Hill in the six-party talks, is unbalanced in favor of North Korea. According to the deal, North Korea would be removed from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list and have economic sanctions under the Trading With the Enemy Act lifted in return for declaring how much plutonium it has produced.

Representative Pete Hoekstra, the ranking member of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, said that as a result of the briefing, the six-party agreements would find it "much harder to go through Congress and get agreements approved." Hoekstra said, "It happened eight months later" than it should have.

"I really believe [that] on an issue that is this critical to the issue of proliferation, to the situation in the Middle East, to what's going on in the six-party talks, and these types of things, Congress needed

this information to be a full partner in those efforts," Hoekstra added.

Representative Howard Berman, the chairperson for the Committee on Foreign Affairs said that details of the briefing were "disturbing" but not a reason to suspend the six-party talks.

"Rather, the information that has been released to the public demonstrates the importance of insisting on a verifiable enforcement mechanism to ensure that North Korea honors its commitments to stop spreading the means to create nuclear weapons and to end its nuclear program permanently," Berman said in a statement released by his office.

Ukrainian manufacturer preparing to sell Adolf Hitler dolls

News reports are claiming that dolls depicting former Nazi leader Adolf Hitler will go on sale in the Ukraine. These reports cite Ukraine's Zerkalo Tizhden newspaper which reported that a toy manufacturer would release the line of Hitler dolls in the summer.

The 40cm doll will reportedly first be available in Kiev with a £100 (GBP) price tag and comes with a large range of accessories in a presentation box with the dates of Hitler's birth and death.

Nazis images are illegal in Ukraine, with positive portrayal specifically banned. However, there are allegations that right-wing nationalist politics are gaining strength in the country and that xenophobia and racism are on the rise, including some said to be comparable to that present in Germany under Nazi rule. Fascism and propaganda are also banned.

When the former Soviet Union, including the Ukraine, was invaded by Germany under Hitler's rule 2-3 million Ukrainians were among the casualties, of which 1.5 million were Jews.

Adolf can be dressed in various guises, including "early days Adolf", which consists of a brown shirt and jodhpurs, and "Wartime Adolf", which features a grey tunic, black trousers and the Iron Cross medal. The doll also comes with boots and shoes, caps, gloves, full uniforms, cane and belt which can be placed on Hitler, whose arms move, allowing the doll to replicate the famed salute of its real life counterpart.

"Kids can undress fuhrer, pin on medals and there's a spare head in the kit to give him a kinder expression on his face"
—Saleswoman

Also included is a model of Blondi, Hitler's female German Shepherd, who was exceedingly loyal to Hitler. Hitler poisoned Blondi with cyanide in 1945 at the same time as taking his own life in his bunker at Berlin.

"It is like Barbie. Kids can undress fuhrer, pin on medals and there's a spare head in the kit to give him a kinder expression on his face. He has glasses that are round, in the manner of pacifist Jon Lennon," said one saleswomen. The company, which will release the dolls in Summer, says that if demand is high a range of toys themed on the Third Reich may be released, to include barracks, working models of crematoriums and gas chambers, concentration camps and interior models of the chancellery.

The doll is not set to be released

until the summer, but BBC News Online has footage suggesting that some stores are selling the doll already.

UK teachers strike in first national teachers strike in 21 years

The BBC has reported that 8000 schools have been fully or partially closed by today's national UK teachers strike.

The majority of state schools in the city of Bristol are closing for the strike, although many of the schools for students age 16+ are expected to remain open.

Some schools that originally said they would be closed have made the decision not to close for the strike.

The Guardian reports that the strike, which is expected to take place on Thursday, will be the first national teachers' strike in 21 years.

Christine Blower from the National Union of Teachers, which is organising the strike, said:

"What we're saying to the government is, if you really do value teachers, then make sure that they're paid at least at the level of inflation - which we take to be the RPI, which is 4.1%"

Earlier this week, John Dunford from the Association of School and College Leaders told The Guardian that:

"Most secondary schools will be partially closed; a thousand could close. It will be very, very difficult for schools which have been on holiday to organise themselves this week."

Today in History

1719 – Robinson Crusoe, a novel by English author Daniel Defoe about a castaway who spends 28 years on a remote tropical island near Venezuela, was first published.

1792 – The guillotine was first used to carry out capital punishment in France, with crowds marvelling at the machine's speed and precision.

1898 – Spanish-American War: The United States retroactively declared war on Spain, stating that a state of war between the two countries had already existed for the past couple of days.

1953 – Molecular Structure of Nucleic Acids: A Structure for Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid by molecular biologists James Watson and Francis Crick was first published in the scientific journal Nature, describing the discovery of the double helix structure of DNA.

1983 – Cold War: Replying to her letter in which she expressed her fears about the tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States, Soviet leader Yuri Andropov invited American schoolgirl Samantha Smith to visit Moscow, Leningrad and the Artek Young Pioneer camp.

April 25 is Great Friday (Eastern Christianity, 2008); Arbor Day in the United States (2008); ANZAC Day in Australia and New Zealand; Liberation Day in Italy; Red Hat Society Day

Quote of the Day

The newest computer can merely compound, at speed, the oldest problem in the relations between human beings, and in the end the communicator will be confronted with the old problem, of what to say and how to say it.

~ Edward R. Murrow

Word of the Day

paraleipsis n

1. A figure of speech in which one pretends to ignore or omit something by actually mentioning it.

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