



Top Stories

Iraqis accept constitution

Iraqi election official Farid Ayar announced Tuesday the draft referendum passed.

Rosa Parks dies at 92

Rosa Parks, the African American woman who served as a catalyst to the American Civil Rights Movement by refusing to yield her bus seat to a white man, died of natural causes on Monday night at her home in Detroit, Michigan. She was 92.

Featured story

Anniversary of Tak Bai incident marked with lawsuits

Marking the anniversary of an incident at Tak Bai police station which led to 78 people suffocating while being detained by the Thai army, relatives of the deceased plan to file a lawsuit with the Pattani provincial court seeking 80 million baht in compensation.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Rumours that a 14-year-old Afro-Caribbean girl had been sexually assaulted, and possibly raped, by several Asian men, lead to a race riot in Birmingham, England. 20 are injured after gun shots and stabbings between South Asian and African gangs, and local police.
- An Irish government-commissioned report, carried out of a retired Supreme Court judge, condemns two Irish bishops, the Roman Catholic Church, the Garda Síochána (police) and

Wikipedia Current Events

health authorities for their failure to deal with clerical sex abuse over 40 years in the diocese of Ferns (Wexford). The report suggested that 10% of priests in the diocese sexually abused children, making it possibly the world's worst case of clerical sex abuse to date.

- BBC World Service announces that it will launch an Arabic language TV news channel in 2007. Radio services in ten languages, mainly Central European but including Kazakh and Thai, will be abandoned in 2006 to release funding for the new service.
- The Swedish telecoms manufacturer Ericsson has bought most of the troubled British telecoms manufacturer Marconi.
- Iraq's Independent Electoral Commission announces that the country's draft constitution was approved in the vote held October 15.
- Paul Hackett, who in August narrowly lost his race for the U.S. House of Representatives to Jean Schmidt, announced that he will seek the Democratic Senate nomination to run against incumbent Mike DeWine.

Sunni leader claims Iraq vote was a "farce"

Saleh al-Mutlaq , spokesman for the National Dialogue Council, says his Sunni group does not accept the referendum report because; "We feel that this constitution is

illegitimate and the referendum was not done in a correct way; therefore we want the referendum to be repeated in four provinces at least."

Al-Mutlaq also called the referendum "a farce" and said that government forces stole ballot boxes full of "no" votes in the mostly Sunni-Arab provinces. He claimed that 80 percent said "no" in Mosul, the provincial capital of Ninevah where the outcome of the election was held in balance.

Another Sunni politician, Hussein al-Falluji, called on the United Nations to intervene. He said, "Violence is not the only solution, if politics offers solutions so that we can move in that direction. But there is very little hope that we can make any gains in the elections." Falluji echoed concerns that Sunnis disaffected by the vote may join the insurgency inside Iraq.

However, Farid Ayar of Iraq's Independent Electoral Commission said before reading the official vote outcome that, "Whatever the results of the referendum are ... it is a civilized step that aims to put Iraq on the path of true democracy."

Iraq officials reported that 97 percent of voters in the predominately Sunni province of al-Anbar and 82 percent of voters in Salaheddin province rejected the constitution. Shortly before the vote, the largest Sunni political party, the Iraqi Islamic Party, agreed to lend some support to the referendum in return for the

inclusion of an option to amend the document during the new National Assembly.

Sunni sects account for nearly 20 percent of the country's population. Their large turnout for the referendum vote is in contrast to the low participation they showed in the January election which established the interim government.

José Azcona, former president of Honduras, dies at 74

José Simón Azcona del Hoyo, ex-President of Honduras, died at 74 on October 24, 2005, reported Reuters.

Azcona was President of Honduras from 1986 to 1990 and well-known as US government ally. He supported the Contra rebel groups that fought the left-wing Sandinista government in neighboring Nicaragua. He once called upon the US government to send troops to battle the Nicaraguan army, which had crossed the border to follow the Contras based in Honduras.

Despite his country's reputation for a high level of corruption, Azcona was known one of cleanest politicians according to Reuters.

Rosa Parks dies at 92

Rosa Parks, the African American woman who served as a catalyst to the American Civil Rights Movement, died of natural causes on Monday night at her home in Detroit, Michigan. She was 92.

Parks was best known for her refusal to yield her seat to a white man who demanded it on a city bus. Her defiance led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott in Alabama in 1955.

She later worked on the Staff of U.S. Representative John Conyers (D-MI) who called her "a real apostle of the nonviolence movement" in an interview with CNN.

Parks founded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development and was politically active until well into her 80s.

She received the two highest civilian awards in the U.S.; the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1996 and the Congressional Gold Medal in 1999.

Parks' health had been in decline in the last decade. She had become more and more reclusive to the public. Parks was confined to a wheelchair and suffered from dementia.

Australian PM says proposed Anti-Terror Laws are Constitutional

John Howard has dismissed the claims made by the Queensland's Solicitor General that the Federal Government's proposed anti-terror laws could be unconstitutional. He has also come under criticism for planning to introduce the laws on Melbourne Cup Day, a day when most Australian's will be paying attention to a Horse Race, and not politics.

In an unusual move, the government will compel an instantaneous debate on the legislation, giving the opposition 10 minutes to scrutinize the draft laws rather than the usual fortnight.

Opposition homeland security spokesman Arch Bevis told The Age newspaper "This is an extraordinary abuse of power, the

likes of which I don't think anyone would remember,"

"John Howard now has control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and if he wants to use his power in an arrogant, bloody-minded way we don't have the numbers to stop him."

Earlier today Queensland's Peter Beattie told ABC Radio that the Prime Minister's proposals could face legal challenges. Other State Premiers are seeking their own legal advice, with only the Western Australian Premier also raising similar concerns

John Howard told ABC's World Today "The advice we have is that these laws are constitutional. There's never been any doubt raised by our legal advisers".

The Prime Minister added he would be willing to talk through the issue with the State Premiers. Agreeing this morning that the solicitor-generals from the states will consult along with the national equivalent to work through these issues .

The QLD Premier who supports the principles of the bill told ABC radio "I'm not interested in making this a public issue, or pursuing some sort of silly public debate. What I'm interested in is resolving these issues, ensuring that we actually protect Australia, protect the nation, and protect Australians as well. That's why we've insisted on a public interest monitor. Any of these legal issues we will deal with and we'll deal with them sensibly.

Independent supporters of the bill are urging the government to push ahead. Neil James from the Australia Defense Association says that the legal precedents recognized during World War I and

World War II would indicate that most of the reasonably contentious provisions would be constitutional.

However Constitutional lawyer John Williams says that judges and magistrates could argue that the proposed laws undermined judicial independence. Dr Williams believes a High Court challenge to the laws was almost inevitable.

Telling ABC Radio that "I could not see that this legislation could operate for long without a challenge being made,"

The Federal Opposition Leader Kim Beazley calling on Mr Howard to exercise vigilance as it would exasperate Australian taxpayers if people mistakenly subjected to his anti-terror laws were then paid thousands of dollars in damages.

Interviewed by Melbourne's Herald Sun Newspaper "You have to, when you are introducing laws like this, make absolutely certain there are checks and balances in it."

Mr Beazley also says that the Anti-Terror Laws aren't the action the Government could be taking to protect Australians..

"We have yawning gaps, yawning holes in the protection of the Australian people."

He cited Australia's coastal borders as being unprotected, with habitual illegal fishing incursions, a sign of the countries vulnerabilities

Iraqis accept constitution

Iraqi voters have accepted the draft constitution, the Independent Electoral Commission announced Tuesday. 78% voted in favor, 21% against. Two, mostly Sunni, provinces rejected the constitution

with a two-thirds majority; three rejections by provinces by two-thirds majorities would have caused the constitution to fail.

Voters in the provinces of Anbar and Salahuddin overwhelmingly opposed the draft, casting 97% and 82% "No" respectively. The deciding swing-province in the referendum was Nineveh. While 55% of the voters in the predominately Sunni province opposed the constitution, that was below the 66% threshold necessary to bring the draft to a halt.

Electoral Commission official Farid Ayar called the vote "100% correct" and said that there were "no cases of fraud that could affect the results of the vote".

But the Sunni official Saleh al-Mutlaq said the referendum was a "farce" and accused the government of stealing ballot boxes in areas where most people voted "No".

Observers from the United Nations dispute that statement. A senior official, Carina Perelli, said the result is "accurate" and that it was checked by her organisation.

The voting turnout was 9.85 million votes, or 63% of eligible voters. This was one million more votes than cast in the interim government election held in January.

Parliamentary elections are now scheduled for December 15, 2005.

South African spies suspended

Three officials of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) in South Africa have been suspended for allegedly spying on Saki Macozoma, a businessman with

the African National Congress (ANC). The three men; deputy director general Gibson Njenje, general manager Bob Mhlanga, and director general Billie Masethla were temporarily relieved of duty by Intelligence Minister Ronnie Kasrils following the allegations.

Masethla has been reported to have clashed with Kasrils over an allegation he made about members of the Directorate of Special Operations(DSO). Also known as the Scorpions the DSO's mandate is to investigate and prosecute corruption and organized crime. It is a division of the National Prosecuting Authority in South Africa.

In a submission to the Khampepe Commission, which is heading an inquiry into the future of the Scorpions, Masethla charged that members were acting as agents for foreign intelligence.

Macozoma told the Mail and Guardian, "It is correct they did survey me. I found out because it was an overt, in your face kind of thing. I complained to the minister and he confirmed it was the NIA that was involved."

Macozoma is considered part of the President Thabo Mbeki's inner circle and is seen to wield considerable influence over who his replacement will be when the president steps down from the ANC in 2007 and as president in 2009.

Jacob Zuma, former deputy president, was considered the natural successor to Mbeki but was fired in June and charged with corruption. Despite this, he retains his position as deputy president of the ANC and continues to hold widespread support.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions, the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress Youth League have all charged that Zuma was fired to block his chances of becoming president.

Anniversary of Tak Bai incident marked with lawsuits

Marking the anniversary of an incident at Tak Bai police station which led to 78 people suffocating while being detained by the Thai army, relatives of the deceased plan to file a lawsuit with the Pattani provincial court seeking 80 million baht (approx. US\$2 million, 1.6 million euro) in compensation.

Utt Bueraheng, the lawyer representing the families is confident they will win their case as an investigation into the incident took some disciplinary action against senior officers involved in the incident.

The suit will name the Thai Defence Ministry, Army, Royal Thai Police Office, Interior Ministry, and Narathiwat provincial authorities as defendants. Earlier in the week other lawsuits were filed in relation to the incident; in all cases the named defendants are the same.

The Tak Bai incident is one of the most publicised events of the South Thailand insurgency. On October 25, 2004 six local men were arrested, accused of supplying defence force weapons to insurgents. Villagers organised a protest, demanding that the police release the accused. Instead, the police called in army reinforcements who used tear gas and water cannons on the crowd; shooting started, and seven people were killed.

Hundreds of local citizens, mostly young Muslim men, were arrested. They were made to strip to the waist and lie on the ground. Their hands were bound behind their backs and later in the afternoon they were loaded into trucks to be taken to an army camp where they were to be detained. The prisoners were stacked on top of each other in the trucks, and by the time the three-hour trip to the camp was completed, 78 men had suffocated in the heat.

The incident provoked widespread protest, not limited to Muslims in the south. Many non-Muslim Thais were shocked by the army's behaviour. However the Thai Prime Minister, Thaksin Sinawatra, gave his full support to the army and until these lawsuits were brought, very little disciplinary action had been taken against those responsible. Thaksin's response in defending the army's actions was to say the men died, "because they were already weak from fasting during the month of Ramadan."

The lawsuits brought earlier this week against the five state agencies seek a total of more than 18 million baht (approx. US\$ 440,000 or 370,000 euros) in compensation. The first lawsuit was filed on behalf of relatives of five of the seven protesters killed outside Tak Bai police station; this suit seeks 5.8 million baht. The second lawsuit was filed by a group of 17 of the protesters who were injured in the clash with police and security forces; this suit seeks 12.4 million baht compensation for injury and loss of property. All of the lawsuits have been brought with the assistance of the Law Society of Thailand.

The aftermath of the Tak Bai

incident saw many of the protestors seeking asylum in neighbouring Malaysia. Recently forty of those who had fled across the border returned after they had been given assurances by authorities regarding their safety.

The leadership of the insurgents remains unclear, with no clearly identified organisational structure, or announced objectives. However, there have been separatists in the former Malay sultanate since the 1930's. Under military rule, they were firmly suppressed and only since early 2004 has violence flared in the troubled provinces. The government reacted to this by declaring Martial law in January of 2004.

Despite the imposition of Martial law, attacks on police, government officials, schools and military compounds continued unabated. This prompted the Prime Minister to introduce an executive decree for administration in emergency situations early in 2005. Additional troops were dispatched to the troubled provinces bringing the total in the area to 30,000; however, lack of counter-insurgency training and experience meant they have done little in the way of quelling the violence. In the past six months the army has reported that 298 have been killed, and over 300 injured in attacks. The estimated total killed since the start of 2004 is claimed to be over one thousand.

Today in History

1863: The Football Association, the oldest governing body in football, was formed in London in England.

1881: The Gunfight at the O.K. Corral took place in Tombstone, Arizona, United States.

1955: Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem declared himself President of South Vietnam, replacing Nguyen Emperor Bao Dai as the head of state.

1979: President Park Chunghee of South Korea was assassinated by the director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency and a long-time friend, Kim Jaekyu.

2001: U.S. President George W. Bush signed the USA PATRIOT Act into law.

October 26 is Angam Day in Nauru, National Day in Austria; Simchat Torah in 2005 (Judaism).

Quote of the Day

"Few men during their lifetime come anywhere near exhausting the resources dwelling within them. There are deep wells of strength that are never used." ~ Richard E. Byrd

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