



Top Stories

Iraq counting ballots

The voting ended on Saturday in Iraq as a historical moment while ballots on their proposed draft constitution are counted. Election officials estimated that as many as 10 million of Iraq's eligible 15.5 million voters cast ballots, which would yield a turnout of around 65 percent.

Australian Minister 'leaks' draft of anti-terror bill

Jon Stanhope, the Australian Capital Territory Chief Minister, has posted a confidential draft of the proposed Australian anti-terror bill to his website. Concerns are being raised that the legislation could prevent free speech and peaceful protest in Australia.

Featured story

Explosion outside Trinidad nightclub wounds more than 10

An explosion outside a popular nightclub in Trinidad's capital, Port-of-Spain, has wounded at least 10. Officials are unsure of the cause of the explosion and no group has yet claimed responsibility.

Wikipedia Current Events

- South Thailand insurgency: A Buddhist monk and five other people were killed and a Buddhist temple was set on fire.
- The reentry module of the Chinese manned spacecraft Shenzhou 6 landed safely in Inner Mongolia, China.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claim responsibility for a West Bank shooting attack that kills three Israelis at a hitchhiking post. Another Israeli is seriously wounded in a second shooting attack.

FEMA credit card expenditures questioned

Twelve million dollars of spending were placed on U.S. government purchasing cards during recent hurricane relief efforts. Among the items purchased are flip-flops, underwear, golf carts, and playing cards. In addition, large purchases were often made at retail prices from outlet stores such as Wal-Mart and Home Depot. One transaction total at a Wal-Mart came to \$66,632.37.

Those defending the expenditures noted that there was little time to seek better prices, and that some purchases only seem unnecessary until the details are known. The cards were only given to 20 FEMA employees, and teams were on hand to review purchases in advance. However, often no records exist of why specific items were bought, or how or even if they were used.

Several members of Congress have promised to look further into the issue, while it may take auditors years to sort through the spending triggered by the devastation.

Spanish police reportedly closing in on fugitive Nazi

doctor

Spanish police believe they are close to capturing Aribert Heim, the 91-year-old known as "Dr. Death". Dr. Heim, described by The Times as "the most wanted Nazi still believed to be alive", is thought to be living in the town of Palafrugell in the Costa Brava area of Spain.

Heim worked as a doctor in a number of Nazi Germany concentration camps (Mauthausen, Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald) carrying out a series of experiments on the camp's Jewish inmates. His experiments reportedly included operating on a patient without anaesthetic to see how much pain a human being could endure, and injecting petrol into the bloodstream, then timing how long it took for the victim to die. Hundreds of people are believed to have died as a result of these experiments.

The Times reports that Heim led a normal civilian life after the end of the Second World War, but fled Germany in 1962, when the authorities were about to issue a warrant for his arrest. Nazi hunters, including researchers from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, have been looking for him ever since. The center's founder, Simon Wiesenthal, was himself active in pursuing Heim prior to his death last month.

German police received a tip six weeks ago by an Israeli citizen who met a man in Ibiza with characteristics similar to Heim. The police acknowledged the

information was helpful. Other evidence pointing the trail to Palafrugell involved banking transfers and tax filings.

Insurgents kill monk and burn temple in south Thailand

In Thailand's troubled southern province of Pattani, a Buddhist monk was among three killed by insurgents attacking a temple.

Around ten people took part in the fifteen minute long attack in the early hours of Sunday morning, leaving the 76-year-old monk, Kaew Panjapetchkaew, with his throat cut. They then proceeded to use gasoline to set fire to part of the temple. Upon putting out the fire, police investigators found the bodies of two teenage boys who had been helping at the temple. Both had died from gunshot wounds.

In an effort to conceal the attack, the insurgents had let off fireworks earlier thus distracting nearby villagers and police.

Welsh swimming squad named for 2006 Commonwealth Games

The Commonwealth Games Council for Wales has named the first group of swimmers in the swimming squad who will compete in the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

Among the six named is David Davies, Olympic and World Swimming Championships|World Swimming Championships bronze medal winner. In addition to Davies are:

David Davies - City of Cardiff
Thomas Haffield - City of Cardiff
Julie Gould - Halesmere
Bethan Coole - Swansea
Jazmin Carlin - Tigersharks,

Swindon
Rhiannon Henry - Swansea

There will be a second chance to qualify at the Welsh Amateur Swimming Association Open Stage 3 Meet on December 3/4.

UK Christian group plans to highlight concerns about new law by using it to ban the Qur'an

Christian Voice, a UK-based Christian evangelical group has announced that it will press for the prosecution, under "hate speech" legislation, of bookshop staff who sell copies of Islam's most sacred text, the Qur'an.

The British government will shortly introduce a new law which is intended to ban incitement to religious hatred.

Christian Voice say that their campaign is actually a protest against this new law, which they believe could be used to stop Christian preachers criticising Islam or "explaining the horrors of Hinduism".

"If the Qur'an is not hate speech, I don't know what is", Christian Voice director Stephen Green told the Guardian newspaper earlier this week, arguing that the Qur'an incites the killing of non-Muslims.

Christian Voice has previously campaigned against the musical "Jerry Springer the Opera", believing it to be blasphemous.

According to the Guardian, the activities of Christian Voice, which it describes as a "fringe fundamentalist" group have "regularly appalled" other Christian groups. But some of the concerns raised by Christian Voice on this particular issue are more

widely shared.

The British government says that the new law is needed in order to "draw a line in the sand" and protect religious people from attack.

But critics say that such protections already exist in British law, and fear that the new legislation, as currently designed, could end up being used inappropriately.

In July, the actor Rowan Atkinson (best known for his role in the television series "Blackadder") described the law as "a sledgehammer to crack a nut". Atkinson raised concerns that it could be used to suppress the satirisation of organised religion.

Lord Carey, the former head of the Church of England, has warned that the "hate speech" law "threatens civil liberties". Hundreds of Christians protested against the law outside Parliament earlier this week.

The government insists that the law is intended to "protect the believer, not the belief", and that it will not affect "criticism, commentary or ridicule of faiths".

Dog flu spreads across the US

Dogs are normally resistant to most flu strains. Since about 2000, a new strain of dog flu has been spreading in America, and there's no vaccine to stop it.

To limit exposure to the flu, some dog owners are avoiding public places like dog shows and parks. Since the flu can spread where groups of dogs are housed, some dog owners are nervous about the practice of putting their pets in kennels. According to Edward

Dubovil, director of the animal virology lab at Cornell University, 100% of dogs appear to be susceptible to infection by this new flu strain. It is estimated that 1-5% of infected dogs are dying from this flu strain. The symptoms of dog flu are akin to those of kennel cough, a more common and less serious illness.

Starting in 2004 there have been many outbreaks of flu at dog race tracks. Since early in 2004, researchers have been working to characterize the type of flu that is infecting dogs. In September of 2005 it was reported that this dog flu strain had crossed over from horses to dogs. This type of flu virus has been infecting horses for at least 40 years. It is expected that existing flu vaccines for horses can soon be adapted for use in dogs.

The spread of a horse flu virus to dogs is an example of what could happen with bird flu. Currently the bird flu is transmitted from birds to humans but does not spread easily from person to person. The new strain of dog flu shows signs of having been genetically modified from the original horse-preferring virus strain making it easy to transmit from dog to dog. Future genetic modifications of bird flu could better adapt it to humans and allow it to spread from person to person. The chance of such viral evolution can be reduced by limiting exposure of humans to bird flu.

At this time, the new dog flu virus strain does not seem to be a danger for humans. However, humans will be monitored for signs of infection by new genetic variants of the dog flu. Due to the close physical association between pet dogs and humans, a flu strain that could jump from dogs to

humans would be of great concern. Recently evolved virus strains that jump from one species to another are often particularly lethal because the newly infected species may have little or no immunity to the new virus strain.

Today in History

1346 - King David II of Scotland led an invasion of England during the Hundred Years' War, but was captured in the Battle of Neville's Cross.

1604 - Kepler's Star: German astronomer Johannes Kepler observed an exceptionally bright star which had suddenly appeared in the constellation Ophiuchus.

1806 - Emperor Jacques I of Haiti (pictured) was assassinated near Port-au-Prince.

1989 - The Loma Prieta earthquake, the largest earthquake on the San Andreas Fault in California since 1906, struck the San Francisco Bay Area.

2003 - The pinnacle was fitted on the roof of the 106-floor skyscraper Taipei 101 in Taipei, allowing it to surpass the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur and become the world's tallest building.

October 17 Sukkot begins at sunset (Judaism, 2005)

Quote of the Day

"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." ~ Oscar Wilde

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