



Top Stories

Sunday Times says Israel is planning nuclear strike against Iran

According to The Sunday Times, Israel is planning to use nuclear-tipped bunker busters to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities.

Polish Archbishop resigns after spying revelations

Stanislaw Wielgus, the Archbishop of Warsaw, resigned yesterday after admitting to have spied for Poland's former Communist Government. Cardinal Jozef Glemp will retain the position of apostolic administrator until a replacement is chosen.

Featured story

Ethical debate surrounds surgery to stunt disabled girl's growth

An ethical controversy has surged in the United States and elsewhere around nine-year-old Ashley X. The disabled girl was operated upon at the request of her parents, to prevent her from growing, menstruating and developing breasts.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Russian oil supplies to Poland, Germany, and Ukraine are cut as the Russia-Belarus energy dispute escalates.
- Chinese police killed 18 members of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement terrorist organization and arrested 17 others in a raid in the Pamir Plateau on 5

Wikipedia Current Events

January. ETIM members shot and killed one officer and wounded another. Police found 22 grenades and enough explosive material to make 1,500 more.

- Kazakh Prime Minister Daniyal Akhmetov unexpectedly resigns without explanation. Deputy Prime Minister Karim Masimov, Akhmetov's longtime rival, is expected to replace him.
- SPÖ and ÖVP agree on a coalition government after the October 2006 elections. Both parties will get an equal share of ministers with the SPÖ's Alfred Gusenbauer set to become Chancellor of Austria, and the ÖVP has had more success in implementing their demands in the coalition agreement. The government will be sworn in on 11 January.
- Indonesian naval ships discover large metal objects off the west coast of Sulawesi that could possibly be the wreckage of Adam Air Flight 574 missing a week ago.
- The Principality of Sealand, a micronation off the English coast, has been made available for transfer.

Scorpion found on flight to Toronto, Canada

A man who visited Costa Rica who was on American Airlines flight 1552 from Miami, Florida to Toronto was stung by a scorpion on Sunday. The scorpion was from Costa Rica, where the man was on a camping trip with his brother.

The scorpion crawled out of the man's carry-on knapsack. Then, the scorpion bit the man, who is believed to be in his 20s or early 30s. Flight officials immediately delayed the outbound flight. The man was treated by paramedics and was taken to hospital.

Later, the scorpion was killed. Animal control officers said the scorpion was a non-lethal species.

"We delayed the outbound flight and searched the cabin of the aircraft to see if we could find any more, which we did not," said John Hotard, a company spokesman in Fort Worth, Texas. "This is rare. I'm not aware of a scorpion stinging a person on any of our flights before."

"We've had cases where passengers have brought critters on board in their backpack and they get out and crawl around, but it's rare, he added"

They arrived safely at Toronto's Pearson International Airport. The flight back to Miami was delayed by less than an hour.

When the flight resumed the pilot said: "Welcome to Scorpion Flight 1011."

The scorpion is said to be not brought on the plane intentionally.

Austrian students protest new government's student fees plan
A crowd of about 250 activists from the Austrian National Union

of Students (Österreichische Hochschülerinnen- und Hochschülerschaft, ÖH) as well as the Organisation of Socialist Students of Austria (Verband Sozialistischer StudentInnen Österreichs, VSStÖ) quickly reacted to the announced forming of the new Austrian coalition government by starting a demonstration in front of the University of Vienna, the largest in the country.

Specifically, the demonstration protested against the proposed plan of enabling students to do community service work at a rate of EUR 6 (~ USD 7.6) per hour to work off student fees of about EUR 372 (~ USD 475,8) per semester. These fees were introduced under the government of chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, which ruled Austria from 2000 on.

The protest started directly in front of the university buildings on the famous Ringstraße. Protestors blocked the street by sweeping the street, symbolising the work students have to do in order to study. They proceeded to the headquarters of the SPÖ, where they chanted "Who betrayed us? Social Democrats!", and later to the parliament building. After this, they announced to go to the ÖVP headquarters, when this reporter had to leave the scene.

On October 1, 2006, a new National Assembly was elected. The Social Democrats narrowly won the election, while the ÖVP suffered severe losses and fell to second place. Since then, intense negotiations between the two parties about a coalition have taken place and presumably ended today, when at 13:30 hours, SPÖ leader Alfred Gusenbauer and ÖVP leader Wolfgang Schüssel announced the finishing of

negotiations and conciliation of the two parties in a new government, which is to be sworn in by President Heinz Fischer on January 11.

One of the deals struck today between the SPÖ (who called for the complete abolition of the controversial student's fees during the election campaign) and the ÖVP calls for legislation enabling easier access to and higher scholarships, as well as reforms in the student loan system and, most visibly, a system whereby students will be able to work in organizations providing social and community services. For this work, they will receive EUR 6 per hour. The total fees for one semester amount to EUR 372; this means a student will have to work 62 hours per semester to fully pay the fees.

Sextuplets born in Vancouver, Canada

Canada's first sextuplets, four boys and two girls, were born on Sunday January 7th 2007 at the B.C. Women's hospital in Vancouver. The first baby was delivered normally, while the following 5 had to be removed by emergency caesarean section. The children weigh about 800 grams each. The mother was reported to be in her 25th week of pregnancy and the babies will require a period of time in the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit as most pregnancies last 40 weeks.

Accusations Tigger threw punch fill airwaves as teen claims neck injuries

A family has a video of what they claim to be "Tigger" punching their son. Visiting the Disney-MGM Studios on Saturday, Jerry Monaco Jr. alleges that Tigger purposely punched him without provocation. The footage was caught on the family's video camera, and the

Monacos and their attorney are demanding an apology from the actor.

The costumed character actor at the time was employee Michael J. Fedelem.

The contact between the actor's mitted hand and the teen's face is brief. The video shows the following sequence of events: Monaco Jr.'s left arm is moving behind Tigger, while Tigger's right arm is on Monaco Jr.'s shoulders. Tigger abruptly moves his right arm down and around, sweeping Monaco Jr.'s left arm off of his back, pinning Monaco Jr.'s arm to his body.

Tigger then starts rotating clockwise, wherein Tigger's left arm moves across his body. It appears that Tigger briefly pulls down on his chin, in what looks like a move to possibly prevent the head from flying off.

Monaco Jr. stumbles, in combination with his arm being pinned and Tigger's rotation. Tigger's left hand appears to hit Monaco Jr.'s head or face. Monaco Jr. appears to hit Tigger in the head area with his free right hand.

The footage is very brief. It shows little before or after the punch, a total of only four seconds.

Jean Erik Redrupp, General Manager of Park Operations, stated to Local 6 that "I just wanted to follow up with you and let you know that we have spoken to the cast member in question and have reacted very strongly toward him."

Monaco Sr. told the station that "The general manager apologized to me. Everybody will come up and apologize to me but Tigger. He won't be a man about it and get

out of the costume and come out and apologize to my son. I didn't want VIP treatment. I didn't want an extra day at Disney. I didn't want any of that. I wanted him to apologize and that is the one thing that they won't do." In the statement, he did not clarify whom "everybody" was.

Both Disney and the Orange County Sheriff's Office launched investigations on Saturday. Fedelem has been suspended by the company until the investigation is complete. Disney commented in a statement to CBS News that: "We received the complaint alleging that a character struck a guest; guest and character altercation is not tolerated. The Orange County sheriff is launching an investigation and we are conducting our own investigation and we have suspended the cast member pending the outcome."

Monaco Sr. took his son to the hospital the night after the altercation. Monaco Jr. claimed that he had neck pains. "I'm a little sore and most of the pain is gone because I have medicine," he told the CBS Early Show today.

In footage, Monaco has no visible bruising.

The videotape was in regular rotation on news stations on Sunday and Monday. As of 4:00 pm ET 8 January 2007, Google News listed over five hundred news outlets filing stories on the incident.

A 1981 case tried Winnie the Pooh, a character from the same series of cartoons as Tigger, was viciously slapped. The incident, which happened three years prior, was alleged to have resulted in bruising, recurring headaches, and

possible brain damage.

Costumed character actor Robert Hill was the first witness in the case. He testified that the costume severely restricted his vision and movement. He recalled that the girl was tugging at his costume from behind. Turning to see who it was, he accidentally struck her ear.

The Disney attorney reentered the courtroom in costume, with Hill in costume. Hill responded to questions while on the witness stand. Pooh was asked "What do you do at Disneyland?" Hill danced down the courtroom aisle, causing the audience to burst into laughter. The judge stated, "Have the record show that he's doing a two-step." The comical procedure demonstrated the arms on the elaborate costume were too low to the ground to slap the girl at her then height.

After 21 minutes, defendant Robert Hill was acquitted on all charges.

Similarly in 1976, a woman filed a lawsuit claiming one of the Three Little Pigs ran up to her at the "It's a Small World" attraction, grabbing at and fondling her, it supposedly exclaimed "Mommy! Mommy!" As a result, she claimed to have gained 50 pounds, seeking \$150,000 in damages for assault and battery, false imprisonment, and humiliation.

The plaintiff dropped charges after Disney's lawyers presented her with a photo of the costume, which had only stubs, not operable arms.

Another Tigger performer, Michael C. Chartrand, was prosecuted on criminal charges. A 13-year-old girl and her mother both claimed he fondled their breast while posing for a photo, while visiting

the Magic Kingdom on 21 February 2004. Arrested in April, Chartrand was charged with lewd and lascivious molestation of a child and simple battery. Twenty-four more complaints were logged with authorities in the following week, however each lacked sufficient evidence to press charges.

A plea bargain found him not guilty after Mr. Chartrand's attorney, Jeffrey Kaufman, donned a Tigger costume to demonstrate its limited visibility and maneuverability to the jurors. He was allowed to return to his job by August.

The same actor was later suspended after "shoving" a male and a female Kodak photographer in the chest as Goofy. His lawyer from the previous case felt this was just part of the act, and not unnormal. He also stated to his client that as a tall character actor at a Disney Park immediately following the court case, "he would be a walking bull's-eye" for such accusations.

Natural gas odor permeates New York and Jersey Cities

A strong odor of natural gas permeated through parts of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Jersey City early this morning. Authorities assert that there is no cause for alarm and assure the air quality, though smelly, is safe enough to breathe. New York City's Health Department, the Coast Guard, and Con Ed are still on the scene.

In a press conference, Mayor Michael Bloomberg says that a small gas leak at Bleeker St. and Sixth Av. "could not account for a smell so pervasive throughout the city". PATH trains were temporarily suspended from Hoboken, New Jersey, to the 33rd St. terminus, and an MTA control tower at West

4th St. was also temporarily shut down.

"Sensors do not show any high concentration of natural gas that would cause concern" continued Mayor Mike. "We want to take our time and make sure we don't get the wrong information. We cannot speculate, but these are the facts: the smell is there, we don't know the source, and it doesn't appear to be dangerous."

Some buildings in Midtown Manhattan were evacuated as a safety precaution, and HVAC systems in the area have been brought back online. Jersey City EMTs report that seven people have been taken to hospital, but it is unclear if it is a direct result of mercaptanline inhalation.

WINS-AM reporter Juliett Poppa has been reporting along 34th St., commenting that the odor was most noticeable around Fifth Av., but has now dissipated. On-air locutor Lee Harris added that the odor was noticeable even in their Broadway and 57th St. studios. During an interview on air, a Con Ed spokesman said that no gas leak has been found.

"We've had reports as far north as 96th St. on the West Side and 130th on the East" said one NYC 311 operator (This was during this journalist's report of a gas smell at 205th Street.)

Although all reports describe the odour as a gas smell, natural gas supplied for domestic and commercial use is odourless. Mercaptan is added to give natural gas its distinctive smell as an aid to leak detection.

Polish Archbishop resigns after spying revelations
Stanislaw Wielgus, the Archbishop

of Warsaw, resigned yesterday after admitting to have spied for Poland's former Communist Government. At a mass in Warsaw Cathedral, the Archbishop was to have marked his formal installation. Instead, he tendered his resignation. The resignation came at the request of Pope Benedict XVI, who had appointed Wielgus one month previously.

The reaction to the resignation is mixed. Polish President Lech Kaczynski, who attended the service, applauded the resignation. Wielgus' supporters gathered outside the cathedral, yelling "Stay with us". Those opposed to the Archbishop also gathered outside, carrying banners that said "non possumus" ("we cannot allow that").

Since the late 1960s, the former Archbishop spied on members of the Church for about 20 years. After the Gazeta Polska newspaper published allegations of his actions on December 20, Wielgus denied them. However, when church officials announced they had obtained documents showing that Wielgus had willingly co-operated with the secret services, he acknowledged that the accusations were true. There is some suspicion that the documents were leaked by communists, in retribution for the Catholic Church's role in the fall of European communism.

A poll, conducted by the TNS OBOP Institute and published January 5 in the Polish daily Dziennik Polska-Europa-Świat, revealed that 26% supported the Archbishop's immediate resignation, 41% thought that he would have to resign "after some explanations", 20% believed that he should keep his position, and 13% had "no opinion".

Cardinal Jozef Glemp will retain the position of apostolic administrator until a replacement is chosen.

Subway train derails in Washington, D.C.

Subway service in the United States capital city of Washington, D.C. was disrupted Sunday afternoon when a Washington Metro Green Line train derailed as it approached the Mount Vernon Square station.

Sixteen passengers were reported hospitalised, but no critical injuries were reported. All passengers were evacuated from the trains less than an hour after the incident. The Mount Vernon Square station remained closed for the remainder of Sunday, with shuttle bus service bypassing the accident scene. Travel for Green and Yellow line passengers was delayed by 20 minutes during clean up and accident investigation. Normal service on Metrorail resumed on Monday.

Nick Smith responds to claims he is New Zealand's worst behaved politician

Previously Wikinews published an article where New Zealand politician, Honourable Peter Dunne claimed that the Honourable Doctor Nick Smith was the worst behaved politician in the House, "by a country mile".

Gabriel Pollard (Nzgabriel), accredited Wikinews reporter, asked Hon Dr Smith what he thought of Hon Dunne ranking him the worst behaved politician. Hon Dr Smith did not respond to the e-mail when the story was first published, but now has.

Hon Dr Smith said that Hon Dunne's way of assessing the behaved politicians is flawed. Hon

Dunne only takes into account being asked to withdraw and apologise for a statement and for being asked to leave the House, both are enacted by the Speaker. Hon Dr Smith said that personal attacks, like those on Don Brash and Prime Minister, Helen Clark, are not taken into account when ranking the behaviour of politicians. "Nor do one fingered salutes, which the Speaker chose not to punish," referring to the three times when MP, Ron Mark did it.

Hon Dr Smith also has defended the time when he has been asked to leave the House, mainly because when it has happened it was because he had been trying to make the government accountable for various public interest issues. Dr Smith gave an example: "I was thrown out for disagreeing with Margaret Wilson about Dover Samuel's not having to answer questions on the Whangamata Marina because his public comments were as a previous councillor and not a Minister (yeah right)."

Hon Dr Smith also challenges the speaker of the House, Margaret Wilson, saying that she is biased as the three top offenders on Hon Dunne's list, are from the opposition, National, Dr Smith, Honourable Tau Henare and Gerry Brownlee respectively.

"I make no apologies for taking the fight to the Government," Hon Dr Smith said.

Today in History

1768 - Philip Astley staged the first modern circus in London.
 1839 - The French Academy of Sciences announced the Daguerreotype photographic process, named after its inventor, Louis Daguerre.

1878 - Humbert the Good became King of Italy.

1916 - World War I: In Gallipoli, the Ottoman Empire was victorious in the Battle of Çanakkale.

1964 - Martyrs' Day in Panama: A four-day riot erupted over sovereignty of the Canal Zone.

Quote of the Day

I think it is possible, and that is the most dramatic element in modern civilization, that a human truth is opposed to another human truth no less human, ideal against ideal, positive worth against worth no less positive, instead of the struggle being as we are so often told, one between noble truth and vile selfish error.
 ~ Karel Čapek

Word of the Day

acquiesce; v

1. To rest without opposition; to accept passively or consent by silence.

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