



Top Stories

East Timor: President Gusmão takes emergency powers to quell unrest

President Xanana Gusmão has taken special security powers in a bid to quell the violence raging in East Timor.

Iraq to investigate Haditha "massacre"

The Iraqi government is to launch a formal investigation into claims American soldiers murdered civilians in the Iraqi town of Haditha in November 2005.

Featured story

Keep your eyes peeled for cosmic debris: Andrew Westphal about Stardust @home

Instead of distributed computing, Stardust@home will use "distributed eyeballs" to discover interstellar dust. Project leader Andrew Westphal answers our questions about this new online volunteer project.

Wikipedia Current Events

- A motion to vote on a bill opening the Three Links between mainland China and Taiwan is defeated for the third time in the Legislative Yuan of the Republic of China when a Democratic Progressive Party lawmaker tries to eat the written cloture motion. The opposition Pan-Blue Coalition controls the legislature and would have likely passed the bill.
- British mobile phone operator

Wikipedia Current Events

- Vodafone posts the largest annual loss in British corporate history – £21.8 billion – as it writes down the value of company purchases made mainly in Germany in the years up to 2000.
- The board of the Engelhard Corporation agreed to a takeover by BASF. BASF will become the world's largest manufacturer of catalytic converters. BASF will pay USD 5.0 billion for Engelhard, which translates to \$39 per share.
- Seven United Nations peacekeepers are taken hostage by the Nationalist and Integrationist Front militia of Ituri Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- The European Court of Justice rules illegal an EU-US agreement to pass airline passenger data to the US authorities, as it does not ensure privacy protection for European passengers.
- The Constitutional Council of Chad, the highest court in Chad, confirms Idriss Déby's victory in the presidential elections which took place on May 3, 2006. However, the court only gives him 64.67% of the vote, instead of his administration's claim of 77.4%. Turnout was also reduced to 53.08% instead of the previous 60%.
- 2006 Java earthquake: The death toll in last Saturday's earthquake in Indonesia is officially raised to 5,427.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Former Daewoo boss Kim Woo-jung is sentenced to 10 years in prison for fraud.
- John W. Snow has resigned as United States Secretary of the Treasury. President George W. Bush has nominated Goldman Sachs CEO Henry Paulson to succeed him.

Dutch pedophiles set to go political

A group of pedophiles in the Netherlands will make a political party tomorrow, May 31. The party titled Naastenliefde, Vrijheid en Diversiteit (NVD) - Neighbourly Love, Freedom and Diversity - is set to enter the 2007 Tweede Kamer (Lower House) elections, though they are not expected to gain any seats.

Controversially, the party - or NVD - wants to abolish the legal minimum age for youth sexual contact with other youth, lower the legal minimum age for sexual contact with adults to 12, then eventually abolish age restrictions altogether. The members think, contrary to established law protecting minors from sexual abuse, legalising voluntary sex at a young age will diminish the risk of excesses.

Ad van den Berg, one of the pedophile party's founders, says: "Forbidding it will only feed the curiosity of children. (...) Raising children also means letting them get acquainted with sex." The minimum ages for youth-youth sex

and youth-adult sex in the Netherlands currently stands at 16 and 18 respectively.

The NVD also wants to decriminalise much of the porn industry with plans to legalize the possession of child pornography. They want to lower the minimum age for participation in a pornography production; this currently stands at 18, but the group wants the age to be lowered to 12. The child sex advocates from the NVP say any child who is sexually active at age 12 could voluntarily act in a porn movie.

The party also wants to establish a child pornography "hallmark", which would somehow ensure involvement of minors in a specific production was voluntary.

Ireen van Engelen exposes the underlying motives of the small but radical group of pedophile campaigners: "They make it appear as if they wish for more rights for children, but their stance that children from age 12 up should be allowed to enter into sexual contacts of course only serves their own interest."

Political scientist Joop van Holsteyn thinks the establishment of the NVD to decriminalise acts most people find abhorant is a trojan horse to insert the subject into an otherwise unwilling political debate. "What is ethically sound is not laid down in the law: it is an element of the political struggle. If it gains publicity, they already have attained their goal, but they will find more opponents than proponents."

Bomb blasts near Greek Minister's house

A bomb exploded near the house of the Greek Culture Minister, in Lycabettus Hill, Athens, wrecking a

number of cars.

The device, which the police said consisted of 2-3 kg (4-7lb) of dynamite, had been placed on a bike left between two cars.

The explosion at 7:42am (GMT +2), close to the home of Minister Giorgos, is the second time the former Minister for Public Order has been the target of a bomb attack.

While the perpetrators are not yet known, Giorgos Voulgarakis, who had been receiving death threats, is unpopular with leftist parties over questions of immigration.

A trained dog of a Greek anti-terrorist unit had been sniffing around the area of the Minister's home each morning. The September 2003 attack nearly burned down his house.

Two primary schools and a kindergarten nearby were slightly damaged but there were no reported injuries.

As bomb technicians searched the school grounds, frantic parents rushed to take their children home.

The leftist "Epanastatikos Laekos Agonas"(Revolutionary popular rally), is the group which some Greek media have accused for today's bomb attack. No official claim of responsibility has yet been made and the police investigation continues.

All the Greek parties, including the major opposition party, PASOK; the Communist Party(KKE), Synaspismos and LAOS parties, have strongly condemned the terrorist attack.

East Timor: President Gusmão takes emergency powers to quell unrest

President Xanana Gusmão has taken special security powers in a bid to quell the violence raging in East Timor. The period of emergency rule, which would last 30 days, was to "prevent violence and avoid further fatalities" and lead to "rapid reestablishment of public order."

Gusamo, a popular former guerilla leader, will take sole control of the army and police and also the management of the 1,300 strong Australian-led peacekeeping force on the troubled island.

During the disorder at least 27 people have been killed, criminal documents reported stolen, and looting has been widespread in the East Timorese capital, Dili.

Australian Brigadier Michael Slater has called the mobs "gutless thugs."

The decision to give emergency powers to President Gusmão was taken in "close collaboration" with Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri. Mr Alkatiri was unable to stop the rioting that followed the government's decision in March to lay-off 600 soldiers when they refused to work, complaining of discrimination.

As the disorder grew during April and May, East Timor appealed for international assistance. Justice Minister Domingos Sarmiento said Portugal had offered to provide East Timor with 120 security personel by the weekend.

Operation Marham:India rushes aid to Indonesia

The Indian government has begun to send humanitarian aid to the earthquake hit Yogyakarta region

of Indonesia. The relief effort, named Operation Marham involves the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy and aims to deliver aid materials to the victims.

Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee was away on an official visit to China and Japan - a result of which the Indian response was initially delayed. Mr. Mukherjee, however, on Sunday night asked the Defence Ministry to make preparations to dispatch aid to Indonesia with immediate effect.

On the sea, the naval vessel INS Rajput has been redeployed from the South China Sea to Jakarta. It is expected to reach the Indonesian capital with 7 tons of relief material today. The INS Tabar will leave the port of Chennai, India, today carrying additional aid.

In the air, an I.A.F cargo plane carrying 35 tons of relief material has been sent to Indonesia. Another airforce plane, an IL-76, will fly out from India today carrying a similar quantity of relief material.

Among the supplies India is sending to the victims of the Indonesian earthquake are tents, medical equipment and rice. Military doctors are also expected to be sent to aid the casualties.

On news of the disaster, Indian President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh conveyed their condolences to Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

U.S. Military truck crash kills civilians; Kabul riots

Kabul Afghanistan saw the worst violence on Monday since the fall of the Taliban after a large U.S. Military cargo truck crashed into

about a dozen vehicles at an intersection in Kabul killing at least 7 civilians and injuring about 40. "There was a traffic jam and all the vehicles were stopped," said one witness, 21-year old shopkeeper Mohammad Wali. "The American convoy hit all the vehicles which were on the way. They didn't care about the civilians at all."

A U.S. military spokesman, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Fitzpatrick, said no U.S. troops had been hurt, and that an investigation has begun into the incident.

The U.S. military also said the crash was caused by brake failure but Afghans often complain about aggressive driving tactics of the U.S. military. Convoys often pass through crowded areas at high speed and occasionally disregard road rules. U.S. military says such driving is necessary to protect the troops from attack.

Afghan rioters also claimed U.S. troops had shot and killed civilians at the scene of the accident.

Chanting "Death to America," rioters stoned the U.S. convoy involved in the accident Monday before heading to the center of Kabul where they ransacked offices of international aid groups and searched for foreigners. Smoke billowed from burning buildings along the path of destruction.

New Zealand to get new postal codes

New Zealand Post is set to new bring in postal codes for New Zealand, at the cost of \$80 million (NZD).

The New Zealand Herald reported that a new postal code system will be revealed Wednesday, May 31.

There will be 1800 different zones. An automatic mail sorter will sort the mail into 10,000 different mailboxes within the new zones.

On Thursday everyone will get a sheet explaining the changes occurring, in their mailbox.

New Zealand Post communications spokesman Richard MacLean said that hundreds of jobs will be lost, mainly in provincial areas such as Tauranga, Taupo and New Plymouth.

Australian PM doesn't support Queensland party amalgamation

The highest ranking member of the Liberal Party of Australia, Prime Minister John Howard has said he would not support a joining together of the Queensland Liberal and National parties.

The Premier said, pointedly: "There is one thing that I will fight for to my last political breath, is to preserve the nationwide unity of the Liberal Party of Australia. I don't want any arrangement that in any way disturbs that". Mr Howard's statements come after the Queensland branches of both parties held separate meetings where the proposal to amalgamate them was supported in-principle.

In an interview with ABC Radio yesterday, Mr Howard said there had only been an agreement made to discuss whether a merger of the two parties should occur and that nothing was concrete at this stage. Mr Howard warned that the proposal would need to be discussed with both parties at a federal level and that the state's decision would not be able to be made in isolation.

The Australian leader said that as

the leader of the Liberal party he would not support any move that would dilute the party's identity. "Now speaking for myself as leader of the Liberal Party throughout the country, I am totally opposed to anything that would alter the existing identity of the Liberal Party," he said.

"I am opposed to any new name for the Liberal Party in Queensland, I don't want New Liberals, or Old Liberals, I just want the Liberal Party of Australia operating throughout the country" Mr Howard told ABC Radio.

Mr Howard said that he believes the coalition between the Liberal and National parties had served him well over the past ten years and that he supports a close relationship between the two parties.

The Prime Minister hinted that the only merger he would support would be one in which the Liberal party takes over the National party. He said he would not support a new conservative party in the state.

While quick to say that he was not wishing for National party members to quit the national party and join the Liberals, it was noted Mr Howard did not say he was opposed to the idea.

In the statesman's view the Queensland Liberals are part of a nation-wide party, and Mr Howard vowed to fight any proposal that would split them from the rest of the country.

Australia's highest ranked National party member, Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile has said that he sees little need for change. He told ABC Radio that he believes the coalition have a "winning

formula" federally. Mr Vaile also said he had concerns about how the proposal could affect the coalition at the federal level.

Mr Vaile said that the decision to merge would be left to the National party's Queensland members. He said that the national party operates differently to other parties in that it is based at a divisional level within each state and then forms together federally. Essentially, each state branch can operate differently from others so long as it fits into the federal system.

Violence in East Timor causes United Nations evacuation

An upsurge in violence in East Timor has made the United Nations evacuate hundreds of staff members and families from the country.

Sukehiro Hasegawa, the Special Representative to Secretary-General Kofi Annan in Dili said, "A temporary relocation for non-essential staff is the most judicious choice at this time."

The decision comes after the Australian-led peacekeeping operation and the East Timorese government struggled to contain unrest in Dili, the country's capital.

Gang members, some wielding machetes, have been fighting along ethnic lines. There also has been looting and buildings have been razed.

Staff members and families will be relocated to Darwin, Australia. Over 100 United Nations staff will remain in East Timor awaiting the arrival of more Australian peacekeeping forces.

The peacekeeping operation began

after an appeal by the government for international help. Australian forces are part of the multinational force which numbers over 2000 military personnel.

The peacekeepers say they do not directly engage in combat. This brought confusion from one child who said, "Why aren't the Australians doing anything?"

The Australian Prime Minister John Howard said "It's a trickier operation than some people think, nobody should assume that it's just a simple walk-in-the-park military operation -- it's quite challenging."

Lebanese Hezbollah militants threaten Israel with Iranian-made rockets

According to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah has new long-range rockets. These replace the short-term rockets that Hezbollah fire occasionally on Israel, since 1995. The last rocket attack was on May 28, 2006. A few rockets were fired toward a military base on the Meyron Mountain, about 10 km. away from the Northern border. The base was damaged, and one soldier was injured.

The long-range artillery rocket Zelzal-2 is made in Iran. If obtained by Hezbollah and fired from south Lebanon the rockets are capable of hitting targets and causing damage on most of Israel's large cities, including Tel-Aviv and southern center Be'er Sheva.

Today in History

- 1669 - Citing poor eyesight, Samuel Pepys recorded the last entry in his diary.
- 1678 - The Godiva procession in Coventry, England began.
- 1889 - The South Fork Dam on Lake Conemaugh in Pennsylvania, USA failed, killing over 2,200 people in the Johnstown Flood.
- 1916 - The German Kaiserliche Marine and British Royal Navy clashed in the Battle of Jutland, the largest naval battle during World War I.
- 1970 - The Ancash earthquake devastated various coastal towns in Peru and resulted in a massive avalanche on the north side of Nevado Huascarán, burying the town of Yungay.
- May 31 is Independence Day in South Africa (1910), World No Tobacco Day.

Quote of the Day

I am for those that have never been master'd,
 For men and women whose tempers have never been master'd,
 For those whom laws, theories, conventions, can never master.
 ~ Walt Whitman in Leaves of Grass

Word of the Day

dexterously; *adv*

Definition

1. In a dexterous manner; skillfully, with precision, carefully.

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