



Top Stories

Bomb blast near Mosul, Iraq kills at least 40

A bomb blast near the northern city of Mosul has killed at least 40 Iraqis. The bomber struck shortly after noon in front of a U.S. military base. The Defence Ministry says 30 people were injured in the blast, which was carried out by a suicide bomber. The U.S. military says a car bomb had exploded at an Iraqi police recruiting centre.

Airbus A380 safety test injures 33

Thirty-three people were injured during a test of the Airbus A380, a double decker superjumbo jet, in Hamburg, Germany. Injuries include friction burns from sliding down the escape ramps and one broken leg. 853 volunteer "passengers" and 20 crew members took about 80 seconds to evacuate the aircraft, beating the test's requirements by 10 seconds and over 200 people "rescued".

Featured story

Protesters rally for a second time against Buffalo, N.Y. hotel proposal

Despite the cold weather, at least 45 people protested the Proposed Elmwood Village Hotel in Buffalo, NY. No further protests are scheduled, pending the final vote on the proposal by the city's Planning Board on Tuesday.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The mayor of London Ken Livingstone likens the United States Ambassador to Britain Robert Tuttle a 'chisseling little crook' as the United States embassy continues to refuse to pay London's congestion charge.
- The New York Times reports that it has seen a memo that shows George W. Bush was determined to go to war at least two months before the 2003 invasion of Iraq.
- In Germany, a rare tornado kills 2 and leaves more than 300,000 people without electricity.
- Preliminary results of the 2006 Ukrainian parliamentary election give former Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich and his pro-Russian Party of Regions a narrow lead over the Yulia Tymoshenko Electoral Bloc, with President Viktor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine Bloc trailing in third place.
- Zacarias Moussaoui has told an American court Osama Bin Laden asked him to fly a passenger jet into the White House.
- The European Union agrees to introduce a standardized European driving licence.

Stanisław Lem dies at 84

Stanisław Lem, one of the most popular modern science fiction writers who wrote in a language other than English, died at age 84 after a long illness. He died of heart failure while staying at a cardio-surgery clinic in Kraków, Poland.

Lem, described as "one of the deep spirits of the age," was the author of dozens of books, which have been translated into 41 languages and sold over 27 million copies. He gained international fame for *The Cyberiad*, a series of short stories from a mechanical world ruled by robots, first published in English in 1974. Despite his international popularity, Lem is not a member of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, having turned down an invitation to join after his honorary membership was taken away because of anger at his critical commentary about the quality of much of the science fiction being published in the United States. Many of his books have been filmed, most notably the book *Solaris*, which has spawned two films - one by Andrei Tarkovsky in 1972 and the other by Steven Soderbergh and starring George Clooney in 2002.

UK PM addresses joint sitting of Australian Parliament

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Tony Blair addressed a special joint sitting of the Australian Parliament March 27, 2006. After introductory speeches by both the Prime Minister of Australia John Howard and the Leader of the Opposition Kim Beazley, Blair spoke on globalisation and trade, security, terrorism, and the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. He also touched on the Middle East and climate change.

Mr Blair started by reminiscing

about his childhood, when he lived from the age of two until five in Adelaide, South Australia. "I remember returning from the hospital where my sister Sarah had just been born, looking at her in the back of the old Austin that we drove; running errands for our neighbour, Mr Trederay; taking showers under the garden hose in the heat on the lawn; visiting friends up-country in the Adelaide Hills; and being chased by magpies as I ran across the open ground near our home."

Globalisation, trade, and development

He talked about the inevitability of Globalisation, but warned that it should be tempered by social justice. "Globalisation is a fact, but the values that govern it are a choice. We know the values we believe in: democracy and the rule of law, but also justice, the simple conviction that, given a fair go, human beings can better themselves and the world around them." He later connected linked security with justice, saying "there is no prosperity without security and no security without justice. That is the consequence of an interconnected world."

He described the two perspectives on trade as "open or closed", meaning those who support free trade and reduction of tariffs, and those who are more protectionist. Mr Blair was firmly in the "open" camp, but he warned that poverty must also be tackled. "Everywhere you look today, the tide of protectionist sentiment is flowing. In this World Trade Round we have the opportunity to make it ebb. At stake, obviously, is our commitment on world poverty and development." According to Blair, rich western nations have a long way to go before their markets can be considered open. "Europe's

agricultural protection is a policy born of another age and it is time to end it. But change in Europe alone is not the answer. America must open up; Japan, too."

He also linked trade to development, saying that the connection was a matter "of justice, because the poorest nations need to be able to stand on their own two feet and trade in our markets."

Terrorism, Iraq, Afghanistan

He warned of the immediate threat of "Islamist extremism", but argued that terrorism did not begin with the September 11 attacks in the United States, but rather had a much longer history. "It simply came to our notice then. Its victims are to be found in the recent history of many lands, from Russia and India but also Algeria, Pakistan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Indonesia, Kenya and countless more."

He acknowledged that the decision to invade Iraq was as divisive in Britain as in Australia, but sought to justify military action, saying "for almost three years now we have been in Iraq with full United Nations support. From the outset our forces in Afghanistan have been there with UN authority. In both cases, there is the full support of democratically elected governments." He also spoke of the gains made by both Iraq and Afghanistan. "In each case, the people have, for the first time, been offered a chance to vote. In each case, they have seized it, despite obstacles we can scarcely imagine."

He spoke in support of the US Alliance, but said that maintaining some independence was important. "I do not always agree with the United States. Sometimes

they can be difficult friends to have."

Israel and Palestine

Mr Blair called on the United States to work for security in the Middle East, and especially for a two state solution. "once the Israeli election has taken place, we must redouble our efforts to find a way to the only solution that works—a secure state of Israel and a viable, independent Palestinian state."

Climate change

Mr Blair emphasised the need to focus on climate change, and said that it was even more important now with the crisis over oil prices. He noted the differences between the Australian and British approaches to climate change, and argued that co-operation was needed. "At some point we must bring it all together. There will be no agreement worth having that does not involve the United States, China and India, as well as the rest of us."

Seattle shooting leaves seven dead

Seven young people are dead with two more hospitalized in Seattle, Washington, after a murder-suicide shooting Saturday morning in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. The gunman, identified by police and witnesses as Kyle Huff, 28, left a party briefly to retrieve a pistol-grip shotgun and a handgun from his nearby truck. When he returned, he started firing. He turned his shotgun on himself when apprehended by a police officer on the porch of the house where the shootings took place. The dead who have been publicly identified are Jeremy Martin, 26, Christopher Williamson, 21, Jason Travers, 32, Justin Schwarz, 22, and Suzanne Thorne, 15.

No altercation was reported at the party, and no motive has been identified for the killings. Before returning to the party, Huff spray-painted the word, "now," on the sidewalk, and on the steps approaching the house. Seattle police officer Steve Leonard heard the shots, and arrived on the scene to find Huff emerging from the house. Huff was warned to drop his weapon, at which point he aimed his shotgun at his own head and fired. Three of the victims were killed in the living room, and another two were found dead on the porch and steps of the house. Another died at the hospital. One of the hospitalized victims was initially reported in critical condition, but was upgraded Monday morning to satisfactory condition.

Huff, originally from Whitefish, Montana, had been charged in 2000 with felony criminal mischief for firing on a sculpture with a shotgun, according to Flathead County, Montana Sherriff Jim Dupont. Police found an assault rifle, a machete and ammunition in Huff's truck, and a search of his North Seattle apartment turned up three more rifles.

Greek court rules worship of ancient Greek deities is legal

Greek court has ruled that worshippers of the ancient Greek religion may now formally associate and worship at archeological sites.

Prior to the ruling, the religion was banned from conducting public worship at archeological sites by the Greek Ministry of Culture. Due to that, the religion was relatively secretive.

The Greek Orthodox Church, a Christian denomination, is extremely critical of worshippers

of the ancient deities.

Today, about 100,000 Greeks worship the ancient gods, such as Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Aphrodite, and Athena. The Greek Orthodox Church estimates that number is closer to 40,000.

Many neo-pagan religions, such as Wicca, use aspects of ancient Greek religions in their practice; Hellenic polytheism instead focuses exclusively on the ancient religions, as far as the fragmentary nature of the surviving source material allows.

Western Australia braces for another cyclone

Towns and communities in north Western Australia are preparing for the sixth cyclone of the season. The Bureau of Meteorology says a cyclone warning is current for a category 3 cyclone for coastal and island areas between Cape Leveque and Bidyadanga. A cyclone watch extends south to Dampier. The cyclone is expected to move roughly parallel to the coast in the next few days and intensify further.

In Port Hedland, residents were urged to prepare for Glenda, which today was a category 1 storm off the Kimberley coastline, to the north. Dampier Port supports the offshore oil and gas industry from North West Cape to Broome and offshore, the largest oil and gas export area in Australia.

Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia (FESA) district manager Gordon Tiddums advises residents to closely monitor the cyclone's path and take to take precautions such as clean up loose material and rubbish and get emergency supplies.

Widespread heavy rain is expected to continue during the next few days in the north and east Kimberley. Recent tropical storms have dumped 560 millimetres in the Wyndham area over the past few days. Around 30 elderly people and young children have been evacuated from the Oombulgurri Aboriginal community, 80 kilometres west of Wyndham.

The weather bureau says that Cyclone Floyd continues to weaken as it heads towards the WA coast. Cyclone Floyd has been downgraded to a category one system. The bureau says gales may develop during the day as the cyclone nears the coast and the system is still causing winds of more than 100 kilometres an hour.

Category Four Cyclone Floyd caused wind gusts of up to 280km an hour did not threaten the coast or the state's massive resources industry.

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The A380's first landing on April 27, 2005

The A380 will be the world's largest passenger airliner, almost twice as large as the current largest airliner, the Boeing 747. Airbus has had 159 planes on order by 16 customers, and the first A380s will go to Singapore Airlines towards the end of the year.

This test was important to Airbus, as in August 2005 an Airbus 340 overshot the runway and 300 people escaped before the plane burst into flames. Infrared camera recordings of the test will be analyzed by authorities such as the European Aviation Safety Agency, while the US Federal Aviation Administration was present during the test. The European Aviation Safety Agency will confirm the test results this week; Airbus intends to repeat the test Saturday if the aviation agency fails this attempt.

The volunteers, who were paid 60 euros (about \$72 US) and a meal, were from Airbus staff, sports clubs, and dancing clubs in the Hamburg area where the test took place. Airbus recruited people from clubs in order to get volunteers in good physical shape.

Sweden names Jan Eliasson new Foreign Minister

During a press conference at 10:15 a.m. CEST (0815 UTC), Prime Minister Göran Persson of Sweden appointed Jan Eliasson as the new Foreign Minister.

Eliasson will be taking over the ministry post from Laila Freivalds, and will have Carin Jämtin, the current Minister for Development Aid, as his Deputy Foreign Minister. Until the transfer on April 24, 2006, Jämtin will be acting

Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Eliasson is currently chairing the UN General Assembly. He has also held positions as the Swedish Ambassador to the United States, and as Secretary for Foreign Affairs within the Swedish government. Eliasson will fulfill his role of chair of the General Assembly, ending his term on September 11, 2006.

Freivalds was forced to resign last week when her involvement in talks between a Swedish internet hosting site associated with the controversy over the cartoon of Mohammed was questioned.

Prince closes XVIII Commonwealth Games

Prince Edward formally closed the XVIII Commonwealth Games last night in a spectacular 4 hour ceremony at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

About 85,000 spectators were in attendance; British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Australian Prime Minister John Howard were also there.

Melbourne 2006 Chairman Ron Walker said that the games were "the greatest coalition of Commonwealth nations ever seen....We have all been united by the moment... ..Melbourne, we did it!"

Commonwealth Games Federation chairmen Mike Fennell; named Indian Shooting Samaresh Jung as the winner of the David Dixon Award, for been the Best Athlete of the 18th Commonwealth Games. Jung won five Gold; one silver and one bronze, in the Games

Fennell also praised the organisation, crowds, volunteers

transport and support services as well as the athletic performances and he said that the games had been an "incredible success"

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The blast follows the killing of 20 Shiites at a mosque compound in Baghdad. Shiites have blamed U.S. forces for killing 22 people Sunday and cut off political talks in protest. The United States has said no mosque was attacked.

The number of civilian deaths from military intervention is over 33000 since the beginning of the Iraq war.

Creekstone Farms sues USDA for refusing to allow mad cow testing

Creekstone Farms Premium Beef, an organic meatpacking company based in Arkansas City, has filled a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The company says the USDA threatened criminal prosecution if it proceeded with plans to test nearly 100% of its beef for Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, also known as mad cow disease or BSE.

The USDA's stated position was that allowing any meatpacking company to test every cow would undermine the agency's official position that random testing was

scientifically adequate to assure safety. It also claims that 100% testing does not ensure food safety because the disease is difficult to detect in younger animals.

The USDA currently tests about 1% of cattle slaughtered in the U.S. The USDA's objection is believed to be the result of pressure from larger meatpacking operations. In 2004, the president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association told the Washington Post that "If testing is allowed at Creekstone, we think it would become the international standard and the domestic standard, too." Creekstone Farms says tests cost about \$20 per animal, increasing the cost of beef by about 10 cents per pound.

Crash kills Indy driver Paul Dana

Indy Racing League (IRL) driver Paul Dana died Sunday afternoon, following injuries sustained during a crash in the warmup session of the Toyota 300 race at Homestead-Miami Speedway.

During the warmup, Ed Carpenter's car spun out heading into a turn due to tire failure, hitting the wall and continuing to spin down the track when Dana hit his car on the side while travelling at over 200 mph (321 km/h). Paul was warned of the danger by his spotter, but did not ease off as much as other drivers in the section of the track. The slow-motion footage appeared to show Paul hitting debris from Ed's car a few seconds before the main impact.

Both were taken to a nearby hospital, where Dana died nearly two hours later, shortly after noon local time (1700 UTC). According to Henry Block, senior director of

medical services for the IRL, Carpenter was listed in stable condition at the hospital.

Dana's wife, who was attending a church service in Indianapolis at the time, was informed of his death shortly after.

Despite Dana's death, the Toyota 300 continued as scheduled. However, teammates Danica Patrick and Buddy Rice did not compete. Dan Wheldon beat Helio Castroneves by the car's cone nose to win the race. Wheldon had placed Dana's number, #17, onto his car before the race.

Dana's death is the first in the league for nearly three years. Tony Renna, who was the last death in the league before Dana, was killed in an accident at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Dana was also the first death at Homestead since 1997, when NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series racer John Nemechek was killed in an accident.

Candace Parker double dunks, makes basketball history

On March 19, 2006, Candace Parker, the 6 foot, 4 inches (1.93 meters) tall Tennessee Lady Volunteers forward, made NCAA Basketball history and set a record as the first woman ever to double dunk in an NCAA game. Playing against the Army Black Knights, Parker made her first dunk of the game with 13:44 left in the first half. The Lady Vols were ahead, 14-13, as Sidney Spencer fed the ball to Parker, who flew over opponents to the net, becoming the first woman to slam dunk in an NCAA game. The crowd roared... not once, but twice. With 14:18 left in the second half, Parker took Nicky Anosike's pass and soared above Army and Lady Vol players for her second slam dunk in the game. Even the famously focused

Coach Pat Summit took a moment to appreciate the feat.

During an NPR interview, sports analyst, Nancy Lieberman, spoke about what Parker's dunking foreshadows for women's basketball. Both Lieberman and Summit noted that Parker frequently dunks the ball during practice, as other women do. Lieberman says that women's basketball has developed immensely in recent years. And she expects audiences will see women NCAA and professional basketball players use dunking and other spectacular skills much more in the future.

Canadian Press speculates on special forces role in Iraq

Canadian news outlet CP is speculating that Canadian Forces soldiers, specifically the elite JTF2 unit, may have been involved in the rescue of two Canadian hostages in Baghdad, Iraq.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has refused to answer questions about whether these troops were involved. It would be significant to Canadians if their troops were involved in Iraq, as Canada previously refused to contribute troops to the US-led coalition.

Quote of the Day

"I'd like just to be remembered as a guy that came along and did his music, did his best and showed up on time, clean and ready to do the job, wrote a few songs, and had a hell of a time." ~ Buck Owens

Today in History

193 - Praetorian Guards assassinated Roman Emperor Pertinax and sold the throne in an auction to Didius Julianus.

845 - Viking raiders, probably under Ragnar Lodbrok, captured Paris and held the city for a huge ransom.

1795 - Partitions of Poland: The Duchy of Courland, a northern fief of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, ceased to exist and became part of Imperial Russia.

1862 - American Civil War: An invasion of New Mexico Territory by the Confederate States Army was halted in the Battle of Glorieta Pass.

1979 - A nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania suffered a loss of coolant and a partial meltdown. March 28 is Teachers' Day in the Czech Republic

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