



### *Top Stories*

#### **Big Brother star meets Tony Blair**

The winner of the British television reality show *Celebrity Big Brother*, Shilpa Shetty, met Prime Minister Tony Blair during a meeting at the U.K. Houses of Parliament.

#### **Wal-Mart to face court trial**

A federal court has upheld a ruling given in 2004 for Wal-Mart. 1.6 million woman or more could sue Wal-Mart for allegedly being sexist.

Seven people were killed. Major-General William Caldwell, a U.S. military spokesman confirmed that transport helicopter came down though did not specify whether mechanical failure or ground fire had brought it down.

#### **Wal-Mart to face court trial**

A federal court has upheld a ruling given in 2004 granting class action status for a suit against Wal-Mart. As many as 1.6 million women, or more, could alledge that Wal-Mart was sexist and file civil suits.

Six women in 2001 claimed that the company paid them less than men. They also claim that there are fewer female managers in Wal-Mart stores than workers.

"It is time for Wal-Mart to face the music," said Brad Seligman, a lawyer representing the female plaintiffs. "Two courts now have ruled that Wal-Mart is going to have to face a jury ... We fully expect Wal-Mart to keep appealing but we're very confident now that two courts have upheld this (class) certification."

"Factual evidence, statistical evidence and anecdotal evidence present significant proof of a corporate policy of discrimination and support plaintiff's contention that female employees nationwide were subjected to a common pattern and practice of discrimination," said Judge Martin Jenkins.

This lawsuit only counts for female workers that have worked for the

company since December 26, 1998.

#### **Hamas, Fatah leaders begin talks to end clashes**

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and Damascus-based chief Khaled Meshaal of Hamas arrived in Mecca, Saudi Arabia for negotiations in an attempt to end the fighting between Hamas and Fatah in the Gaza strip.

Ever since the Hamas movement, which refuses to recognize Israel and stop attacks on Israel, won elections for the Palestinian parliament last year, there have been repeated clashes between the two groups. The result has been over 80 deaths.

Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah called the talks in order to stop the violence and help both sides to come to an agreement and establish some sort of unity government.

Hamas and Fatah officials said they hoped the leaders would come together for a meeting with King Abdullah later on Tuesday night. The leaders are expected to take a pilgrimage to the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Islam's holiest site, before opening talks, which are expected to continue on Wednesday.

The United States and the European Union have labelled Hamas a terrorist organization and have blocked financial aid until the movement recognizes Israel and agrees to uphold previous

### *Featured story*

#### **Furry fans flock to Further Confusion 2007**

Furry fans have gathered from far and wide to indulge their love of anthropomorphics at Further Confusion, the second largest furry convention in the world.

### *Wikipedia Current Events*

- Avivim incident: IDF, Lebanese army exchange fire on northern border.
- A letter bomb, the third in many days, has injured a woman working at the main DVLA centre in south Wales. Today's attack follows two others, at other road transport agencies in the UK.
- Indonesia's West Irian Jaya province, on New Guinea, changes its name to West Papua.

#### **Iraq helicopter crash kills seven**

A Marine CH-46 helicopter went down in Al-Anbar province of Iraq.

agreements with Israel signed by the Palestinian Authority.

Senior Abbas aide, Azzam al-Ahmad, said the talks would aim to persuade Hamas to accept the program of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which would involve an implicit Hamas recognition of Israel that could end the aid blockade.

If indeed such a government can be formed it will allow the resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians that were stopped in 2003. Previous attempts to negotiate an agreement between the two Palestinian groups have ended in cease-fire that have lasted only a short time.

### **Big Brother star meets Tony Blair**

The winner of the British television reality show *Celebrity Big Brother*, Shilpa Shetty expressed her gratitude to Prime Minister Tony Blair during a meeting at the U.K. Houses of Parliament.

The Bollywood actress observed prime minister's question time in the Commons before meeting Mr Blair himself. She thanked him for his support, describing him as "very sweet."

The visit took place following an invitation by Labour MP for Leicester South, Keith Vaz, who led calls for action against the treatment of Ms Shetty during her stint on the reality TV show. *Celebrity Big Brother* was criticised by public and politicians alike last month after Ms Shetty's treatment by other contestants erupted in an international race row.

Today, she told reporters she had thanked the PM for his support "to me and my country".

Her visit drew widespread media attention and she was greeted at Parliament by a media scuffle, including over 20 reporters from her native India.

"To see how so much respect has been bestowed upon me has truly been an honour," she added.

According to organisers, the Commons chef had even prepared a special dessert in her honour "Shilpa's delight" and she was also introduced to Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell.

The actress was crowned winner of *Celebrity Big Brother*, following confrontations with fellow housemates Jade Goody, Jo O'Meara and Danielle Lloyd who were accused of bullying and racism. Despite denying the claims, all three lost most of their major endorsements and Jade and Danielle's partners are said to have left them.

Politicians became embroiled in the proceedings when media regulator Ofcom received more than 40,000 complaints from viewers. This resulted in the row reached both the House of Commons and India, where chancellor Gordon Brown's bridge-building visit was overshadowed by controversy caused by the programme.

In the evening, Ms Shetty travelled to the city of Leicester to meet with members of Keith Vaz' constituency. Reena Combo, editor of British Asian entertainment magazine *Ikonz*, was one of the guests. Ms Combo felt the visit would boost a sense of belonging amongst Leicester-South's largely Asian population.

"I think it's wonderful to see Shilpa Shetty taking the time to visit the people of Leicester. There has been

a great deal of national interest in Shilpa since her appearance on *Big Brother* but many of the people here, especially the Asian community, have been fans of the Bollywood star for much longer so it's nice to see her rewarding her loyal supporters."

"She has over the last few weeks become an inspiration to many and become very much a part of British life."

As yet, the Bollywood actress continues her tour of the country as an unofficial ambassador for the Indian film industry and has been invited to attend a Commonwealth reception at London's Marlborough House on March 12, where she will be meeting with the Queen.

### **Celtics lose, extend streak**

Even with six players in double figures, the Boston Celtics fell to the Detroit Pistons 109-102 on Tuesday night. The loss extends the franchise-record losing streak of the Celtics to 15 games.

The Celtics could not keep up with the Pistons during the game, falling behind 16 points at halftime and 22 points after three periods. A rally by the Celtics in the fourth period gave Boston a glimmer of hope but Detroit's starters returned to hold off the Celtics.

Pistons coach Flip Saunders was not pleased by the effort his team gave in the fourth quarter. "Your main guys should have the opportunity to sit down and ice in the fourth quarter of a game like that," he said. "We had to bring those guys back with five minutes left to make sure we won the thing." A 16-2 run by the Celtics midway through the final quarter brought the team back to within 10 points of the Pistons, but the Detroit starters returned after a

timeout to quash the burgeoning Celtics rally.

Doc Rivers, Celtics coach, was less enthused by his team's late run.

"I'm not going to put a lot of stock in that. I'm not sure how much the other team was still competing at that point." Adding to the team's woes was the news that star Paul Pierce was sent home by team doctors with an infection in his left elbow. This latest development will push Pierce's return to the lineup beyond the All-Star break. Pierce has missed the last 23 games with a foot injury.

While the Celtics trailed by only 5 points after one quarter, the Pistons shot 72% from the field in the second quarter, led by Antonio McDyess with 10 points. Rivers attributed the problem to the team's bench play. "The bench really put us in a hole in the second quarter - it was a five-point game when they went in there."

The Pistons are next at home against the Los Angeles Lakers on Thursday, while the Celtics return home to face the Miami Heat this evening.

#### Game notes

The Pistons' Richard Hamilton earned a double-double, with 10 points and 11 assists. The Celtics' Rajon Rondo almost earned one as well but fell two points short, with 8 points and 11 assists.

Both teams had six players in double figures.

The Celtics are now 2-21 since Pierce went down with his injury. Despite this, Pierce still leads the team in scoring.

#### **Mitt Romney to announce presidential campaign**

Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney will formally launch

his Presidential campaign in Michigan, his home state, next week.

Romney has spent the last few months rallying support around the country. Romney is the first of several Republican front runners to formally declare his candidacy.

Romney's record as a moderate and his Mormon faith are expected to be his primary campaign challenges.

Romney, born in Detroit, the son of former Governor of Michigan George W. Romney attended Cranbrook School of Michigan and Harvard Business and Law Schools. Romney ran against senior Massachusetts senator and Kennedy family member, Ted Kennedy. Romney won 41% percent of the vote against Kennedy in the closest election in Kennedy's entire tenure in the United States Senate. Romney was also CEO of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee which was in charge of planning the 2002 Winter Olympics from 1999 to 2002, he took charge after the 2002 Winter Olympic bid scandal. He also sat on the board of Massachusetts-based office supply giant, Staples, Inc.

#### **Halton MP Garth Turner joins the Liberal Party of Canada**

Garth Turner Member of Parliament (MP) for Halton, has joined the Liberal Party of Canada after months of being an Independent MP.

Turner was elected with the Conservative Party of Canada in the January 2006 election, but was suspended in October from the Party after posting critical blog posts. After, there was some speculation the he would join the Green Party, which has 0 elected MPs in Ottawa, the nations capital.

"Garth Turner is an exceptional Member of Parliament, known across Canada for his passion and accomplishments," said Liberal leader Stéphane Dion speaking in Ottawa today with Turner. "He is an outspoken advocate for fiscal prudence, progressive values and environmental sustainability, and I know Mr. Turner's constituents of Halton will only be better served by his decision today."

"As a former Progressive Conservative MP and Cabinet Minister, I believe in being careful on money issues, but also generous on social ones," said Mr. Turner. "I have found Mr. Harper's party to be too far right for my community of Halton, while the Liberal Party of Stéphane Dion now closely reflects those progressive values I've always believed in."

Now there is only one independent MP in the House of Commons being André Arthur for the riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier in French speaking Quebec.

Turner now has a video posted on Google Video. He talks about joining the Liberals. See external links section below to watch.

In the video he says the Conservatives have an extreme right-wing agenda. He also adds that it is better to be in a Party than being independent.

#### **Today in History**

1587 - Mary, Queen of Scots was executed at Fotheringhay Castle on suspicion of having been involved in the Babington Plot to murder her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I of England.

1849 - The Roman Republic was proclaimed.

1904 - The Russo-Japanese War began after a surprise torpedo

attack by the Japanese on Russian ships near present-day Lüshunkou, China.

1971 - Trading began in NASDAQ, the world's first electronic stock exchange.

1979 - Colonel Denis Sassou Nguesso was chosen as the new President of the Republic of the Congo.

February 08 is Prešeren Day in Slovenia.

**Quote of the Day**

One single war — we all know — may be productive of more evil, immediate and subsequent, than hundreds of years of the unchecked action of the mutual-aid principle may be productive of good.  
~ Peter Kropotkin

**Word of the Day**

banter; v

1. To engage in good-humoured, playful conversation.

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