



Top Stories

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld resigns

The Associated Press is reporting that U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is about to resign. President George W. Bush announced that he will nominate Robert Gates, former head of the CIA, as a replacement for Rumsfeld, speaking at a White House press conference at 1 p.m. today.

Ed Bradley of 60 Minutes dies at 65

The 60 Minutes correspondent Ed Bradley has died today at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York at the age of 65 after a struggle with leukemia.

Featured story

Three Walmart superstores open in Canada

Wal-Mart Canada's first three supercentres opened in Ontario. The supercentre has wider aisles, higher ceilings, clear signage, and cash registers in selected departments such as electronics and clothing. The idea originally started in America in late 2005 and was announced that it would be arriving in Canada.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Ken Mehlman to step down as chairman of the Republican National Committee.
- Eight synchronized bombs hit car showrooms in Southern Thailand, nine injured.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev formally signs the new Constitution of Kyrgyzstan. The Constitution drastically weakens the power of the executive branch in favor of the legislative. Bakiyev and Prime Minister Felix Kulov are expected to maintain their positions until 2010.
- Montana Senator Conrad Burns concedes his U.S. Senate race to Jon Tester.
- Virginia Senator George Allen to concede his U.S. Senate race to James Webb. This gives control of the U.S. Senate to the Democrats.
- A recount is reported to be underway in Florida's 13th congressional district, after Christine Jennings, who lost her bid for Katherine Harris's former House seat by 373 votes, alleges that touch-screen voter machine malfunctions failed to record 18,000 votes in Sarasota County, Florida, a Jennings stronghold.
- BP settles the last remaining lawsuit from the 2005 explosion at its Texas oil refinery that cost 15 lives.
- The Bank of England raises interest rates in the United Kingdom to five per cent.
- Israel braces itself for revenge attacks after yesterday's dawn barrage in the Gaza Strip leaves a family of 18 dead. The general in charge of Israel's Southern Command, Youav Galant, blames problems with the targeting

Wikipedia Current Events

- device for the artillery strike.
- Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack announces he will be running in the 2008 US Presidential Election.
- Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, is hospitalized following a heart attack.
- France performs successfully the first flight test of its new nuclear missile, the M51.

Royal Canadian Legion upset over white poppies

The Royal Canadian Legion are upset over the distribution of white poppies at a store in Edmonton, Alberta. Veterans in Canada sell red poppies to remember the soldiers that fought in War which is now called Remembrance day.

Michael Kalmanovitch, owner of The Earth's General Store, who has been selling white poppies for the past three years, says the white poppies symbolize the hope for peace.

A veteran at the Royal Canadian Legion says that white poppies are an insult and may infringe on the legion's trademark.

"If he, Kalmanovitch [the owner] doesn't, then we will proceed with further legal action," said Steven Clark, Ottawa-based remembrance co-ordinator who oversees the poppy trademark for the Legion.

A British organization called the Peace Pledge Union in London,

England started the distribution of white poppies in 1993, and over the years the idea has been sold to Canada. The white poppy is a symbol of opposition to the war and they also pay tribute to the pain of those who have lost someone in war.

Mr. Kalmanovitch says that he won't cease white poppy sales until he's officially been notified by the Peace Pledge Union, a British organization that took over from the Women's Co-Operative Guild to distribute the white poppies worldwide.

Marya Nyland, who belongs to Women in Black, an international peace organization, which has been distributing the white poppies across Canada for the last 11 years, said, "Peace is free. You never buy peace."

"It's offensive and it's disturbing that this white poppy would appear at this time of year," he said. "To me, the white poppy is an insult to the veterans. The Women in Black organization, I think, are piggybacking on the sacred time of the year," said Harvey Shevalier, president of the Legion's Alberta-Northwest Territories Command.

Peace activists are advised to focus their efforts on September 21, UN-sanctioned International Day of Peace. However, white poppies would still infringe on the Legion's trademark even if they change the date to Sept. 21.

The poppies are CAN\$2 apiece and sell quickly. Two-hundred of them sold on Monday and the store has ordered more, according to Mr. Kalmanovitch, the store owner.

About 12,000 white poppies are distributed each November in Canada.

New Zealand's alcohol purchasing age not to be raised

In a conscience vote last night, Wednesday, parliament decided that the alcohol purchasing for New Zealanders will not be raised to 20 but instead will stay at the current age of 18.

The vote was 72-49 with the noes as the majority, a conscience vote is where the individual Member of Parliament (MP) votes instead of the party and their policies.

The bill was brought before Parliament with the intent of placing the drinking age back at 20 following its lowering to 18 in 1999. It was first drafted by Matt Robson of the NZ Progressive Party, and was then taken on by Martin Gallagher from the New Zealand Labour Party.

However, the Labour-led government is being attacked for interfering with the liquor purchase age bill. Before the debate on the bill, two ministers who are against raising the age, justice minister Mark Burton and associate health minister, Damien O'Conner both announced that they would fully review the sale/supply of liquor to people below the age of 18, regardless of whether the bill were passed or not. The review will most likely look at how many off-licence outlets there are and increased law enforcement of the drink age. Mr Burton said that he did not pre-empt the bill voting, he said: "It was important to ensure all options were on the table before the vote. What we are saying is you can have confidence that if the bill doesn't proceed there will be an alternative vehicle for addressing the issues immediately thereafter."

Many MPs said that it was unorthodox to intrude in such a

manner in the voting process. Leader of Jim Anderton's Progressive coalition and supporter of the bill, Jim Anderton, said: "Making a last-minute plea to MPs is not to be fooled by the promise of the unnecessary review. This is the review you have when you want to give parliamentarians a soft option. We do not have that luxury. And I hear that sigh of relief in many places, 'oh gosh you've got a review so we don't have to make a hard decision'. Well this is the place for hard decisions and this is where the buck stops."

Christopher Bishop, a spokesman for the Keep it 18 campaign, said: "We welcome the Government's moves to review the supply of alcohol to minors in the likely event that the Sale of Liquor Amendment Bill is defeated today. Raising the drinking age is never going to work as a way of dealing with New Zealand's drinking culture. It is a simplistic and knee-jerk solution – a legislative sledgehammer."

Chester Burrows, National MP, said: "My experience is I've seen too many pissed young people, raped young people, assaulted young people."

Wayne Mapp, National MP, said he favours a split age, 18 and 19-year-olds are allowed to drink in pubs but not to buy alcohol at liquor stores until they are 20. "They [the two who introduced the review] should have waited till Parliament decides, rather than trying to dictate," he said.

Gordon Copeland, United Future MP, who also preferred the split age, said he had "no doubt the move would influence the way people voted. It was a most unfortunate interference."

Simon Power, National MP, said: "It [the bill] is inconsistent. It requires peculiar legal definition and will make life more difficult and harder for the police to enforce."

Ron Mark, New Zealand First MP, said: "Are we going to do something, or are we going to do nothing?" asked New Zealand First list MP Ron Mark. "We can at least let this bill go through to the next stage."

Ross Bell, spokesman for the Drug Foundation, said: "Not only is such a review too narrow, it also seemed to pre-empt the outcome of Wednesday's debate. A cynical person might think the announcement gave MPs an excuse not to support the bill. That review has already been looked at by the Law and Order Select Committee, and what is needed is a review of price and availability of alcohol."

However it has been suggested by the select committee previously researching the drinking problem in New Zealand that there is little hard evidence 18 & 19 year olds are buying alcohol for minors, with the largest problem instead being the purchasing of alcohol by parents for their children.

Ed Bradley of 60 Minutes dies at 65

The 60 Minutes correspondent Ed Bradley has died today at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York at the age of 65 after a struggle with leukemia.

"It's an incredibly sad day for everyone at CBS News. Ed was a phenomenal reporter and a great man," Senior Broadcast Producer Bill Owens told CBSNews. "Never have the words, 'he will be missed'

meant more."

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Bradley was diagnosed with leukemia two years ago. It started to get worse two weeks ago, contracting pneumonia and succumbing to the disease.

Chicago activist publicly burns himself alive in protest of Iraq War

Chicago peace activist and musician Malachi Ritscher burned himself alive Friday morning on the Kennedy Expressway, apparently in protest of the Iraq war.

Police found a homemade sign near his body which said "Thou Shalt Not Kill." Before the act, he posted a suicide note on his website.

Microsoft announces that new Vista OS on schedule

Microsoft Corporation announced on Wednesday it has finished all work on its long-delayed Windows Vista operating system (OS) and plans to release it to consumers January 30 2007.

The announcement means Microsoft is on track to meet its revised release schedule.

Jim Allchin, co-president of the Microsoft division that includes Windows, said that Windows Vista's code was released to begin manufacturing copies early on Wednesday.

"This is a good day," Allchin declared.

Microsoft previously announced that it would release Windows Vista to large business clients at an event at the NASDAQ Stock Market on November 30 2006, and make it available to consumers

sometime in January 2007.

The release will be the first major upgrade in more than five years to the OS of the company that powers most of the world's PCs. Vista claims to have improved graphics, more effective tools for finding documents, pictures and other items on PCs, and a new Internet browser.

Vista's release has been victim to a series of delays, the most recent delay was blamed in part on efforts to improve security of the OS.

In its quest to get Vista up and running, Microsoft also has had to scrap some of its original goals, including getting rid of a more sophisticated method for sorting and organizing information. Analysts have said that scaling back the system could hurt the company if people don't see enough of a reason to upgrade.

The most recent delays also forced Microsoft to miss the holiday season, possibly dealing a blow to computer makers and retailers who would have been hoping for the new OS to boost holiday gift sales.

Microsoft and other computer manufacturers are offering holiday shoppers coupons good for a free or discounted Vista upgrade.

It's not clear how quickly big businesses will start using Vista. It can often take months if not years for companies to test a new operating system and make sure it will work well with the other programs they rely on.

Allchin said Microsoft is providing tools that allow companies to test for compatibility problems more quickly than with past Windows

releases. He also said he hopes the security improvements would drive companies to upgrade faster.

Microsoft estimates that the new OS could set off a hike of 10% or more in Windows software sales in the financial year to June 30, with most of the increase coming in the second half of the year.

Microsoft shares rose 3 cents (from US\$ 28.95) to close at US\$28.98 Wednesday on the NASDAQ.

Retired pastor burns himself alive to protest spread of Islam

The 73-year old retired pastor, Reverend Roland Weisselberg, burned himself alive during Reformation Day services on Tuesday in Erfurt, Germany. His self-immolation was apparently to protest against the spread of Islam, which he felt the Protestant church should take more seriously.

His last words were "Jesus and Oskar," which is believed to refer to Oskar Bruesewitz, a priest who burned himself alive to protest the Communist government of East Germany. He was transported to a burns unit in Halle but died en route.

Reverend Weisselberg had lived under Communism in East Germany, and had been a publisher in his former vocation. Axel Noack, Bishop of Saxony, said that he was shocked at Rev. Weisselberg's self-immolation, stressing that Christians could not accept a "clash of cultures". He confessed that the issue of Islam had been sidelined within the Church and was only spoken about in private. There were few Muslims there with whom they could engage in dialogue, Noack claimed.

'Jesus Camp' shuts down

The evangelical christian summer camp "Kids on Fire " featured in the documentary Jesus Camp will shut down for several years due to negative reactions to the film, negative e-mails, phone calls and letters. Many accuse camp leader Becky Fischer of "brainwashing" the children.

The documentary showed camp leader Becky Fischer acting as a "drill instructor" for young children preparing themselves for spiritual and political warfare. Fisher makes explicit comparisons between her camp and Islamist 'jihad training camps'. It also shows children praying before a photograph of President Bush.

The film included scenes with disgraced preacher Ted Haggard, who resigned his leadership of the National Association of Evangelicals after he was accused of having sex with a male prostitute and using methamphetamine.

Haggard has criticized the film as mocking the evangelical movement and for using his statement that "If the Evangelicals vote, they determine the election." The film makers responded that "Pastor Haggard is the only person in Jesus Camp who has a problem with how he was portrayed" and stated that they had been careful to avoid his more inflammatory and divisive comments.

Indian Railways tie up with Bombardier Transportation

The Indian Railways (IR) has tied up with the Canadian transport solutions major Bombardier Transportation to produce electronic freight locomotives in the country for the proposed Rs 22,000-crore dedicated freight corridors on the eastern and

western routes.

Bombardier produces regional aircraft and business jets to rail transportation equipment.

Bombardier Transportation officials have met Railways' officials for exploring the option of setting up a greenfield electronic freight locomotive manufacturing facility and an assembling unit in India.

Analysts feels that IR will need at least 500-600 electronic freight locomotives, besides the same number of diesel locomotives for dedicated freight corridors in the first phase. "Conservative estimates for a normal locomotive are between Rs 13 crore and Rs 15 crore. The investment required for manufacturing electronic freight locomotives is around Rs 10,000 crore," the analysts said.

It is also been learned that IR would also pick up a stake in this project.

Bombardier President, Transportation, Andre Navarri confirmed talks with IR, "We are keen to take part in the dedicated freight corridor project, but the nature of the agreement with the Indian government is yet to be finalized."

IR will come up with a detailed plan and tenders for the proposed corridor by mid-November.

New Zealand students able to use txt language in exams

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has announced that a shorter version of English known as txt language will be acceptable in the external end of year exams. Txt language is where words are shortened for easier mobile phone usage, e.g. txt is for text, lol is for laugh out loud, brb

is for be right back, etc.

Txt language has been approved if the marker can see that the paper "clearly shows the required understanding", however the NZQA still advises not to use it. Bali Haque, deputy chief executive of NZQA, said: "Students should aim to make their answers as clear as possible. Markers involved in assessing NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement) exams are trained professionals, experienced in interpreting the variety of writing styles and language uses encountered during the marking process," Mr Haque is confident that marker will understand txt language.

Educators and students alike are divided saying that it will be easier and others saying it could damage the English language.

Mr Haque said that if the marking schedule said that good language use is needed then txt language will be penalised.

Debbie Te Whaiti, president of the Post-Primary Teachers' Association, said: "The authority's new stance reflected the situation in the classroom. Individual teachers are grappling with [txting] every day. However, teachers would have concerns if text slang became an acceptable everyday written language in the classroom."

Year 11 student at Avonside Girls High School, Cathy Adank, said: "Most students would be surprised to hear text language was acceptable in some exams. That's great. You'll just be able to get your ideas out quicker. It's so much faster; you can get through the exam faster." But her close friend, Harriet Prebble, disagreed,

"I think it's a terrible idea. When you start progressing in the world, people judge you on the written language, and spelling things incorrectly seems sloppy and lazy and gives a bad impression." However both girls did agree that the use of txt language damages the overall spelling of the users.

Denis Pyatt, principal of Papanui High School, said: "While I would not encourage students to use text abbreviations in exams, I am excited by the language developments. I think text messaging is one of the most exciting things that has happened in a long time. It is another development in that wonderful thing we call the English language. Society has to adapt to change and I think ultimately text messaging could help resolve one of the strangest parts of English, which is its spelling, though I think it will be some time before text spelling is formally adopted."

Lincoln High School NZQA officer, Stephen Rout, said: "[I] will not be recommending text speak to his students. I would advise students to use proper English rather than text abbreviations. Students need to be able to write and understand full English and I would encourage our students to do that."

Lynda Harris, chief executive of the Write Group who help people develop their English skills, said that her staff are worried "about students being allowed to write in text abbreviations."

This decision comes over a week later when the Scottish Qualifications Authority also allowed txt language.

Vietnam becomes 150th member of the World Trade Organization

World Trade Organization (WTO) has officially invited Vietnam to become a member of their organization. Vietnam is the 150th nation to join the WTO.

Now that the country has joined the WTO, Vietnam will have more access to overseas markets, but will be forced to cut high import tariffs, thus reducing the budget by as much as 21%.

Vietnam has proclaimed its intention to leave the ranks of the world's poorest countries by 2010, and will become a WTO member 30 days after official approval from its National Assembly.

Joining the WTO will force a reduction in import duties, within five to seven years, from their current average rate of 17.6% to 13.8%. It will also eliminate any import quotas WTO countries have against Vietnamese textiles, rice and coffee. Vietnam's banks, insurers and telecommunications companies, however, will have to face competition from foreign interests, and restrictions on foreign ownership of Vietnamese firms will be eliminated.

"Foreign competition is bitter medicine for Vietnamese enterprises, but it will help them become stronger," said Le Dang Doanh, an economist at the ministry of planning and investment.

UK Foreign Office is over-secretive: Committee reports

The House of Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs published its Eighth Report today. This criticizes the way in which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) protects information. The

FCO has the presumption that information should be regarded secret unless there are good reasons for disclosure. The Committee regarded this management practice as a "relic of a bygone age, when secrecy was endemic in public life".

These days, in the Committee's view, attitudes to information are quite different and the presumption is that information should be available to the public unless there are "very strong and valid reasons not to disclose it".

The Committee gave an example. Extracts from the farewell e-gram from William Patey, the Ambassador to Baghdad, appeared in the press. The Committee had asked for, but had been refused, a copy of the message. Within days, the press reported that outgoing Heads of Mission were forbidden to send such messages.

The Committee noted that all the FCO Board papers it has asked for had been provided.

Today in History

1520 - After a successful invasion of Sweden, Danish soldiers under King Christian II executed scores of Swedish leaders in the Stockholm Bloodbath.

1865 - Henry Wirz, the superintendent of the Andersonville Prison, was hanged, becoming the only American Civil War soldier executed for war crimes.

1871 - "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" – Henry Morton Stanley located missing missionary and explorer, David Livingstone in Ujiji, near Lake Tanganyika in present-day Tanzania.

1969 - Sesame Street debuted on the National Educational Television network in the United States.

1995 - Playwright and environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others from the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People were executed by the Nigerian military government.

Quote of the Day

No man knows till he has suffered from the night how sweet and dear to his heart and eye the morning can be. ~ Bram Stoker

Word of the Day

higgledy-piggledy; adj

1. In utter disorder or confusion; mixed up.

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