



### Top Stories

#### World reacts to execution of Saddam Hussein

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#### Bangkok hit with further New Year bomb blasts

More bombs went off just after midnight (0500 GMT) on New Year's Day in Bangkok, injuring eight people near a shopping mall where hours before a New Year's Eve countdown was cancelled due to a string of six bombings earlier in the evening.

### Featured story

#### Ice shelf breaks free in Canadian Arctic

The Ayles ice shelf, which is the size of more than 11,000 football fields and is located just south of the North Pole, has broken free in the Canadian Arctic and scientists say that global warming has played a "major" role in the break.

### Wikipedia Current Events

- The Palestinian factional violence flares up again.
- The Islamic Courts Union collapses in the Battle of Jilib, and flees from its last major

### Wikipedia Current Events

stronghold in Kismayo towards the Kenyan border.

- The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia assumes control of Kismayo after the Islamic Courts Union retreats.
- Romania and Bulgaria join the European Union.
- Slovenia adopts the euro, replacing the tolar and becoming the first enlargement to the eurozone.
- CITIC, a state-owned investment enterprise of the Chinese government, buys Nations Energy Company, a Canadian petroleum extraction company, giving it a majority stake in KazMunayGas, the state-owned oil and gas company in Kazakhstan, for USD \$1.91 billion. The deal is highly controversial because of the amount of control China now has over Kazakhstan's natural resources. Kazakh Oil Minister Baktykozha Izmukhambetov has criticized the deal since it was first considered in October 2006.
- The Armenian government detains citizen Vahan Aroyan for allegedly plotting a coup d'état against Armenian President Robert Kocharian. The Association of Armenian Volunteers a political opposition group, denounce Aroyan's detainment, saying the move is an attempt to silence dissidence.
- Adam Air Flight 574 disappears over Indonesia with 102 people on board.

### Contact with Indonesian passenger plane lost

A Boeing 737-400 flying for low-cost carrier Adam Air has gone missing during its flight from Surabaya, Java to Manado, Sulawesi, Indonesia. The plane serving as flight number KI-574 was carrying 96 passengers and a crew of 6. The incident has been confirmed by Indonesian authorities, but details remain scarce.

According to air traffic personnel, the more than six-hours overdue flight must be well over its fuel-limit if still in the air. The flight reportedly encountered bad weather conditions and a distress signal has been received in the central Sulawesi region. Military airport Chief Eddy Suyanto in South Sulawesi said to the Associated Press that the type of signal received from the aircraft "indicated a big chance it had an accident or crash."

### World reacts to execution of Saddam Hussein

The execution of Saddam Hussein caused critical statements by governments from the world and also by non governmental organisations.

The United States, Australia, Iran and some Polish politicians saw positive effects of the execution. George W. Bush said it was a "milestone" on the way to a democratic Iraq. Iranian politicians also think that the execution was a "victory for the Iraqi people". The Polish foreign minister said he was

an opponent of death penalty, but would make an exception in this case. Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer referred to the death of Saddam Hussein as an "important step" on the way towards a historical judgement of Hussein's "tyrannous regime". He thinks that it will lead to an opportunity of strengthening the process of reconciliation.

At odds with this response there were the countries of Europe, such as the U.K., Finland, France, Switzerland, the Vatican and Germany who stand up for a worldwide abolishment of the death penalty. The main reason given by them was that even incredibly heinous crimes would not justify executions. The Vatican's spokesperson, Federico Lombardi, said that there was "the risk that it would incite the seek for revenge and produce more new violence". Germany's minister of state in the Office for foreign affairs, Erler, said that Saddam Hussein's crimes would not be doubted, but the German government would stay with its general attitude of rejecting death penalty.

Russia also expressed regret for the execution. An official of the Russian Office for foreign affairs, Michail Kamynin, warned against an intensification of the military and political situation in Iraq and against a rise of ethnical-confessional tensions. Libya ordered a three-day national mourning. Head of state Ghadhafi stopped all celebrations and ceremonies for the Eid al-Adha half-masting all flags on governmental buildings. The Palestinian foreign minister criticised the execution, too. There had been often disagreements, but nevertheless, the execution had been wrong, he said.

The organisation "Human Rights Watch" criticised that the proceedings against Hussein had "shown severe deficiencies". The World Council of Churches expressed its critical attitude towards the execution of Saddam Hussein: "Everytime a person is taken his life, it is part of a big tragedy." Amnesty international very much criticised the proceedings: The execution was apparently a foregone conclusion. The appeal court had only created the impression of legitimacy in a flawed proceeding, they said.

The Council of Europe condemned the execution and called on Iraq to abolish death penalty.

Meanwhile, at 4:00 a.m. this morning local time (1:00 a.m. (GMT)), the dictator's remains were buried in Awja, close to Tikrit, the hometown of Hussein, as was reported by CNN.

### **New UN Secretary General assumes post**

Ban Ki-Moon, South Korean foreign minister, officially assumed his post as United Nations Secretary-General today.

Ban, the eighth UN Secretary-General, is also the first Asian to serve in this office in 35 years.

Ban, 62, grew up on the Korean peninsula in the midst of the Korean War that divided the region. He promises to bring peace to the North Korean nuclear conflict.

Along with North Korea, Ban faces a litany of difficult issues including the genocide in Darfur, tensions in the Middle East, an international campaign against AIDS and poverty in line with his predecessor Kofi Annan's

Millennium Goals, a push to increase the size of the Security Council, and calls for ethics reform within the United Nations.

In his inaugural address, Ban said, "My first priority will be to restore trust."

"The United States will rely on his leadership to help steer the UN organization through the reforms already underway," said White House spokesman Scott Stanzel on Sunday, "and to propel it even further on the path of reform."

Ban will temporarily reside in a hotel in New York City until renovations on his official residence are completed as part of a modernization plan approved by the UN General Assembly.

### **1 million people welcome 2007 in Sydney**

A crowd of approximately 1 million has welcomed the new year in Sydney overnight. Many of the crowd had camped out since 6 AM AEDT (7PM UTC) to ensure they had the best vantage point for the fireworks displays at 9 PM and 12 AM. Earlier predictions of rain failed to dampen enthusiastic revellers and fortunately did not eventuate.

According to police, vantage points were Circular Quay and Sydney Opera House closed around 7 PM.

This year's theme was "A diamond night in Emerald City" and celebrated the Sydney Harbour Bridge's diamond anniversary of 75 years which will fall in March.

As usual, the bridge became the centre piece of Sydney's celebrations with a question mark turning into a coat hanger during the 9 PM fireworks show before a diamond appeared at 11 PM.

Entertainment was held in the city throughout the day, culminating in a spectacular fireworks display at midnight. Revellers counted down the final seconds of 2006 with numbers on the side of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

The festivities are estimated to have cost AUD \$4 million and organisers claim their fireworks display is "the largest in the world". Sydney's celebrations were broadcast on television live around the world as other countries prepared their New Years Eve celebrations.

Despite the large crowd, police made only 58 arrests for offences including offensive conduct, stealing, assaulting police, goods in custody, assault, drink driving and affray.

Ambulance officers were called to 1,139 incidents in Sydney with another 900 in country areas.

### **Australian 1976 Cabinet papers released**

Today the National Archives of Australia released most of the 1976 Cabinet papers of the Fraser government revealing a plot by Palestinian terrorists to assassinate the then Israeli Ambassador to Australia and prominent supporters of Israel.

Countering terrorism in the 1976 papers was seen to require "specialist elements of the Defence Force" to be trained as police forces were seen as inadequate to the emerging threats. Reform of the Australian intelligence community was also recommended as it was seen as "fragmented, poorly coordinated and haphazardly organised."

Cabinet papers are released to the

public after 30 years through the National Archives on the 1st of January.

### **New Zealand to be present at state funeral of Gerald Ford**

New Zealand member of Parliament (MP), minister of ethnic affairs, conservation, and housing, the Honourable Chris Carter is to represent New Zealand at the state funeral of the late United States President, Gerald Ford held in Washington.

The state funeral will include the family of President Ford, foreign representatives and senior politicians from America. The funeral is to be held in the Washington National Cathedral in Washington DC, on the morning of January 2, 2007.

Hon Carter, said: "The prime minister [ Helen Clark ] considers it important ... to show at a time of national mourning in the US that we are prepared to send someone in the middle of our summer holidays, when our parliament is not sitting, because we value the relationship."

MP Honourable Trevor Mallard, who made the announcement, said: "President Ford won respect for the decent, down to earth qualities that he brought back to government after assuming the Presidency in 1974 in the difficult circumstances of the aftermath of the Watergate scandal and the resignation of former President Richard Nixon."

The announcement of Hon Carter representing New Zealand overseas is strange because the Right Honourable Winston Peters is the minister of foreign affairs for New Zealand.

After the funeral on the national

day of mourning, Hon Carter should meet America's secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice.

Hon Mallard, said: "The United States is a fundamentally important partner for New Zealand. It is appropriate that we mark our respect for the strength of US democracy and the many other enduring values that we share in common with the United States in this way."

Hon Carter left for America last night (NZDT), December 31, 2006.

President Ford was in office for only two years, 1974 - 1976. President Ford took over from President Nixon following the Watergate scandal. President Ford was 93-years-old when he passed on.

### **Bangkok hit with further New Year bomb blasts**

More bombs went off just after midnight (0500 GMT) on New Year's Day in Bangkok, injuring eight people near a shopping mall where hours before a New Year's Eve countdown was cancelled due to a string of six bombings earlier in the evening.

The first bomb exploded at a seafood restaurant on the Saen Saeb Canal near Pratunam Pier just seconds after midnight.

Three foreigners and two Thais were injured. One of the foreigners had her legs amputated by the blast, according to television and local newspaper reports. The foreign tourists were having dinner at the restaurant.

Police said the bomb was hidden in a tire at the pier.

A second bomb exploded in a telephone booth near a pedestrian

bridge at CentralWorld, where thousands of people had gathered earlier in the evening for a countdown party and had been urged by authorities to leave the area and go home. Several foreigners were injured and rushed to hospitals.

Another bomb was found and disposed of without incident at Suan Lum Night Bazaar, another late-night venue for tourists.

A possible bomb was investigated at Buddy Bar, a popular music venue on Khaosan Road. It turned out to be a false report. Police had earlier closed the venue and other bars on the street frequented by backpackers, urging people to return to their hotels and guesthouses.

Earlier in the evening, bombs had gone off at six locations across the city, from about 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Twenty-five people were injured and three later died at hospitals from their injuries. The biggest toll was at Victory Monument, where 17 people were injured, two of them dying from their injuries. Other targets were a police booth at Saphan Kwai intersection, where two people were injured, and a market in Khlong Toei, where three people were injured, one fatally. At Seacon Square shopping mall, a bomb was found in a trash can inside the mall and taken to the parking lot, where it exploded without injuring anyone. Police booths on Sukhumvit Soi 62 and in suburban Nonthaburi were also hit, but there were no injuries.

After the bombings, Bangkok Governor Apirak Kosayothin had ordered the cancellation of the countdown celebrations at Central World and Sanam Luang and other smaller ones.

"Due to several bomb explosions in Bangkok and for the sake of peace and security, I would ask all of you to return to your homes now," Apirak told a crowd of around 5,000 people at CentralWorld. Most of the crowd dispersed quickly and calmly.

Army Commander-in-Chief General Sonthi Boonyaratglin ordered soldiers deployed around the capital. Security was intensified on the Metro and Skytrain rail systems. The Skytrain cancelled plans to run all night and closed at midnight as usual. Department stores closed early.

Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont visited victims at a local hospital. He appeared on television looking tense, telling reporters he didn't know who was responsible for the attacks.

Surayud was appointed premier after a coup d'état on September 19 in which the military led by Sonthi ousted prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

The Nation newspaper quoted a "security source" as saying "the old power clique" was behind the bombing.

However, there is also the ongoing violence by Muslim separatists in the South Thailand insurgency, which has left 1,900 people dead since 2004.

### Today in History

- 366 - The Alamanni crossed the frozen Rhine in large numbers to invade the Roman Empire.
- 533 - Mercurius became Pope John II, the first pope to adopt a new name upon elevation to the papacy.
- 1492 - Reconquista: Catholic Monarchs expelled Boabdil of Granada, the last of the Moorish

rulers, from the Iberian Peninsula.  
 1949 - Luis Muñoz Marín became the first democratically elected Governor of Puerto Rico.  
 1959 - Luna 1 (pictured), the first spacecraft to reach the Moon, was launched by the Soviet Union.

### Quote of the Day

Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent. ~ Isaac Asimov

### Word of the Day

passim; adv

1. Throughout or frequently; used to indicate that a particular word or idea appears many times within a book or article.

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