



Top Stories

Bomb blasts in Iraq kill nearly 200

Several car bombs have killed 190 people in Baghdad on Wednesday and wounded over 200 others in what is being reported as the worst string of bombings to occur in Iraq the US-led invasion in 2003.

Bible publishing firm in Turkey attacked; 3 killed

Two Germans and a Turkish employee of a bible publishing firm, which was earlier accused of proselytizing, have been killed in an attack.

Featured story

380 million year old fossilized trees found in New York, USA

Two fossilized trees said to be over 380 million years old have been found in the state of New York inside a rock quarry.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Colombia's Nevado del Huila volcano erupts, provoking avalanches and floods that sweep away houses and bridges and prompt hundreds to evacuate.
- After the acquisition of Algoma Steel, India's Essar Group plans to buy U.S.-based Minnesota Steel for US\$ 1.66 billion.
- A diplomat claims that an International Atomic Energy Agency document claims that Iran has assembled some 1,300 centrifuges at a key underground nuclear plant in Natanz and has

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started to feed them with the uranium gas necessary for enriching uranium.

- The Supreme Court of the United States rules 5-4 in favor of upholding the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act in the case of Gonzales v. Carhart.
- Virginia Tech police respond to what turned out to be an unfounded threat near Norris Hall, where 31 people died Monday in the United States's deadliest ever shooting spree.
- Authorities announce that Cho Seung-hui, the gunman who killed more than 30 people on Monday at Virginia Tech, has sent a package that contained disturbing images and video to NBC during the two-hour period between the shootings at the West Ambler Johnston Hall dormitory and the shootings at Norris Hall. The new evidences are sent to the FBI for more analysis.

- At least 198 people are confirmed dead after a series of bombings in Baghdad.
- United States Army soldiers raid buildings in a rural area northeast of Falluja, killing four suspected terrorists and capturing another 30.
- At least 16 secondary school students die in Egypt's Al Jizah governorate as the truck they were traveling to school on collides with another vehicle.
- Three workers at a publishing house in Turkey that prints Bibles

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are murdered in ongoing sectarian violence.

- Australia and the United States agree to exchange hundreds of asylum seekers kept in offshore detention camps in Nauru and Guantanamo Bay.
- Iccho Itoh, Mayor of Nagasaki, Japan, dies after being shot in a suspected gangland killing on Tuesday. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe denounces the murder as unforgivable.
- The People's Republic of China begins a new service of high-speed trains capable of reaching speeds of 200km/h (124 mph).
- Thirty-two steel workers are killed and two more injured in China after a ladle full of liquid steel failed, engulfing an adjacent room full of workers.
- UEFA chooses Poland and Ukraine as joint hosts for the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship.

Iran's Supreme Leader wants religious army

Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader and commander-in-chief of the military, met with army personnel and their families on April 18, the Day of Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He blasted the military of the previous regime as one without spirituality, saying, "the defunct regime (of Shah Pahlavi), which was backed by America and other superpowers, amassed all its efforts on building an army of irreligious

and unpopular identity. Nevertheless, following the Islamic Revolution, the Army picked a religious identity."

Khamenei then went on to pay tribute to several martyrs and former army commanders by stating that these men played pivotal roles in shaping the religious identity of the army. Finally, he exhorted the army to modernize and obtain sophisticated military technology through utilization of the nation's own resources.

In the same vein, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stressed that Iran would rely upon God and advised major powers to "return to the path of God's prophets".

Tehran Times also reported that Khamenei glorified the "religious democracy" and "anti-hegemonistic character" of Iran.

Virginia Tech gunman sent package to NBC

According to police, Cho Seung-hui, the gunman who killed 33 people including himself on Monday at Virginia Tech., sent a package containing pictures and video to NBC, in between the first and second shootings at the campus. The package was timestamped by the United States Postal Service at 9:01 a.m., just under 30 minutes before the second shooting.

"This may be a very new, critical component of this investigation. We're in the process right now of attempting to analyze and evaluate its worth," said superintendent of Virginia State Police Colonel Steve Flaherty.

The package, which contained a DVD, allegedly contained "rants against rich people" and "warns that he wants to get even".

"[The package contained a] rambling, manifesto-like statement embedded with a series of photographs" and the material was "hard-to-follow ... disturbing, very disturbing — very angry, profanity-laced," said Steve Capus, the president of NBC News.

At least 23 videos are reported to be inside the package, in a QuickTime format, where Cho speaks about religion and how he hates rich people. No specific names were mentioned in the video. The pictures of Cho show him holding both guns believed to have been used in the shootings, and in some cases he is leaning against a white wall. There are also pictures of him showing hollowed out bullets and holding a knife. It is not known where the pictures or videos were taken.

No images of the either of the two shootings were inside the package, but it did include "vague references" to the shootings and asserted that "things like this didn't have to happen," added Capus, who also said that the package had an incorrect address and ZIP code.

All of the material that Cho sent to NBC was immediately handed over to the FBI by NBC security guards wearing gloves for further analysis.

NBC plans to air some of the material on NBC Nightly News on Friday. However, the video is also being discussed on NBC's 24-hour news channel, MSNBC.

US Supreme Court upholds ban on partial birth abortions

The Supreme Court of the United States on Wednesday April 18 has upheld the federal Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003. The 5-4 vote reflected the change in vote count resulting from the retirement of Justice O'Connor and the

confirmation of Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Alito.

The Intact dilation and extraction procedure, also known as partial birth abortion, involves removing an intact late-term fetus from the womb via the cervix. While it is a relatively rare operation - 0.17% of all abortions in the US in 2000, it has become a focal point in the abortion debate.

The Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act bans the procedure in cases where the fetus is terminated during the operation, unless it is performed to to save the life of the mother.

Justice Kennedy wrote in the opinion of the court: "respondents have not demonstrated that the Act would be unconstitutional in a large fraction of relevant cases." Further, he said, "Respondents have not demonstrated that the Act, as a facial matter, is void for vagueness, or that it imposes an undue burden on a woman's right to abortion based on its overbreadth or lack of a health exception. For these reasons the judgments of the Courts of Appeals for the Eighth and Ninth Circuits are reversed."

In a concurring opinion, Justice Thomas stated that he joins "the Court's opinion because it accurately applies current jurisprudence, including Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pa. v. Casey, 505 U. S. 833 (1992)."

In dissent Judge Ginsburg wrote: "Today's decision is alarming. It refuses to take Casey and Stenberg seriously. It tolerates, indeed applauds, federal intervention to ban nationwide a procedure found necessary and proper in certain cases by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists."

Justice Kennedy's words also recall

the complicated issues of standing related to such cases. An issue in *Roe v. Wade* was the impossibility of any individual having standing in a court proceeding regarding abortion rights, since court proceedings take more than the 9 months of pregnancy, retiring any individual plaintiff's standing before an appeals process can take place. The criterion of "a large fraction of relevant cases" may effectively deny standing to any plaintiffs who wish to litigate particular restrictions in some relevant future cases.

Football: Roma defeats Inter 3-1 in Milan

FC Internazionale Milano must wait for the Serie A Scudetto after a 1-3 home defeat against AS Roma in the Italian Serie A. The loss is the first Inter have suffered this season, and it came at a very unfortunate time. With a win, Inter could have sealed the league title for themselves, breaking the record for clinched title with most games remaining. The loss, however, means that Inter will attempt to tie the record of 5 games remaining next Sunday against Siena.

Roma started well and took the lead after 44 minutes through Simone Perrotta. Inter equalized in the 52th minute when Adriano earned a soft penalty, and Marco Materazzi scored from the spot. In the 88th minute, Roma captain Francesco Totti scored a freekick goal after a deflection off Luis Figo in the wall. Roma sealed the win only a minute later through Marco Cassetti.

Though mathematically Roma could still win the league, the reality of the situation is that Inter will seal the league title easily within the five remaining games. The win does help Roma secure their spot for next seasons Champion's

League, however, where they will be hoping to put in a better showing than they did this past season.

Roma's next match is also on Sunday, as they take on tenth place Atalanta.

2007 Cricket World Cup: Ireland vs Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka have defeated Ireland today in the Super 8 phase of the World Cup at Queen's Park, St. George's, Grenada.

77 is the lowest score in this world cup for an opening batting team. It has also confirmed that South Africa will finish fourth in the Super 8 stage, however Sri Lanka's position may change after the Australia vs New Zealand match.

Toss: Sri Lanka won the toss and elected to field first.

More dog and cat food recalled in the United States

Natural Balance Pet Foods has recalled some of its wet and dry food for cats and dogs after several owners said that their pets were becoming sick. The company urges owners to stop feeding their pets the food immediately.

The brands recalled include Venison & Brown Rice Dry Dog Food and Venison & Green Pea Dry Cat Food.

Last month, Menu Foods recalled all of its 60 million products of dry and wet dog and cat food after pets began to fall ill and in some cases died of kidney failure.

"Natural Balance, Pacoima, CA, is issuing a voluntary nationwide recall for all of its Venison dog products and the dry Venison cat food only, regardless of date codes. The recalled products include Venison and Brown Rice canned

and bagged dog foods, Venison and Brown Rice dog treats, and Venison and Green Pea dry cat food. Recent laboratory results show that the products contain melamine. We believe the source of the melamine is a rice protein concentrate. Natural Balance has confirmed this morning that some production batches of these products may contain melamine," said a press release issued by Natural Balance.

The FDA states that the "investigation remains open and active, and the agency continues to follow leads to get closer to the root cause of the problem and to ensure that all contaminated product is removed from the market."

"The source of the melamine appears to be a rice protein concentrate, which was recently added to the dry venison formulas. Natural Balance does not use wheat gluten, which was associated with the previous melamine contamination," said the press release.

Bags, cans and zip lock bags of the food are expected to be the most affected.

"The products are packaged in bags, cans and zip lock treat bags and sold in pet specialty stores and PetCo nationally. No other Natural Balance products are involved in this voluntary recall as none of our other formulas include the rice protein concentrate," added the press release.

The company states that the food, Venison & Brown Rice Dry Dog Food and Venison & Green Pea Dry Cat Food, are the only brands affected by the recall.

Turkey's Army chief proposes unarmed flights over Aegean Sea

Turkey's Chief of General Staff, Gen. Yaşar Büyükanıt proposed that Greek and Turkish fighters should fly unarmed flights over the Aegean. This follows reports that Greek and Turkish fighters held mock dogfights during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Athens last month,

Greek Foreign Ministry spokesman Giorgos Koumoutsakos said that Turkish planes were in the air at the time but denied any effort to confront Greek fighters.

Gen. Büyükanıt is in Thessaloniki, northern Greece, where the Conference of the Balkan countries Chiefs of Army Staff takes place, and met his Greek counterpart, Admiral Panayiotis Chinofotis.

Greece's Minister of National Defence Evangelos Meimarakis this morning declared open the Conference which takes place in Thermi, a suburb in eastern Thessaloniki. As Meimarakis said during his opening speech, the dialogue among Balkan countries is very significant; characteristically saying that a dialogue builds bridges.

Gen. Büyükanıt's visit in Greece is his first in the country, after he became chief of the Turkish Army Forces. According to Turkish officials, Gen. Büyükanıt will visit the Turkish Consulate of Thessaloniki which is regarded as the birthplace house of Kemal Atatürk.

Electronic voting disputed in France

In France, traditionally, voting has been a relatively low-tech experience: voters isolate themselves in a booth, put a pre-

printed sheet of paper of their choice, bearing the name of a candidate, in an envelope, then they walk to the ballot box, demonstrate that they are entitled to vote to the voting office staff, sign the voting roll, then put the envelope into the ballot box. French electoral law rather strictly codifies the proceedings. Since 1988, ballot boxes must be transparent, so that people can witness that no envelopes are present at the start of the vote and that no envelopes are added except those of the duly counted and authorized voters. Candidates can send representatives to witness every part of the process. In the evening, votes are counted by volunteers under heavy supervision, following specific procedures.

In the past, voting machines, though authorized by law, were scarce. But this year, as presidential elections loom (the first round is on April 22, the second on May 6), France is shaken by a controversy about machines supposed to count about 1.5 million votes.

As in the United States, there is a group of academic computer scientists that oppose voting machines. They argue that voting machines replace a public, easily understandable counting process, where large-scale fraud would entail large-scale corruption, by an opaque process where votes are counted by machines that voters have to blindly trust. Voting machines have to be approved by the Ministry of the Interior, but this approval is based on confidential reports by private companies. Opponents to the machines point out that the Ministry was long held by Nicolas Sarkozy, who happens to be the leading candidate. Opponents also list a number of weaknesses and discrepancies that

have occurred in other countries using voting machines.

All main political parties, except Mr Sarkozy's ruling party, UMP, oppose the voting machines. Some citizens have filed for court injunctions against the voting machines. Opponents have given detailed instructions that voting witnesses should check whether the machines correspond exactly to an approved type, including software versions, and fulfill all legal conditions. Sign of the official frenzy on the issue, the Ministry of the Interior issued a last-minute, April 12, authorization for a specific model (hardware, firmware). The stakes are high: votes on unapproved machines should be cancelled by the Constitutional Council for the official count.

The opposition is now crystallized on the Paris suburb of Issy-les-Moulineaux. Issy's mayor, André Santini is a well-known technophile; his city organizes a "World E-Gov Forum". Here too, last minute fixes are at work. The machines delivered to the city are of a yet-to-be-approved type. The manufacturer, the American company ES&S voting systems, is now delivering older 2005 machines. Le Monde reports that other municipalities have already replaced their recent machines by an older, approved, model.

Proponents of the machines, such as the French company, France Élection, claim they are being defamed and dispute the competence of the computer scientists who dispute the machines. Elected officials supporting the machines claim the machines save on paper, time, and the need to find volunteers to count votes.

Outage leaves tens of thousands of New Zealanders without Internet

An Internet outage in New Zealand has left tens of thousands of people without Internet access for over five hours after a planned upgrade crashed Telecom's servers.

Telecom, New Zealand's telecommunications monopolistic company, had planned for an upgrade to its network overnight but it didn't quite go to plan as their network crashed at around 4.00 a.m. (NZST) until around 11.00 a.m., when it was restored. Telecom has said that either customers lost their connection altogether, or could not access some websites.

The network outage also affected other ISP's who purchase their services off Telecom. Vodafone's ihug, TelstraClear, Slingshot, Callplus, Quicksilver, MaxNet, Woosh, World Exchange, ICONZ, and, of course, Xtra were all the affected ISPs.

Another network outage, again, left broadband subscribers without Internet for around 20 minutes, from 11.20 a.m. to 11.40 a.m..

The outage affected international and national websites, and e-mail services of both residential and some corporate customers.

Telecom says that they are still investigating the full reason for why the outage occurred, but they do know it was related to a problem with a broadband router in Auckland.

Spokesperson, Sarah Berry has said that Telecom will consider compensation case by case for affected customers.

Some people still had limited

Internet access though, including Wikinews reporter, Gabriel Pollard. Gabriel Pollard has said that he was able to access his Gmail account, some pages of Wikinews, and some pages would start to load but never finish. He described it as "painfully slow". Mr Pollard says that it took a while to log onto his work e-mail as their TelstraClear Internet connection wasn't working.

The network is still being monitored for any other problems that may arise.

Bell Canada Enterprises might be taken private

Bell Canada Enterprises (BCE), one of Canada's largest telecommunications companies, announced Tuesday that it is in talks with a consortium of Canadian pension funds to explore the possible sale of the company.

If successful in their bid, the consortium would take the publicly-traded company private, which would mean an end to the trading of BCE shares on the Toronto (TSX: BCE), New York (NYSE: BCE) and the Swiss (SWX: BCE) stock exchanges. BCE is one of the most widely held stocks in Canada.

BCE revealed that the potential takeover group includes the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, and Canada's Public Sector Pension Investment Board. Each of the pension funds involved have signed non-disclosure and standstill agreements with BCE. It was also revealed that New York-based private equity firm Kohlberg Kravis Roberts (KKR) would join the Canadian-led consortium as a minority partner.

"We are pleased to be a partner with this consortium of leading Canadian institutional fund

managers and look forward to working closely together in this transaction." said Henry Kravis, co-founding member of KKR. "Our experience in large, complex transactions of comparable size will be of significant value to this process," continued Kravis.

BCE is also leaving the door open to rival bids, "taking into consideration the need to meet all legislative and regulatory requirements, including ensuring the Company remains Canadian to meet existing foreign ownership restrictions," the company stated. In addition, BCE may retain the status quo if it does not receive a bid that it feels would enhance shareholder value.

One other pension fund that has expressed interest is the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP). "We are pleased that this process is not exclusive and we will continue to review our options, including leading an alternative Canadian consortium," said Jim Leech, Senior Vice-President, Teachers' Private Capital. OTPP is currently BCE's largest single shareholder, with an approximate ownership stake of 5.3 percent.

BCE, as Bell Canada, has been in business for 127 years. It provides phone service, satellite television, Internet access, wireless services, and other technologies to residential and business customers.

If analyst estimates are accurate, the sale of BCE could be worth about CA\$32 billion or roughly \$40 per share. On Tuesday, BCE shares were up CA\$2.34 to close at \$38.60 on the TSX, and up US\$2.03 to close at \$34.10 on the NYSE.

Virginia Tech was warned about gunman Cho

A former professor at Virginia Tech

has said that she informed the university authorities about Cho Seung-hui and his unusual behaviour in 2005.

Lucinda Roy claims that after Cho wrote a disturbing piece for an English class, she "was so uncomfortable that I didn't feel that I could leave him in the classroom." Roy also indicates that she felt the repeated warnings that she gave concerning Cho should have been considered more seriously.

16 Killed in Egyptian motor accident

In Egypt, 16 teenagers on their way to school have been killed. The vehicle they were traveling in was involved in a head-on collision on the main road from Cairo. Early reports indicate that at least eight others were injured.

About 6,000 people die and 30,000 are injured each year in traffic-related incidents in Egypt.

Nigeria begins 'evacuation' of militants

There are reports that the Nigerian Army has clashed with militants. The army has begun an operation to remove militants from Kano in the north of the country.

According to police the militants, who have been linked with Islamic extremists, may have been in the area because an Islamic cleric was assassinated last week.

The unrest comes days after a number of political parties in Nigeria called for postponement of Nigeria's presidential election and a boycott of the poll over its integrity.

Brewing Cartel? - Not here says EU

The European Union has imposed fines on brewers in the Netherlands totaling at least 273 million euros

for price fixing and alleged anti-competitive behavior.

Whilst not record, the fines are intended to send a clear message that cartel-like behavior would not be tolerated in the EU.

EU Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes was quoted as saying "The highest management of these companies knew very well that their behavior was illegal, but they went ahead anyway and tried to cover their tracks", indicating that senior management in the firms had done little to stop the behavior.

Combating price-fixing and cartels remains a priority of EU Competition Commission authorities; 1.7 billion euros in related fines have already been issued this year.

More Fatalities in Somalia

There have been seven more deaths in Somalia in fresh clashes between insurgents and Ethiopian troops. 50 people are also reported to have been injured.

A spokesperson for the Dominant Hawiye clan indicated that despite high tensions a ceasefire agreement holds.

Today in History

1775 - The American Revolutionary War began with the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

1839 - The signing of the Treaty of London formally recognised Belgian independence from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

1971 - The first space station, Salyut 1, was launched.

1995 - Oklahoma City bombing: A car bomb was detonated in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, killing 168 people.

2005 - Joseph Alois Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI on the

second day of the papal conclave.

Quote of the Day

Children say that people are hung sometimes for speaking the truth.

~ Jehanne Darc (Joan of Arc)

Word of the Day

sigmoid; adj

1. Curved in two directions, like the letter "S", or the Greek ς (sigma).

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