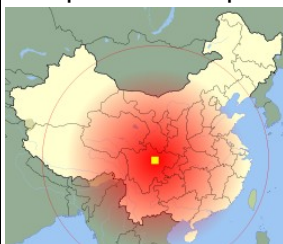




Top Stories

Chinese earthquake: Death toll reaches almost 15,000 as 'dangerous' cracks found in dam near city

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Zipingku Dam to repair "extremely dangerous" cracks in the structure, which is upriver from

Dujiangyan City, already severely hit by the disaster.

Bomb destroys Spanish police barracks and kills policeman in Basque Country

A car bomb car exploded in the Basque town of Legutiano, near the barracks of the Spanish paramilitary police Guardia Civil.



A policeman died and 4 more were injured. Authorities have blamed

Basque separatist group ETA for this attack.

Coordinated series of bombs kills at least 80 in India

At least eighty people were killed and over two hundred injured in coordinated bombings in Jaipur, India. Two men have



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been arrested in connection with the attack. A daytime curfew has been imposed to keep the peace in the city.

Community forum held after attacks on Mormon teens in Arizona

A community forum was held Monday in Mesa, Arizona, to discuss a recent attack on two Mormon teenagers which took place May 2 at a park in Gilbert. Local representatives from the NAACP and the Phoenix Anti-Defamation League attended the meeting, where local police met with area residents and concerned citizens to discuss the incident.

Wikipedia Current Events

Marc Dann resigns as the Ohio Attorney General following a sexual harassment scandal involving several of his aides and an admitted affair with a subordinate.

•United States presidential election, 2008: John Edwards, a former contender to be the Democratic Party nominee, endorses the bid of Barack Obama.

•The United States Department of the Interior declares that the polar bear is a threatened species due to declining levels of Arctic Ocean ice as a result of global warming.

•A suicide bomber kills at least 22 people and injures 40 in an

Wikipedia Current Events

attack on a funeral in a village west of Baghdad.

•The Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Olmert warns Hamas that Israel will "not tolerate" attacks.

•The President of the United States George W. Bush starts a trip to the Middle East where he will celebrate Israel's sixtieth anniversary and meet with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

US says polar bears are threatened species

The United States Department of the Interior today listed the polar bear as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), due to the melting of Arctic sea ice that is the bears' habitat. The announcement of the listing was made by Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne.

In making the announcement, Kempthorne said he wishes to prevent further losses of polar bears, but he warned against using the Endangered Species Act to "regulate greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles, power plants, and other sources", which he called "a wholly inappropriate use of the ESA law."

Kempthorne says it is unlikely that oil and gas drilling in Alaska will be affected much by the designation. The Interior Department has applied separate rules for marine mammal protection to the polar bear, which will permit flexibility in economic development as long as

the survival of the species is not adversely affected. Kempthorne said the stipulations "will ensure the protection of the bear while allowing us to continue to develop our natural resources in the Arctic region in an environmentally sound way."

The Government of Nunavut fears the decision could lead to a ban on the importation of polar bear hides into the United States. As a result the Nunavut economy could suffer. Sport hunting brings \$1.5 million per year to the Canadian arctic territory.

Carl Pope, director of the environmentalist Sierra Club, criticized the Interior Department's decision, saying it was "riddled with loopholes, caveats and backhanded language that could actually undermine protections for the polar bear and other species".

The government was forced to make a decision regarding the polar bear by May 15, after environmental groups sued the George W. Bush administration for failing to meet a January 9 deadline. The administration was accused of postponing the decision as a way to allow for more Alaskan oil and gas drilling.

The purpose of the Endangered Species Act is to protect species that may be in danger of extinction as a result of human action. It aims to achieve this by regulating federal activity in the habitat of threatened species. Commercial activity is not directly regulated, but companies must receive a permit for development in designated habitats.

The polar bear is the first animal to be protected under the Endangered Species Act due to the threat that global warming poses

to the bears' Arctic habitat. Some environmental groups say they could use the designation to protest the construction of coal power plants located thousands of miles away from the Arctic, which they blame for contributing to greenhouse gases and global warming.

However, Barton H. Thompson Jr., a law professor at Stanford University, says that such lawsuits would be difficult to win. "Interior has a reasonable case here that the connection [between greenhouse gas emissions and polar bears] is just too far removed," he says.

If sea ice continues to melt, two-thirds of the polar bear population could be gone by 2050, according to studies released by the United States Geological Survey last September. Also, Louis Fortier of the Canadian research group ArcticNet believes the Arctic Ocean could be ice-free in the summers by 2010.

But M. Reed Hopper of the Pacific Legal Foundation, a property-rights group, disputes the notion that the polar bear is severely threatened. He says the government used "speculative computer modeling" to make its decision, and he plans to sue the Interior Department. "Never before has a thriving species been listed under the Environmental Species Act, nor should it be," he said.

John Edwards endorses Barack Obama

Senator John Edwards (D-NC) endorsed former rival Barack Obama (D-IL) on Wednesday, another sign that the party establishment is embracing the likely nominee for the United States 2008 Presidential election

even as Hillary Clinton, Obama's opponent, refuses to give up her candidacy.

Edwards appeared at a campaign rally for Obama in Grand Rapids, Michigan. At the rally, Edwards addressed Obama's supporters.

"The Democratic voters in America have made their choice and so have I," he told a crowd of cheering supporters.

"There is one man who knows and understands that this is a time for bold leadership...there is one man who knows in his heart that it is time to create one America, not two - and that man is Barack Obama."

The endorsement comes the day after Clinton defeated Obama by more than 2-to-1 in West Virginia's primary. Edwards received 7% of the vote despite having suspended his campaign in January.

Both Obama and Clinton immediately asked Edwards for his endorsement, but he stayed mum for more than four months. A person close to Edwards, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he wanted to get involved now to begin unifying the party. Obama also signed on to Edwards' poverty initiative, which was a major cause for Edwards in his campaign and since he left. When Edwards suspended his campaign, he asked both Obama and Clinton to make poverty a central issue in the general election and a future Democratic administration, something both agreed to do.

"The Democratic voters in America have made their choice and so have I." —John Edwards

When he made his decision,

Edwards didn't even tell many of his former top advisers because he wanted to make sure that he personally talked to Clinton to give her the news, said a person close to him. Edwards' wife, Elizabeth, who has spoken favorably about Clinton's health care plan, did not travel with him to Michigan and is not part of the endorsement.

Clinton campaign chairman Terry McAuliffe said Wednesday that "We respect John Edwards, but as the voters of West Virginia showed last night, this thing is far from over."

According to latest estimates, Barack Obama has a total of 1,887 delegates in CNN's count and 1,884 in the Associated Press's count. Both tallies have Clinton trailing Obama with 1,718 delegates. Obama needs just 139 delegates to reach the 2,026 necessary to clinch the party's nomination.

Edwards, meanwhile, has 19 total pledged delegates who may or may not pledge their support for Obama at the Democratic National Committee's August convention in Denver, Colorado.

"We respect John Edwards, but as the voters of West Virginia showed last night, this thing is far from over." —Terry McAuliffe, Clinton campaign chairman

Edwards, who is not a superdelegate, said last week that it was "fine" for Clinton to continue making her case, but expressed concern that a continued campaign could damage the party's prospects in November.

Wednesday's endorsement could help Obama reach out to white blue-collar voters, a demographic that Obama has failed to capture, most notably in the recent

Pennsylvania and West Virginia primaries. Some political pundits predicted that Edwards' supporters are more likely to lean in Obama's direction.

"The conventional wisdom is that Barack Obama will pick up maybe 60 percent of them, and in some places, that makes a huge difference," former presidential adviser David Gergen said in January.

Chinese earthquake: Death toll reaches almost 15,000 as 'dangerous' cracks found in dam near city

Officials say the death toll in the recent earthquake in China has reached almost 15,000. The news comes as 2,000 of the nation's troops were dispatched to the Zipingku Dam to repair "extremely dangerous" cracks in the structure, which is upriver from Dujiangyan City, already severely hit by the disaster.

It is feared that the the toll will rise much further as 60,000 people are missing after the 7.9 magnitude quake in Sichuan let entire towns "razed to the ground" with no buildings standing, according to officials in the area. At one destroyed school 178 children were found dead after the building collapsed while they slept inside it. A second school at Wudu, twenty miles from the epicentre behind the White Cloud Mountain, has 130 dead children and 150 more still buried and feared dead.

Zipingku Dam has had some water drained to ease the preassure on it. According to the Ministry of Water Resources' website "If Zipingpu develops a serious safety problem, it could bring disaster to Dujiangyan city downstream." Numerous other dams are also affected, including several others

near Dujiangyan. In addition, experts from France's Institute for Radiological Protection and Nuclear Safety say it cannot yet be ruled out that a number of nuclear power facilities in the area have been affected.

50,000 troops have been brought to the area to provide assistance. However, emergency response is being made difficult by continuing poor weather and landslides that have cut off Wenchuan county. In Mianyang alone, one of the worst-hit cities, some 19,000 people are thought to be buried under rubble and the first rescuers to reach the epicenter state tens of thousands may be dead there as well. The Wenchuan town of Yingxiu has only 2,300 confirmed survivors from a 12,000-strong population. Some aid in the form of food, water and medicine has arrived by helicopter, but rotorcraft operations are very dangerous due to ongoing poor weather. Trucks loaded with noodles and biscuits were raided by crowds before the aid could be properly handed out. The People's Liberation Army intends to send in paratroopers.

"They had better set up a distribution system, or we will be stealing what we can," one survivor promised.

Meanwhile, accusations of blame over the scale of the effects have been leveled at construction companies and local authorities. The allegations say that the firms used substandard techniques and materials when building many projects, and corrupt local authorities deliberately ignored the problem. Some people have nicknamed the resulting structures "tofu buildings", an allusion to the fact that they are alleged to be 'as soft as tofu'. "It's nothing but corruption - they must have used

sub-standard cement and steel," said rescuer Dr Tian, who withheld his second name from journalists. It is also alleged that both local residents and international scientific organisations were ignored when they warned of a large impending earthquake.

As a mark of respect, the Olympic torch relay will be scaled back in response to the earthquake.

Queen Elizabeth, UK head of state, visits Turkey

Queen Elizabeth II, the UK head of state, recently arrived in Turkey. She said in a speech made on arrival that she was "delighted to be back in Turkey more than 36 years after our last visit of which we have many happy memories."

Her Majesty continued, "here in 1971, I remarked on the tremendous achievement of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in guiding this country of rich and ancient traditions along a course towards a modern, enlightened and democratic state."

The Queen praised Turkey for its efforts on democracy. "One could hardly have imagined then the further strides that Turkey would take to become today's confident and dynamic democracy. In this new century, we can celebrate the links between our two countries [Turkey and the UK] as being stronger than ever."

On the relationship between Turkey and the UK, the Queen commented as follows: "Thus it is that thousands of jobs in both countries depend on our trade; Turkey is visited by two million British tourists each year; many thousand Britons have made their homes here; and, we are pleased to welcome increasing numbers of Turkish students in the United

Kingdom."

Coordinated series of bombs kills at least 80 in India

According to police sources, a series of seven coordinated bombs detonated in Jaipur, the capital of the state Rajasthan, in India on Tuesday, May 13. At least eighty people were killed and over two hundred injured in the attacks.

The bombs went off over a period of twenty minutes and tore through the city's crowded bazaars, beginning at 7:20 p.m. IST (UTC+5:30). An eighth bomb, which did not go off, was recovered. Ten of the dead were children.

In the wake of the bombing, a daytime curfew has been in place. "The curfew is a precaution to ensure peace," said Vasundhara Raje, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan.

On Wednesday, two arrests were announced. "We have arrested two people and have detained several more for questioning," said Vasundhara Raje. "This seems to have been done by some international group," she added, in a comment that was interpreted by The Daily Telegraph to suggest Pakistan-based Islamic militants.

The President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani both condemned the Jaipur bombings.

Bomb destroys Spanish police barracks and kills policeman in Basque Country

A car bomb exploded today at 3:00 AM CEST (UTC+2) in the Basque town of Legutiano, near the barracks of the Spanish paramilitary police Guardia Civil. A policeman died and 4 more were injured. The Basque separatist group ETA was blamed for this

attack by authorities, but no one has claimed responsibility yet.

The dead man was in a small surveillance building near the barracks, which were both destroyed by the bomb van. Four more people, two men and two women, were injured, one of them seriously. There were more than 40 people in the barracks at the moment of the blast.

The barracks and a nearly abandoned building are practically collapsed. The force of the explosion has also made a large hole and damaged buildings 500 meters away. According to authorities, the bomb van may have contained more than 300 kg of explosives.

"We want to make it clear to the ETA terrorist group that all of the democratic parties are closing ranks to finish off the ETA terrorist group. I express my condolences to the families of the victims," said José Antonio Alonso of the Socialist Workers' Party, the majority leader in the Cortes Generales, while speaking on Cadena SER.

This would be the first fatal action carried out by ETA since Spain's general election two months ago, when Isaías Carrasco was killed on the final day of official campaigning.

Community forum held after attacks on Mormon teens in Arizona

A community forum was held Monday in Mesa, Arizona, to discuss a recent attack on two Mormon teenagers which took place May 2 at a park in Gilbert. Local representatives from the NAACP and the Phoenix Anti-Defamation League attended the meeting, where local police met with area residents and concerned

citizens to discuss the incident. Approximately 60 residents of Mesa attended the forum, which was hosted by the Mesa Police Department and held at the Mesa Public Safety Training Facility.

Local police investigated the attack, and arrested two teenagers. According to the police the two suspects ages 15 and 16 have carved swastikas into their skin on the inside of their wrists, and allegedly beat the Mormon teenagers and attacked them using pellet guns. According to a police report, one of the teens sustained golf-ball-size swelling and cuts to his face. One of the victims of the attack was transported to the hospital. Police said that the suspects made anti-Mormon statements during the attack.

Terrea Arnwine, vice president of the East Valley NAACP, discussed the history of hate crimes and related the origins of his organization. "I immediately spoke up when I heard about the incident with LDS," said Mesa police Chief George Gascón. LDS refers to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, also called the Mormon Church or LDS Church.

"This is America; this isn't supposed to happen here. This is the legacy we have been left with — unfortunately it is oftentimes not true." —Bill Strauss, Phoenix Anti-Defamation League

"This is America; this isn't supposed to happen here. This is the legacy we have been left with — unfortunately it is oftentimes not true," said Anti-Defamation League representative Bill Strauss. According to the Arizona Department of Public Safety, 254 incidents were reported in 2003 involving hate crimes, though

Strauss said that the actual number of incidents could be higher due to underreporting.

The Gilbert Human Relations Commission also discussed the incident in a meeting Wednesday. "It's an abysmal, and abominable occurrence, and yet it's extremely rare, and I think that speaks volumes of our community," said Patricia Krueger of the Human Relations Commission.

Detective Terry Burchett of the Gilbert Police Department conducted interviews with 20 to 30 individuals as part of the investigation into the attack. According to police, a conflict arose between two groups of teenagers at a park in Gilbert, and some teenagers were asked by others if any in their group were Mormon. The victims later told police that they were attacked because they are Mormon.

According to The Arizona Republic, police are not yet certain that the attack should be considered a hate crime. Both teenagers have been charged with underage drinking, disorderly conduct and aggravated assault, and were booked into the Maricopa County Juvenile Detention Facility. According to KNXV-TV one of the suspects is a football player at Mesquite High School in Gilbert.

"I broke down, I just, I couldn't believe the way he looked"
—Mother of one of the victims

The parents of the victims spoke with KNXV-TV reporter Christina Boomer. The victims are ages 15 and 17. The parents of one of the victims said that their son's face was pushed into the gravel and that he sustained a fractured collarbone, and the father of the other victim said his son has a

broken nose and fractured cheekbone from the attack, in addition to facial lacerations.

One of the teens' mothers stated: "I broke down, I just, I couldn't believe the way he looked." "No parents should see their kids in that kind of situation ... I don't believe that anybody should be persecuted for their beliefs or their faith," said the father of the same teenager.

Police exchange shots in South Melbourne, Australia

Shortly before midnight on May 13, Victoria Police intercepted a car on Clarendon Street in South Melbourne, Australia. A search revealed drugs and firearms in the vehicle and police took two people into custody while the third fled on foot.

Police called for assistance to search for the man, who ran along York Street to a service station at the intersection of Kings Way, where he attempted to board a taxi.

It is believed the man was armed and fled north along Kings Way and when he was underneath the West Gate overpass, shots were exchanged between police on scene and the man.

As a result, a senior constable was shot in the leg and the suspect was shot and died on scene. His identity currently remains unknown.

The police officer was taken to the The Alfred Hospital in a stable condition with minor injuries.

Wikipedia Current Events

A Katyusha rocket fired at the Israeli city of Ashqelon struck a

Wikipedia Current Events

clinic in the third floor of the Huzot shopping mall. This attack resulted in three people seriously injured, two moderately injured and eleven people suffered minor wounds. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claims responsibility.

- NATO raises concerns about an increase in insurgent attacks in Afghanistan and raises concern that it is partly due to agreements between Pakistan and militants in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan.

- Xinhua reports that the confirmed death toll from the 2008 Sichuan earthquake has reached nearly 15,000. Nearly sixty thousand people remain missing near the epicentre of the earthquake.

- Xinhua reports that 2,000 People's Liberation Army troops have been sent to repair "extremely dangerous cracks" in the Zipingku Dam, upriver from Dujiangyan City in Sichuan province.

- The United Nations is warning that another cyclone could be forming near Myanmar which was devastated by Cyclone Nargis.

- Thailand claims that the State Peace and Development Council will allow 30 Thai doctors to visit the Irrawaddy River Delta region worst hit by the cyclone.

- The Prime Minister of Thailand Samak Sundaravej fails to convince the State Peace and Development Council to open up for international relief efforts and allow foreign aid workers into the country.

- A car bomb explodes in a civil guards barracks in the town of Legutiano in the Basque Country

Wikipedia Current Events

of Spain killing at least one person and injuring several others.

- In football, Zenit St Petersburg of Russia win the 2008 UEFA Cup after defeating Scottish side Rangers 2-0 in the final.

Today in History

1602 – English explorer Bartholomew Gosnold became the first European to discover Cape Cod.

1836 – English astronomer Francis Baily first observed "Baily's beads", a phenomenon during a solar eclipse in which the rugged lunar limb topography allows beads of sunlight to shine through.

1932 – Japanese Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi was assassinated in the May 15 incident, an attempted coup d'état by radical elements of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

1957 – The United Kingdom tested its first hydrogen bomb over Malden Island in Operation Grapple.

1990 – Vincent van Gogh's Portrait of Dr. Gachet was sold at auction in Christie's New York office for a total of US\$82.5 million, at the time the world's most-expensive painting.

May 15 is Independence Day in Paraguay (1811); Teachers' Day in Mexico and South Korea; Nakba Day in Palestinian communities

Quote of the Day

Every child saved with my help and the help of all the wonderful secret messengers, who today are no longer living, is the justification of my existence on this earth, and not a title to glory.
~ Irena Sendler

Word of the Day

avuncular adj

1. In the manner of an uncle, pertaining to an uncle.
2. (hence) Kind, genial, benevolent, or tolerant.

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