



Top Stories

Strong 6.3 earthquake reported in Sumatra, Indonesia

According to the United States Geological Survey, a magnitude 6.3 earthquake has been recorded in northern Sumatra, Indonesia at 3:02 p.m. local time [08:02 (UTC)].

Democrat submits resolution to impeach Cheney



Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) has submitted a resolution for the impeachment of U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney.

Featured story

Arrest warrant issued for Richard Gere for kissing actress Shilpa Shetty



A court has issued an arrest warrant for both American actor Richard Gere and Indian actress Shilpa Shetty for public obscenity. If charged, Gere could be fined or sent to jail for three months.

Wikipedia Current Events

• A man is killed and about 40 people are hurt during a night of unrest in Tallinn, Estonia. Demonstrators protesting against the removal of the Bronze Soldier statue clash with the police. Russia's authorities threaten to break off diplomatic relations with their Baltic neighbour.

Wikipedia Current Events

- At least 22 people, mostly insurgents, die and dozens more are wounded in several hours of heavy clashes which rage in the Somali capital Mogadishu.
- U.S. Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) submits Resolution HRES 333, calling for the impeachment of Vice President Dick Cheney.
- A nationwide mid-morning power outage hits Colombia; government sources discount guerrilla activity and blame a technical fault.
- North Korea and Myanmar restore diplomatic relations after a break of more than 20 years.
- Syrian parliamentary election, 2007: Syria's ruling coalition, the Baath Party-led National Progressive Front, wins the vast majority of seats in the People's Council, with the opposition boycotting the process claiming it as a farce.
- The Senate of the United States approves a funding measure for the War in Iraq calling for the staged withdrawal of forces. U.S. President George W. Bush responded by stating that his reaction to the bill will be to veto it.
- All eight official Democratic candidates debate in the first 2008 presidential debate, hosted by South Carolina State University and the South Carolina Democratic Party.
- A former commander of a United States military detention center in

Wikipedia Current Events

- Iraq is detained and under investigation for "aiding the enemy".
- The Sultan of Terengganu, Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin, is formally installed as the 13th Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia.
- A multi-story apartment building collapses in Istanbul during an emergency evacuation, with several people trapped or killed.

Pilots spot 'UFOs' near the Channel Islands

Two airline pilots said they witnessed UFOs off the coast of Alderney on Monday.

Aurigny's Captain Ray Bowyer, 50, said that during his flight from Southampton, England, at 3 p.m., he saw a bright-yellow light 10 miles west of Alderney in England. His craft at the time was 30 miles away from the island and had an elevation of 4,000ft. "It was a very sharp, thin yellow object with a green area. It was 2,000ft up and stationary, I thought it was about 10 miles away, although I later realised it was approximately 40 miles from us. At first, I thought it was the size of a 737. But it must have been much bigger because of how far away it was. It could have been as much as a mile wide."

As Bowyer approached Alderney, he noticed another object identical to the first one.

"It was exactly the same but looked smaller because it was further

away. It was closer to Guernsey. I can't explain it. At first, I thought it might have been a reflection from a winery in Guernsey, but that would have disappeared quickly. This was clearly visual for about nine minutes. As I got closer to it, it became clear to me that it was tangible. I was in two minds about going towards it to have a closer look but decided against it because of the size of it. I had to think of the safety of the passengers first. I'm certainly not saying that it was something of another world. All I'm saying is that I have never seen anything like it before in all my years of flying."

Bowyer, who has been flying commercial aircrafts for about 20 years, said that he did file a report on the incident and did contact air traffic controllers during the incident.

Paul Kelly, 31, who was the Jersey Airport air traffic controller on duty during the incident, said that the airport received simultaneous reports from the Aurigny and Blue Island pilot and that the Blue Island pilot had reported a UFO approximately 1,500ft underneath his plane. Kelly noted that the airport was unable to detect the object on their radar.

"The pilot from Blue Islands was en route to Jersey at the same time and as he went past Sark he described an object behind him to his left. The description was very similar to Captain Bowyer's and they described it as being in exactly the same place. But they were looking at it from opposite sides. The Blue Islands plane was at 3,500ft at the time so, again, both pilots placed it at the same altitude. If the object was stationary, our equipment would not have picked it up because the radar would have screened it out."

John Spencer, deputy chairman of the British UFO Research Association, said: "These types of sightings have been reported by pilots - generally accepted to be reliable and sensible observers - since the 1940s and they have excited attention to this day. Such light effects are often popularly thought to represent alien visitors but many UFO researchers believe they more likely represent natural, atmospheric, phenomena not yet fully understood by science. However, a similar encounter in 1978 over the Bass Straits in Australia, where the pilot was in radio contact with the ground throughout, resulted in the pilot never being heard from again, so these phenomena are important to study."

Nick Pope, who previously worked for the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, said: "While no witnesses are infallible, pilots are trained observers and less likely than most people to misidentify something mundane. The MoD's UFO case files contain several reports from civil and military pilots, some of which were correlated by radar. This is the sort of sighting that is taken seriously and should be investigated thoroughly. While most UFOs can be explained as misidentifications of aircraft, weather balloons, satellites and suchlike, a small percentage are more difficult to explain. This is one of the most intriguing sightings I've heard about in recent years."

The current spokesperson for the UK Ministry of Defence said that they would not be investigating this incident.

Linda Jackson confirmed mayor of Vaughan, Canada

After three vote recounts it has been confirmed today for the third time that Vaughan, Ontario mayor

Linda Jackson was elected on the November 13, 2006 election.

A request for a recount was made by former mayor Michael Di Biase after Jackson was elected short of 94 votes. He then requested another one with the city council and received the same result. Di Biase said the electronic voting machines could have made an error. He then declared the votes illegal and void to the Ontario Superior Court on April 2. The judge just recently requested the third recount. The hand recount, which was done today, came up with the same result.

The recount results are 28,358 votes for Di Biase, 28,448 for Jackson, and 49 disputed.

"This has been very stressful for my family, the staff and the residents of Vaughan," said Jackson. "We're very pleased, we can finally move on."

"I'd like to move forward. I'm glad it's over," Di Biase told reporters.

Democrat submits resolution to impeach Cheney

Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) has submitted a resolution for the impeachment of United States Vice President Dick Cheney.

Resolution HR 333 contains three articles, the first two holding Cheney responsible for manipulating intelligence to fabricate a threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and allege a relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda, in order to justify the use of the United States Armed Forces against Iraq.

The third article alleges that Cheney has threatened aggression against Iran despite the absence of any real threat from Iran, thus

undermining the national security of the US.

On April 17, Kucinich had sent a letter to his Democratic colleagues saying that he planned to file impeachment proceedings against Cheney, without specifying the charges to be brought.

Kucinich planned to introduce the impeachment articles on April 24, 2007, but in light of Cheney's surprise doctor's visit to inspect a blood clot, Kucinich decided to postpone the scheduled press conference "until the vice president's condition is clarified."

Impeachment in the United States may be undertaken only for "treason, bribery and other high crimes and misdemeanors." Congress traditionally regards impeachment as a power to use only in extreme cases; the House of Representatives has initiated impeachment proceedings only 62 times since 1789. Two cases did not come to trial because the individuals had left office.

Actual impeachments of federal officers have taken place only seventeen times.

Putin delivers eighth annual address to parliament

Nearing end of his second term as President of Russia, Vladimir Putin delivered his eighth annual state-of-the-nation address to the Federal Assembly of Russia today.

Putin said foreign cash is being used to meddle with domestic affairs, criticised the United States plans to install an anti-missile shield in Eastern Europe, while arguing to declare a moratorium on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. He also discussed economical issues and internal affairs, and made it clear that next

year's address would be given by another President.

Putin began his 72-minute long state-of-nation address by requesting one minute of silence for Boris Yeltsin, who died at age 76 last Monday of a heart condition. He suggested that a national library be established in the name of the deceased president. Putin's speech had originally been scheduled for Wednesday, but it was postponed one day because of the funeral for Putin's predecessor. Putin followed Yeltsin as Acting President when the latter unexpectedly resigned on December 31, 1999. Putin was then elected May 7, 2000.

Putin attacked unnamed foreign political influences in Russia's politics: "There is a growing influx of foreign cash into the country used for the sole purpose of meddling in our internal affairs," Putin declared in the Kremlin, before both the upper and lower houses of Russia's parliament. "Some people are not averse to using the dirtiest methods, trying to foment interethnic and religious hatred in our multi-ethnic country. That is why I call on you to speed up the adoption of amendments to legislation toughening punishment for extremist actions," the president said.

This month, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia complained about U.S. funding to organisations promoting democracy. Putin continued: "There are those who, skilfully using pseudo-democratic rhetoric, would like to return to the recent past — some to loot the country's national riches, to rob the people and the state; others to strip us of economic and political independence."

The head of state urged the lawmakers he addressed to give up

the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. He explained how NATO countries that signed the treaty did not respect it's clauses, which limit conventional military forces in Europe.

Putin: "NATO countries are planning to station elements of anti-missile defence systems in Poland and the Czech Republic, and new member countries like Slovakia and Baltic states, despite the agreements with the Alliance, have not yet joined the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. This poses a real danger for us with unpredictable outcomes. Therefore I think it is necessary to declare a moratorium on Russia's implementation of this treaty." He thinks the moratorium should be upheld "until all countries of the world have ratified and started to strictly implement it".

Kremlin aides stressed however that freezing Russia's efforts to comply with the treaty were not directly linked to the U.S. plans for a weapons shield in Eastern Europe. Prior to the NATO-Russia council meeting in Oslo, Norway today, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice dismissed the idea that the shield would pose a strategic threat to Russia, calling the Russian concerns "purely ludicrous".

Putin acknowledged that political analysts were expecting him to endorse a candidate as his successor, but instead he said: "It is premature for me to declare a political will." He made it clear however that he would not pursue a third presidency in the elections of next March, by stating that "The next state-of-the-nation address will be given by another head of state." The Russian constitution only permits two terms as president, but last month the head

of the Federation Council of Russia, the upper house of parliament, proposed making a third term possible.

On the other hand, Putin didn't seem eager to give up his political life completely after the end of his second term. "It is premature for me to come out with political last wills and testaments," the president commented.

On the upcoming parliament elections next December and ongoing reforms of the voting system, Putin said that a system of proportional representation would "help the opposition widen its representation," and ensure a fair result. The Associated Press however reports however that a new system based on party-lists is perceived by critics as a way of hindering smaller opposition parties.

On foreign influences on Russian culture, Putin said that "Society can only meet big national challenges when ... it preserves respect for its native language (and) its distinctive cultural values."

The president praised Russia's economy as one of the top 10 economies in the world. Russia's oil income has soared due to high oil prices on the world market. Putin suggested using some of the money from the auction of bankrupt oil company Yukos to finance housebuilding and transport infrastructure projects. "It is inadmissible for a country with such reserves accumulated from its oil and gas revenues to be at peace with the fact that millions of its citizens live in Khrushchev-era housing," Putin said, referring to the living conditions under Soviet leader Khrushchev, who reigned between Stalin and Brezhnev.

Another idea involved a ship canal between the Caspian Sea and Black Sea. He also thinks it would be a good idea to encourage private pension saving by adding top-up payments to the amount of rubles Russians save for their retirement. For Putin, state pensions should rise by 65% by 2009.

On the matter of energy, Putin called for an increase in power generation by two-thirds by 2020. 26 new nuclear power plants could help achieve this goal, the President thinks.

Demonstrators demand Buddhism be made Thai national religion

Thailand's draft constitution has come under fire from Buddhist monks and supporters for not having a clause declaring a national religion for the country. The coup-appointed Prime Minister, Surayud Chulanont, noted that the issue could cause problems with the upcoming referendum to ratify the proposed constitution.

According to the Bangkok Post 20,000 protesters gathered outside the parliament building in Bangkok, and a procession of nine elephants joined the protest with Senator Sawet Thinnakul riding one of them.

It would appear that the government has carefully worded the draft constitution to avoid favouring one religion over another. Tensions and violence in the predominantly Malay Muslim south of the country have led to over 2,000 deaths; having a clause that recognised Buddhism as the country's official religion may further inflame tensions in the region.

Vanstone quits Australian politics, to receive posting in Rome

After resigning from the Australian Senate, Amanda Vanstone earlier today, it has been announced that she will receive a diplomatic posting in Italy. Ms Vanstone served as a senator for South Australia since 1984 and held a number of portfolios in the Howard government.

Ms Vanstone was removed from the Howard ministry in January and said she had been contemplating her future since then.

Speaking in Adelaide Ms Vanstone announced her resignation from the senate - effective immediately. She told reporters she was fortunate to have been given the opportunity to represent South Australia in the senate and to have seen the Australian government from a number of perspectives. "To have experienced such a range of portfolios and therefore to see the Australian government from so many different perspectives has made the last 10 years an even richer experience," she said.

She declined to comment on rumours that she would be given a diplomatic post to Rome, claiming that such decisions are not in her hands.

Earlier today, foreign affairs minister Alexander Downer giving no indication of the announcement he was to make this evening, said that Ms Vanstone was a colourful character and her presence on the political scene will be missed. "She's had an impressive political career and has been a good colleague over a long period of time," said Mr Downer

"She's also been a colourful character in politics, and politics

certainly needs its characters."

"Her presence on the political scene will be missed by many Australians."

Other Liberal politicians also paid tribute to Ms Vanstone.

Christopher Pyne, Federal Ageing Minister, said Ms Vanstone was one of the most popular figures in the government. "I think she's one of the most loved figures in the Howard Government amongst the public," he said

Australian immigration minister Kevin Andrews, who replaced Ms Vanstone on the front bench in January said Ms Vanstone has made a large contribution to Australia. "We regret that Amanda has resigned, she's made a very significant contribution to Australian life, an enormous contribution through the Parliament and the Senate in particular," he said.

"She's been one of the few women who have ever risen to the rank of Cabinet minister in Australia, that's a major contribution and I wish her the very best in the future."

Alexander Downer this evening confirmed reports that Ms Vanstone will receive a posting in Rome. In a statement he said "Ms Vanstone may take up the position in Rome when the current ambassador's term ends in late June".

Mr Downer said Ms Vanstone would be a valuable asset in Italy. "Amanda Vanstone's long and varied experience as a member of parliament and minister in a range of portfolios will enable her effectively to promote Australia's interests in Italy," he said.

"She will begin pre-posting

preparations and consultations as soon as possible."

Pagan pentacle accepted by U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

The Wiccan pentacle was added to the list of 38 emblems allowed on United States government-issued headstones for soldiers, according to a settlement announced Monday April 23.

The settlement was in response to a lawsuit brought on behalf of nine families by the advocacy groups ACLU and Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AUSCS). One of these was the family of Sgt. Patrick Stewart, 34, who was killed in Afghanistan, who was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. His wife Roberta Stewart said in the year prior to the settlement "This is discrimination against our religion".

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn of the AUSCS said: "This settlement has forced the Bush Administration into acknowledging that there are no second class religions in America, including among our nation's veterans."

Wicca is a nature-based religion. Many Wiccans, though not all, include themselves in Paganism or Neopaganism. There are an estimated one million Neopagans in the world today.

Dow Jones Industrial Average closes at record high on Wednesday

The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed at an all time record high of 13,089.89. The Dow climbed 1.05% [135.95 points] at its closing bell.

On February 27, the Dow had a record for the worst day since 2001 and plunged over 400.00 points by

the closing bell, after the stock exchanges in Asia had a steep loss on the same day.

Anarchist youths attack police station in Athens

A group of around 30 or 40 anarchists launched an attack against a police station in Exarchia, a busy district in central Athens, in Greece. Meanwhile, another 70 hooded individuals launched other attacks. They set fire to vehicles, politician's offices at the Kolonaki area and various bank departments in Exarhia. Greek Riot police responded with tear gas, while the fight between anarchists and the police still takes place in streets around the University of Athens. It is believed that the youths launched the attack in order to demonstrate their support to prisoners who started an uprising in three major prisons. Another demonstration takes place in Thessaloniki, but without any clashes, so far.

US Senate bill includes withdrawal date from Iraq

The United States Senate today passed a spending bill that sets a target date of March 31, 2008 for a complete pull-out of United States forces from Iraq. The House of Representatives has already passed a similar measure. The bill also includes US\$100 billion for the continuing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

US President George W. Bush "will veto this legislation," said White House spokesperson Dana Perino. "The president is determined to win in Iraq. The bill they sent us today is mission defeated."

Colombia hit by nationwide power-outage

Colombia was faced with a nationwide electricity outage at 10:15 a.m. local time today. Traffic

chaos and people trapped in elevators has been reported. Hospitals and airports continued operations, using their own backup generators.

Speaking on local radio, President Alvaro Uribe said, "It appears to have affected all of the country."

"The blackout was caused by a failure at an energy substation in northern Bogota. We do not know what type of failure it was," Manuel Maiguashca, vice minister of energy and mines, told reporters. Speculation that the outage was caused by left wing rebels was dismissed by officials.

Today in History

1521 - Filipino natives led by Lapu-Lapu killed Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan in the Battle of Mactan.

1565 - Conquistador Miguel López de Legazpi and 500 armed soldiers arrived at Cebu and established the first Spanish settlement in the Philippines.

1667 - John Milton, blind and impoverished, sold the copyright of Paradise Lost for £10.

1865 - An explosion destroyed the steamboat Sultana on the Mississippi River, killing 1,700 passengers.

1994 - Apartheid in South Africa: The African National Congress had a landslide victory in the first non-racial elections in the history of South Africa.

April 27 is Independence Day in Togo (1960) and Sierra Leone (1961), Freedom Day in South Africa.

Quote of the Day

Though I have been trained as a soldier, and participated in many battles, there never was a time when, in my opinion, some way could not be found to prevent the drawing of the sword. I look forward to an epoch when a court,

recognized by all nations, will settle international differences.

~ Ulysses S. Grant

Word of the Day

crepuscular; adj

Of or related to twilight.

1. (zoology) Active at or around the time of sunset or sunrise.

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