



Top Stories

Insurgents shoot down U.S. helicopter near Baghdad

A United States Apache military helicopter has been shot down in Baghdad, Iraq says a military spokesman and al-Qaeda in Iraq is claiming responsibility.

Two Prime Ministers banned from Fiji

The Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand, John Howard and Helen Clark respectively, have been banned from travelling to Fiji following the discovery of Ms Clark's and Mr Howard's names on an immigration list by Fiji Television.

Featured story

British Columbia government gives Canadian sextuplets blood transfusions

Last Friday the British Columbia government gave blood transfusions for two of the four surviving premature babies in spite of the parents beliefs. The parents have accused the B.C. government of violating their children.

Wikipedia Current Events

- All Italian Serie A and Serie B matches this weekend, and next Wednesday's friendly international between Italy and Romania, are cancelled following the death of a policeman during rioting at the Catania vs Palermo local derby in Sicily.
- Hamas and its rival Fatah renews

Wikipedia Current Events

their truce when violence broke off again after the initial ceasefire.

- Chinese President Hu Jintao signs a series of economic deals with Sudan, which China has protected from UN sanctions.

- Eight people are killed in a mortar attack in Somalia's capital Mogadishu.

- Matti Ahtisaari unveils a United Nations plan for the final status of Kosovo. Serbian leaders denounced the proposal.

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change publishes its fourth assessment report, concluding that global climate change is "very likely" to have a predominantly human cause.

- Storms hit Florida during the early morning hours, forecasters suspect tornadoes as the cause. At least 19 fatalities are reported from the storm.

Al Franken to run for US Senate

Al Franken, a comedian, is going to run for Senator in 2008 for the state of Minnesota according to an unnamed official currently serving in the state, media reports say.

According to the unnamed official, Franken said that he is planning to run for the senate in 2008 during a conversation.

Director of Franken's Midwest Values Political Action Committee has refused to comment on the reports, and Franken has made no official announcement himself.

Earlier this week, Franken announced on his Air America Radio show that he will no longer be hosting the show, but also said that he would make a decision about the senate race in the near future.

Woman found guilty of plotting to sell Coke documents to Pepsi

After deliberating for 11 hours a jury found Joya Williams, now former Executive Administrative Assistant for Coca-Cola Inc., guilty of plotting to steal Coke's secrets to sell them to Pepsi Inc. Williams, 41, took confidential documents and unreleased samples of products to Ibrahim Dimson and Edmund Duhaney in an attempt to sell the items to Pepsi for about US\$1.5 million. Dimson and Duhaney also pleaded guilty.

Williams claimed in court that even though she brought the documents and unreleased samples to her home, Dimson and Duhaney went into her home and took them. Duhaney denied the statement and said Williams gave the documents and unreleased samples to them.

Coca-Cola, in May 2006, received a letter from Purchase, New York based company Pepsi. It was from a person, like Williams, offering samples and other confidential information.

The former secretary could face up to 10 years in prison.

YouTube to remove 100,000 videos

Yesterday, YouTube was asked by

Viacom Inc. to remove over 100,000 video clips from Viacom owned companies after the two failed to make an agreement for revenue sharing. Viacom said its pirated programs on YouTube generate about 1.2 billion video streams, based on a study from an outside consultant.

Viacom owns popular American companies such as MTV and Black Entertainment Television (BET).

Many users on YouTube upload copyrighted video everyday, without even knowing it.

"Filtering tools promised repeatedly by YouTube and Google have not been put in place, and they continue to host and stream vast amounts of unauthorized video," Viacom said in a statement.

"It's unfortunate that Viacom will no longer be able to benefit from YouTube's passionate audience which has helped to promote many of Viacom's shows," a YouTube spokesperson said. "We will continue to work with content partners large and small to provide them with a platform to promote their content and engage and grow their audiences."

Companies such as CBS have reached deals with YouTube over using their content.

Locals claim to have witnessed multiple UFOs over north London

At 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, 10-15 UFOs were spotted over north London in the inner-city district of Islington. The Islington police said they started receiving phone calls only minutes after the objects started appearing.

34 year-old market stall trader Alix McAlister, who witnessed the

objects, said that, "I just picked up my son from nursery in Bredgar Road. I had just come out of the door when I noticed what was going on in the sky. There were a group of them - 10 to 15 of them moving together. My first impression was that they reminded me of a squadron of aeroplanes in formation. But they didn't have a proper formation and they were all moving at the same speed. I thought for a while that something was happening in the centre of London. Bombs and planes crossed my mind. But I realised very quickly that they didn't look like any aircraft I'd seen before. They were coming from the north and moving south. And then they kind of stopped and they were hovering. There was no sound. They seemed to fade away and I saw more coming and then they stopped. It lasted about 10 minutes."

The Contact International UFO Research organization was informed about the event by the Islington police and one of the witnesses. A spokesman for the organization said that the witness had told them, "He told me he was picking his daughter up from school and he saw many people looking up in the air. Traffic had stopped and people were staring. He said he saw between 12 and 15 orange lights travelling across the sky. Then they would stop and then they went upwards."

Insurgents shoot down U.S. helicopter near Baghdad

A United States Apache military helicopter has been shot down in Baghdad, Iraq says a military spokesman.

Reports say that the chopper went down near the U.S. air base, Taji, located just north of downtown Baghdad.

"I can confirm that we are looking into reports that a helicopter went down north of Baghdad," said Lt. Col. Josslyn Aberle, a spokeswoman for the U.S. military.

At least 2 soldiers were onboard the aircraft, but their condition is not known.

Witnesses near the scene and police say that at least 2 Apaches were flying together when insurgents began to shoot at the choppers, shooting one of them down and hitting the other, but the helicopter still managed to fly away. The helicopters were believed to have been escorting a U.S. military convoy on the ground when shots were fired.

"I saw smoke coming out of the tail. The chopper was swinging around before it hit the ground one kilometer away from me and I heard a big explosion," said local farmer, Hashim Assafi who also said that he had to find shelter as shots were fired in the direction of the helicopters.

In a statement posted on an Al-Qaeda in Iraq website, insurgents claim responsibility for shooting down the helicopter.

"We say to the enemies of God that the sky of the Islamic state of Iraq is forbidden just like its land," said the statement.

This is the fourth helicopter operated by the U.S. military to crash or be shot down in two weeks.

Davao City, Philippines militant leaders declare victory

Davao City militant leaders known as Davao 8 announced last Monday, January 29, their vindication from the rebellion charges thrown against them March last year as

police officers release a notarized apology and retraction letter last week.

In a press conference headed by Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) Southern Mindanao, the militants are glad with what they described as a "tactical victory of the street parliamentarians in the struggle for justice and in the assertion of the rights and welfare of the ordinary Filipinos."

Last year, eight local progressive leaders were linked to rebellion charges filed against Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Joel Virador in the heat of the crackdown against progressive groups during the pronouncement of the State of National Emergency or Presidential Proclamation 1017.

In reaction to the accusations, Davao 8 filed before the People's Law Enforcement Board an administrative case against two (2) Criminal Investigation and Detention Group Region 11 (CIDG-11) operatives April 6 last year.

BAYAN secretary general Ariel B. Casilao, Bayan Muna party-list regional coordinator Jeppie Ramada, Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Urban Poor Union, KADAMAY) Davao City chairperson Editha Duterte, Samahan ng mga Maralitang Kababaihang Nagkakaisa (United Urban Poor Women, SAMAKANA) Davao City Chapter chairperson Corazon Espinoza, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Peasant Movement of the Philippines, KMP) regional chairperson Antonio Flores and then Anakbayan (Youth of the Nation) leader Lorie Ann A. Cascaro filed affidavit-complaints attached with a copy of the false and perjured affidavit of Police Officer 3 Franco Duca and Chief Investigator 2 Rex Rodriguez both officers of the

CIDG-11, Camp Leonor, San Pedro St., Davao City for their false, baseless and malicious accusation hurled against the eight leaders of progressive organizations in Davao City.

The said police officers of the CIDG submitted an apology and retraction letter duly notarized to the accused progressive leaders and the case was amicably settled.

Casilao said that the result of the case is a tactical victory for progressive organizations in the city. "Our vindication proves that what we fight for are the legitimate demands and causes of the people," he added.

He cited this as proof that the police and the military are crafting charges against them to discredit their organizations despite the continuing crackdown against progressive militant leaders across the country.

"All they could produce are fabricated cases against us to blind the people from the truth. They continue to discredit us, tag us terrorists, when the real terrorists are being coddled in Malacañang, with its fascist, anti-people and pro-US policies," Casilao said.

In her speech Wednesday, Arroyo said there was a discrepancy with the figures presented by PNP Task Force Usig and the "front organizations of the communists". She was referring to the statistics on extrajudicial killings which spurred international outcry.

Arroyo's latest statement angered militant group Bayan declaring Thursday they will not cooperate in any Malacanang-initiated investigation into extrajudicial killings after President Arroyo uses "legal communist fronts" tag for the

first time.

"Her pronouncement shows the government's official attitude towards legal activist organizations. She herself has encouraged the killings of activists just by referring to them as communist fronts," Reyes said.

In a press statement, Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes Jr. said "Mrs. Arroyo's pronouncement of a new investigation is meant to appease the growing outrage of the international community. However, the truth remains that the Arroyo administration has masterminded and encouraged the killings on a nationwide scale."

"Arroyo wants us to cooperate yet in the same breath she calls us front organizations of communists. How can you cooperate with that?" he added.

Reyes vowed their group "can never cooperate with murderers nor with a government that has sanctioned death squads."

Tornado kills 14 in Florida

At least 14 people have been killed in central Florida in the city of Lady Lake and Paisley after severe storms and a tornado ripped through the cities in the middle of the night. Eleven of those killed were in Paisley and three were in Lady Lake.

Volusia, Sumter, Lake and Seminole counties have all been declared a state of an emergency as dozens of houses, mobile homes and a church were destroyed. Clothes and furniture are scattered around the wrecked houses and pieces of trees are scattered about. Cars are reported to have been turned over or thrown around in the air.

"Our priority today is search and

rescue," said Gov. of Florida, Charlie Crist. Rescuers are still looking through the wreckage to find survivors of those who might have been killed.

A spokesman for the emergency response team of Lake county, Chris Patton calls the damage "devastating" and worse than "hurricanes in 2004."

"We have complete devastation of homes, of businesses, religious institutions. It was unlike even perhaps the hurricanes of 2004 when we had minor roof damage, screen damage, pool damage. This is way far more devastating," said Patton.

The storms hit at about 3:15 [EST] a.m. on Friday morning. At least 20,000-30,000 people are without power.

Greek government faces censure motion by opposition

The Greek government faces a censure motion filed by PASOK opposition party which doubts the governmental program and demands parliamentary elections. As PASOK party leader, George Papandreou stated today at the Greek Parliament, "the Greek people expected to see meritocracy and transparency being enhanced"; and he continued saying "the Government of New Democracy demonstrated no signs of compunction, failing the citizens and the youth. They lied before the elections and they keep lying today."

Mr.Papandreou condemned government and Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis personally, as being responsible for poor governmental performance in economy and public sector. In her speech, the leader of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), Aleka

Papariga expressed the opinion that the whole discussion will end in political deadlock and blamed the two major parties for "hypocrisy".

The Greek Parliament decided to host a three-day discussion between the parties which will end on Sunday with a vote of all the 300 members. In their first speeches today, PASOK MPs including Evangelos Venizelos as well as opposition's parliamentary representative, MP Charis Kastanidis, attacked the government and asked for immediate elections. In his response today at the parliament, Minister of Internal Affairs Prokopis Pavlopoulos, blamed PASOK for its past years of governance and stated that elections will not take place until the end of government's job. The conservative New Democracy party was elected in government in 2004 after 11 years of continuing PASOK governance.

Sony Ericsson to produce low-cost mobile phones in India

Sony Ericsson announced on Wednesday that it will produce low-cost mobile handsets featuring color screens and music capability in India. The company has reached agreements Singapore and Taiwan based companies, Flextronics and Foxconn to manufacture the phones.

Sony Ericsson said that besides competitive prices, Sony Ericsson mobile phones will provide customized features, including local content and a customized keypad for the Indian market, in a press statement.

The company achieved success and became the fourth biggest cell phone producer in the world with premium phones that included such features like Cybershot digital cameras and Walkman music

players. The analysts say that if the company looks forward to become number three producer of mobile phones it needs to focus on low cost phones. Providing mobile phones for customers with lower income is a strategy that analysts consider to be quite useful for Sony Ericsson.

Speaking at a press conference in Chennai, the president of Sony Ericsson, Miles Flint, said that manufacturing in India will result in improved cost efficiencies and enable the company to provide attractive cell phones at competitive prices.

A Japanese-Swedish joint venture, Sony Ericsson surpassed the third largest mobile phone maker Samsung in terms of revenue in the fourth quarter, through sales of its upmarket line of phones.

Smoking in public places banned in France

The French government has banned the smoking of cigarettes in all public places.

The ban includes no smoking in hospitals, airports, schools, places of employment and any public area that is "closed or covered." Eleven months from now, the ban will include restaurants and cafes.

Some members of France's Parliament are surprised to see how quick the ban was enacted.

"Nobody, not even I, thought a year-and-a-half ago that France would abandon tobacco so fast," said member of Parliament (MP) and an advocate of the prohibiting of smoking, Yves Bur.

Police and other law enforcement agents are required to fine anyone who violates the ban. Fines for smoking in banned areas could be

as much as \$88.00 [USD].

Employers who do not enforce the smoking ban could be fined at least \$174.00 [USD].

At least 15 million people who live in France, smoke cigarettes, but a poll conducted by the French government had shown that 76% of the country's population was in favor of the ban. 74% of the population also backs the restaurant and cafe ban to take place in one year.

Publication date for last Harry Potter book announced

J K Rowling, the author of the "Harry Potter" series, has revealed the release date of the seventh and final installment - Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - July 21, 2007. Mary GrandPre, the illustrator of the first six books, will return to illustrate the new novel.

The book will be released worldwide at midnight by the publisher Scholastic. Huge crowds are expected around the world, and the book, since its first appearance on Amazon.co.uk, had risen to the number one sale for pre-orders. After the new book was announced, Amazon.com reported a surge of traffic occurred on their website. Amazon.com has called the novel "one of the most eagerly awaited books of all time".

J K Rowling recently wrote the following about her new book: "I'm now writing scenes that have been planned, in some cases, for a dozen years or even more, I don't think anyone who has not been in a similar situation can possibly know how this feels: I am alternately elated and overwrought. I both want, and don't want, to finish this book (don't worry, I will.)"

Two Prime Ministers banned from Fiji

The Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand, John Howard and Helen Clark respectively, have been banned from travelling to Fiji following the discovery of Ms Clark's and Mr Howard's names on an immigration list by Fiji Television.

The Immigration Department list bans people from entering Fiji, and bans some people from leaving Fiji. The list also contains the names of civil and political activists, businessmen, politicians, and trade union officials.

Ms Clark says that self-appointed Fijian Prime Minister Voreqe "Frank" Bainimarama is only digging himself a bigger hole and that it would be unwise to listen to anything that Mr Bainimarama had to say.

Mr Bainimarama said that if he can't visit their countries, then shouldn't be allowed to visit his country.

Both Australia and New Zealand had already put a ban in place preventing high ranking politicians and officials from entering either country because of their disapproval of the recent Fijian coup which Mr Bainimarama led. The two countries have also imposed other sanctions.

Turner Broadcasting apologizes for Boston scare

An advertising campaign for shows on Adult Swim, a programming block on Cartoon Network, which is owned by Turner Broadcasting, gave local and federal law-enforcement a scare when devices were discovered on eight different bridges and roads.

The U.S. city of Boston was snarled

in traffic jams January 31 as police investigated devices with flashing lights representing a cartoon character were placed around bridges and other areas throughout the city.

Different governmental agencies were brought in to help deal with the problem, which was later found to be no threat, as described by Boston Police Department spokesperson Eddy Chrispin. A bomb squad was deployed under supervision of the FBI, Boston police, the US Coast Guard, and different federal agencies.

The advertising campaign, for the widely popular program Aqua Teen Hunger Force, featuring characters from that series, was in place for two to three weeks in Boston, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and many other major US cities.

Two people have been arrested for alleged participation in this incident.

Turner Broadcasting Systems hired New York marketing firm Interference Inc. which in turn hired individuals in the various cities to place the devices promoting the cartoon's fifth season, scheduled for a February 23 premiere. Road and rail traffic was disrupted by Police as they investigated and removed the devices.

The mostly flat devices resemble two-foot-square Lite-Brites with batteries attached to the bottom and visible wires.

G4TV has dubbed the incident "Aquagate" on its broadcast of Attack of the Show segment The Feed

It is not known why the devices took police several weeks to notice,

nor why the devices were believed to be dangerous.

British Columbia government gives Canadian sextuplets blood transfusions

Last Friday the British Columbia government gave blood transfusions for two of the four surviving premature babies in spite of the parents' beliefs. Two babies had died from being premature: one a couple days after it was born, the other a couple of weeks after.

The B.C. government applied Section 30 of the B.C. Child, Family and Community Service Act in an attempt to save the babies born in Vancouver, British Columbia. The decision was only made public yesterday.

If doctors feel that the infants are in immediate need, they may ask for intervention.

The parents, who are unnamed due to a court order, are Jehovah's Witnesses who object to blood transfusions on religious grounds. When asked by Canadian reporters why they are against blood transfusions, a spokesman for the Jehovah's Witnesses cited a Bible passage:

"And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people," Leviticus 17:10-14.

The parents have accused the B.C. government of violating their children. They have asked the court to block future transfusions.

B.C. premier Gordon Campbell said yesterday, "We act, I think, with the children's best interest in mind,

and we will continue to do that,"

The father of the sextuplets said in a court affidavit, "(My wife) and I could not bear to be at the hospital while they were violating our little girl,"; "We took our immense sadness and grief and tried to console each other in private."

The babies were back in the parents' custody since the transfusions were finished.

Today in History

1488 - Bartolomeu Dias of Portugal sailed around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa and landed in Mossel Bay.

1787 - Shays' Rebellion was crushed, but it prompted the drafting of the Constitution of the United States.

1867 - Crown Prince Mutsuhito succeeded his father Kōmei as Emperor of Japan, taking the title Meiji.

1959 - Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and The Big Bopper died in a plane crash on "The Day the Music Died."

1966 - The Soviet spacecraft Luna 9 became the first space probe to land on the Moon and transmit pictures from the lunar surface to Earth.

February 03 is Setsubun in Japan; Four Chaplains' Day in the United States; Tu Bishvat (Judaism, 2007).

Quote of the Day

At the bottom of the heart of every human being, from earliest infancy until the tomb, there is something that goes on indomitably expecting, in the teeth of all experience of crimes committed, suffered, and witnessed, that good and not evil will be done to him. It is this above all that is sacred in every human being. ~ Simone Weil

Word of the Day

cartouche; n

1. An ornamental figure, often

on an oval shield.

2. An oval figure containing hieroglyphics that represent the names of royal or divine people.

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