



**Top Stories**

**Strong earthquake hits Pakistan, north India, Afghanistan**



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**Nations begin to offer aid to regions afflicted by Indian subcontinent earthquake**

As the death toll for the recent earthquake in Asia has recently passed 3,000, countries around the world are beginning to send aid.

**Featured story**

**Australia's High Court rules mod-chips are legal**

Australia's High Court, in an unanimous decision on Thursday, found modchips to be legal. Mod-chips are attached to the systems motherboard that allows users to bypass copyright and regional controls on game consoles such as PlayStation 2 and Xbox

**Wikipedia Current Events**

• 2005 South Asia earthquake: An earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale occurred at 03:50:38 UTC in a Pakistan-administered region of the disputed territory of Kashmir, killing over 18,000 people.

**Wikipedia Current Events**

- Three autonomous vehicles have completed the 2005 DARPA Grand Challenge, the winner travelling the 132 mile course in less than 7.5 hours.
- A mudslide in Guatemala triggered by heavy rains buries the village of Panabaj. All 800 residents of the village are feared dead.
- Uganda Human Rights Commission, in its 2004 report, states that at least 4,000 children who were among the tens of thousands abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army rebels cannot be traced. This estimate is much lower than the previous estimate of 20,000 kidnapped children released by the most recent Human Rights Watch report. The UHRC accuses the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) of torturing the Acholi people of northern Uganda through brutal methods to extract information or to instill discipline in suspects.
- 2006 World Cup qualifiers in Germany are: Italy, England, the Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Croatia, Paraguay, Ecuador, Angola, Togo, Ghana, Tunisia, Ivory Coast and Costa Rica.

**Google launches online RSS reader**



Google, Inc recently launched a new product, Google Reader,

which is an aggregator for web feeds. The browser-based reader lets users add RSS feeds and search for them too. There was already an RSS reader in their downloadable Google Desktop as part of the sidebar and as part of their customizable homepage.

**Robotic cars successfully complete 132-mile DARPA Grand Challenge race**

Four robotic vehicles successfully completed the \$2 million 2005 DARPA Grand Challenge 132-mile race on Saturday October 8th, 2005. The first vehicle to cross the finish line was Stanford University's entry, a Volkswagen named Stanley. The Volkswagen completed the course in less than 7.5 hours, beating the 10-hour minimum requirement for the \$2 million prize. However, a winner was not declared immediately as not all vehicles have completed the race.

The first race, in 2004, failed to produce any winners. A modified Humvee by Carnegie Mellon University was the best robotic vehicle in the 2004 race, and completed less than 8 miles. Most vehicles in the 2005 race surpassed the distance of the 2004 robotic Humvee. The \$1 million prize in 2004, was doubled to \$2 million for 2005, as no vehicles completed the 2004 race.

It is expected that the \$2 million prize will be awarded once the remaining vehicles pass the finish line. A staggered start for the race was used, in order to spread the distance between the 23 robotic

vehicles.

### **GAO ruled parts of Education Department contracts illegal**

On September 30, 2005, the Government Accountability Office, an investigative agency of the U.S. Congress, released report B-305368, Department of Education--Contract to Obtain Services of Armstrong Williams. Senators Edward Kennedy and Frank Lautenberg asked the GAO back in October of 2004 to look into "an illegal use of taxpayer funds by the U.S. Department of Education, and request an expedited legal decision from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on the matter."

In the 16 page report, the GAO found that the contracts with Ketchum Inc. "violated the publicity or propaganda prohibition for fiscal year 2004 because it amounted to covert propaganda. As a result of this violation, the Department also violated the Antideficiency Act, 31 U.S.C. sect. 1341."

The report goes on to describe the history of the contract between the United States Department of Education, Ketchum, and Armstrong Williams. The report also describes the Department's own defense of its position, "the Department argued that it contracted only for television and radio advertisements featuring Mr. Williams. Talbert Letter at 2. The Department offered three points in support of its position: First, the only portions of its Statements of Work that have any legal significance are the lists of "deliverables." The Department argues that its task orders did not procure Mr. Williams's commentary, which meant there was nothing for the Department to

disclose. Second, the Department did not pay any appropriated funds for covert propaganda. Third, the Department's task orders represented the legitimate dissemination of information to the public. Id. We do not agree." [3]

The report concludes, "The Department of Education violated the fiscal year 2004 publicity or propaganda prohibition by contracting with Ketchum for the services of GWG to obtain commentary by Armstrong Williams on the NCLB Act without requiring Ketchum to ensure that Mr. Williams disclosed to his audiences the Department's role. The commentary obtained as a result of these contracts violated the publicity or propaganda prohibition because it was "covert," in that it did not disclose to the targeted audiences that it was sponsored by the Department and was paid for using appropriated funds. E.g., B-303495, Jan. 4, 2005; B-302710, May 19, 2004. At the same time, because the Department had no appropriation available to contract for commentary in violation of the cited publicity or propaganda prohibitions, the Department also violated the Antideficiency Act, 31 U.S.C. sect. 1341. B-303495, Jan. 4, 2005; B-302710, May 19, 2004. It must report this violation to the Congress and the President, and submit a copy of that report to the Comptroller General. 31 U.S.C. sect. 1351, as amended. B-304335, Mar. 8, 2005."

The GAO acts as an investigative arm of Congress, and reports to Congress and the White House, to enable Congress's effective oversight of the government. All enforcement of GAO findings is left up to Congress itself, as the GAO has no enforcement powers.

### **Nations begin to offer aid to regions afflicted by Indian subcontinent earthquake**

As the death toll for the recent earthquake in Asia has recently passed 3,000, countries around the world are beginning to send aid. The sponsors of the relief are listed below.

The European Union executive branch has pledged about \$3,600,000.

The United Kingdom has pledged £100,000 (about \$176,000), as well as fifty aid workers and three search and rescue teams.

Germany has made €50,000 (about \$60,600) available for Pakistan.

France is sending a rescue team for Pakistan, as well as "any assistance which Pakistan could need," says Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy.

Ireland is currently offering €1,000,000 (about \$1.2 million).

The United Nations has sent a team to Pakistan.

Other sponsors include Turkey and Greece, as well as the Medecins Sans Frontieres and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

### **Iraq on verge of civil war, head of Arab league fears**



Amr Moussa, head of the Arab League, says a civil war in Iraq is looming. "A civil war could erupt at any moment, although some people would say it is already there."

"There are a lot of individuals now

playing games with the future of Iraq, and there is no clear strategy, there is no clear leadership." "We are now in a mission to bring people together."

Sunni Arab leaders met today on how to vote in the up-coming referendum on Iraq's draft constitution. The group came just short of boycotting the vote, instead asking members to vote no on October 15th.

The leaders asked followers to oppose the referendum "by all legitimate means." The constitution was drafted by mainly Shia leaders, the majority in Iraq. The Kurdish leaders also supported the new constitution.

The Sunnis make up 20% of Iraq. They most likely fear a political movement that would allow the Shia and Kurds to control the government and lucrative petroleum industry.

Violent acts have been on the increase lately. Most carried out by suicide bombers targeting Iraq police and new recruits into the nations army.

UK Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy has also been expressing concerns over violence in Iraq. The most worrying was "the apparent breakdown in trust" between local authorities and UK troops.

These comments come after UK troops were attacked by a mob after they tried to free two soldiers who had been arrested. UK troops later broke into a Basra prison while looking for the two arrested soldiers. They were found later in houses, police had handed them over to Shia militiamen. Kennedy has also been pushing for the removal of troops from Iraq.

Other Arab countries have been expressing their concern over the violence in Iraq.

"The situation is bad and our work now is to bring all communities together; we want to do something constructive." Amr Moussa told the BBC.

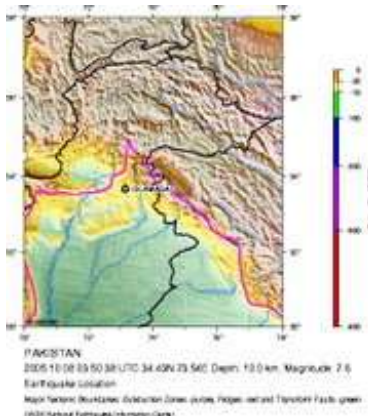
### **Five arrested in Italian art smuggling**

Numerous smuggled artifacts were found at an Austrian tour guides home. Five Italians were arrested and twenty-eight are now under investigation. The Austrian, known as Mozart in the art trafficking world, received a citation for his involvement.

Police claim that some 600 artifacts, which had been illegally excavated, were found. Most of them ranging from 8th century BCE to the 5th century CE. Many of the items were gold and silver, along with ceramics. One item, a cup, has been valued at several thousand Euros.

The artifacts stolen were plundered from an archaeological site near Rome, which was accessed by the man through his tour guide credentials.

### **Strong earthquake hits Pakistan, north India, Afghanistan**



The strongest earthquake that this region experienced in the last century has caused widespread damage across Pakistan, North India and Afghanistan this morning. Strongest hit was apparently Kashmir. Thousands are feared dead. The epicenter was close to Muzaffarabad, just North of Islamabad, and also caused severe damage from both shaking and from landslides to Balakot, Garhi Habibullah and one village in Rawalakot. Officials in Muzaffarabad said they estimated that 2,000 had been killed there, with fifty percent of the buildings in the town either collapsed or badly damaged.

The tremors began at 8:50 am (0350 GMT) and continued for two minutes, followed by several aftershocks over a period of ten minutes. Initial reports said that they were felt in Delhi, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Kabul, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and other areas. A Magnitude 6.3 aftershock occurred 7 hours later just to the northwest.

The earthquake caused several apartment buildings in Islamabad to collapse, trapping hundreds of people.

The Pakistani Interior ministry reports that several villages were "wiped out"; a spokesman for President Musharraf, Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan, called the quake a "national tragedy" and said: "Casualties will be high [...] they could be well over 1,000." The Pakistan army has been directed to extended all out help to the civil population in the quake-hit areas. All civil and military hospitals have been directed to deal with the situation on an emergency basis. The President and the Prime Minister have appealed to the nation to stay calm in the face of

the calamity and asked the concerned authorities to carry out an immediate assessment of the extent of damage caused by it.

The Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz talked on telephone with authorities in four provinces and Azad Kashmir and directed them to utilize all machinery and make all possible efforts to help the victims. He said the whole federal administration, civil and military authorities have been alerted and relief goods have been provided to them for the victims of the quake.

Most of the roads are closed in the Northern Sector near the earthquake, and some have been completely washed out, so the Pakistani army is flying supplies in by helicopter.

The Indian government reports that so far 200 people are confirmed dead in the part of Kashmir India controls.

Magnitude: 7.6

Region: North India, Pakistan, Afghanistan

Time: (UTC) Sat Oct 8 03:50:38 2005 (08:50:38 local time)

Epicentre: 80km (50 miles) north-east of Islamabad, Pakistan

### Today in History

1514: Mary Tudor, sister of Henry VIII of England, became queen consort of France.

1831: John Capodistria, the Greek head of state, was assassinated in Náfplio.

1888: The Washington Monument, then the world's tallest building, officially opened to the general public.

1919: The Black Sox scandal: The Cincinnati Reds "defeated" "Shoeless Joe" Jackson (pictured) and the Chicago White Sox to "win" the World Series major league baseball championship by 5 games to 3.

1963: A landslide displaced large amounts of water from the Vajont Dam in northern Italy, causing waves and floods that quickly swept away several villages and killed almost 2,000 people.

October 09 is Independence Day in Uganda (1962), Hangul Day in South Korea (1446), Leif Erikson Day in the United States.

### Quote of the Day

"I think the ultimate sense of security will be when we come to recognize that we are all part of one human race. Our primary allegiance is to the human race and not to one particular color or border." ~ Mohamed ElBaradei

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