



Top Stories

Angela Merkel elected new German chancellor



Angela Merkel has been elected the first female chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany; she succeeds Gerhard Schröder after his seven years as head of government.

60th anniversary of Nuremberg trials marked



The city of Nuremberg has marked the 60th anniversary of the opening of the trials against Nazi war criminals.

Featured story

U.S. government proposes removing Yellowstone grizzlies from endangered species list



The United States Fish and Wildlife Service has announced that "The greater Yellowstone area population of grizzly bears ... is now recovered."

Wikipedia Current Events

• After two months of negotiations, Angela Merkel is elected the first female Chancellor of Germany by a coalition of the CDU/CSU and SPD delegates in the Bundestag.

Wikipedia Current Events

•Kenyan voters overwhelmingly reject a new constitution, which would have given the president greater power, in a national referendum, which used symbols on the ballot paper to assist illiterate voters.

Alleged Bush/Blair Al-Jazeera bombing transcript leaked

An unverified document claimed to be leaked from Downing Street suggests that US President George W. Bush wished to bomb the headquarters of Arabic TV station Al Jazeera in Doha, Qatar. According to the UK's The Daily Mirror, the President was dissuaded from bombing Al Jazeera's headquarters in Qatar by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. The newspaper said its story was based on information from an unnamed source with access to the "top secret" memo of the President and Prime Minister's conversation.

The Daily Mirror reports that one of its sources said Bush "made clear he wanted to bomb al-Jazeera in Qatar. Blair replied that would cause a big problem. There's no doubt what Bush wanted to do — and no doubt Blair didn't want him to do it."

The document is said to be a transcript of a conversation between Bush and Tony Blair at the White House on 16 April 2004, during the second US offensive on the Iraqi city of Fallujah. The Bush administration has accused Al-Jazeera of " inciting violence against [US] troops" and being "a

mouthpiece for al-Qaeda and a vehicle of anti-American propaganda" and has criticized it for airing images of dead soldiers and US military contractors and civilians casualties from behind rebel lines in Fallujah.

While a UK Government official was quoted in the report as saying Mr. Bush's remarks were intended as "humorous, not serious", another source with apparent access to the memo told the newspaper that "Bush was deadly serious, as was Blair. That much is absolutely clear from the language used by both men."

The authenticity of the documents and its alleged contents have not been verified independently. The sources of the leak, David Keogh, 49, a UK civil servant, is charged under Section 3 of the Official Secrets Act, of passing the memo to MP Tony Clarke's former assistant Leo O'Connor. Section 3 concerns "a person who is or has been a Crown servant or government contractor" and who made a "damaging disclosure" of "any information, document or other article" that relates to "international relations" or was "obtained from a State other than the United Kingdom or an international organisation". A document is deemed "damaging" if (a) it endangers the interests of the United Kingdom abroad, seriously obstructs the promotion or protection by the United Kingdom of those interests or endangers the safety of British citizens abroad; or (b) it is of information or of a document or article which is such that its

unauthorised disclosure would be likely to have any of those effects.

Both Keogh and O'Connor are scheduled to appear in court later next week. Clarke has returned the memo to Downing Street and said O'Connor had behaved "perfectly correctly".

Former British defense minister Peter Kilfoyle called for the full text of the memo to be published. "I believe that Downing Street ought to publish this memo in the interests of transparency, given that much of the detail appears to be in the public domain". He added "If it was the case that President Bush wanted to bomb al-Jazeera in what is after all a friendly country, it speaks volumes and it raises questions about subsequent attacks that took place on the press that wasn't embedded with coalition forces." Al-Jazeera's Kabul office was hit indirectly by two US bombs in 2001 and Al-Jazeera's reporter Tareq Ayyoub was killed when two US missiles hit the Al-Jazeera office in Baghdad in 2003.

Al Jazeera has reacted cautiously to the report, releasing a statement in which it said it was investigating it and urged the US and UK governments to make the documents in question publicly available.

A spokesperson for the White House dismissed the allegations, saying, "We are not going to dignify something so outlandish with a response." Downing Street declined to make a statement, telling BBC News that official procedure prevents it from commenting on "leaked documents".

UK children's charities announce merger

Two of the UK's leading children's charities have announced that they are to merge.

ChildLine, formed in 1986 by the television presenter Esther Rantzen, is to become part of the NSPCC. The two charities have a combined annual income of over £125 million (213 million USD, 182 million Euro).

Sir Christopher Kelly, Chairman of NSPCC, said: "The NSPCC and ChildLine share the same vision for children and young people - we have always enjoyed a close working relationship. We are joining together now in the best interests of children. There is now an enormous opportunity to develop a more extensive service to help even more children. The two organisations are a natural fit. Esther and I are delighted to be in the position to reassure children and young people that ChildLine will be there for them today and tomorrow as it has been for nearly twenty years."

ChildLine has been in financial difficulties for some time. In July 2005 it launched an emergency appeal for an extra £1 million in order to keep its night service open.

Former DeLay aide pleads guilty in corruption case

Michael Scanlon, the former partner of the influential lobbyist Jack Abramoff, plead guilty yesterday to conspiracy to bribe congressmen and other public staffers. He agreed to pay back \$19 million US to a defrauded Indian tribe and entered into a plea agreement. Scanlon is an ex-aide and press secretary to former

House Majority Leader Tom Delay, who was indicted in October on conspiracy and money laundering charges relating to his dealings with Abramoff.

The members of Congress involved in the corruption charges have not yet been named by the prosecutors, but Representative Bob Ney of Ohio has acknowledged that he is "Representative No. 1" named in the court papers. The prosecution alleges that Representative No. 1 accepted gifts, including a golf trip to a luxury resort in Scotland, and regular meals in an upscale D.C. restaurant "in exchange for a series of official acts and influence."

Ney is said to be cooperating with the investigation. According to Ney's spokesperson, Brian Walsh, Congressman Ney was a merely victim of Scanlon's illegal activities.

Angela Merkel elected new German chancellor

Angela Merkel has been elected the first female chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany; she succeeds Gerhard Schröder after his seven years as head of government.

Merkel received 397 of the 612 votes cast in the Bundestag. Schröder was the first to congratulate her before she accepted the election. The newly formed grand coalition of Social (SPD) and Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) holds a total of 448 seats in the Bundestag.

Later in the day, Merkel took the oath of office and president Horst Köhler officially appointed her along with her cabinet.

Angela Merkel was born 1954 in Hamburg. After her birth her father was offered a pastorphism in East Germany (GDR) and the family moved there. She studied physics in Leipzig where she earned her PhD. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Merkel became involved in the East German democracy movement, joining the Demokratischer Aufbruch. She was spokeswoman of the first and last freely elected prime minister of the GDR, Lothar de Maizière. After the reunification Merkel served as minister of youth and family in the government of Helmut Kohl during the years 1990 – 1994 and later as minister of the environment from 1994 – 1998. In 2000 she became head of the Christian Democrats and in the following Federal election of 2002 she stood aside, letting Edmund Stoiber of the Bavarian CSU be the failed Christian Democrats candidate for the chancellorship. When Gerhard Schröder called for an early election in May of this year, Merkel received the nomination of her party.

Outgoing Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, was born during 1944 in Blomberg. His father died in World War II, only a few months after Schröder's birth. He initially worked as a sales clerk and earned his high school diploma studying at night. He studied law in Göttingen and worked at the University there, joining the Social Democrats and became chair of the Young Socialists, the youth organisation of the party. In 1980 he was elected to the Bundestag and later became governor of Lower-Saxony. In 1998 he was the SPD's successful candidate for chancellor, forming a coalition government with The Greens. After the resignation of Oskar Lafontaine in 1999, Schröder also became chair of the SPD, a post

he held until 2004. His coalition was re-elected in 2002.

After a humiliating defeat of SPD in North Rhine-Westphalia, Schröder called for an early election. During a tough campaign, Schröder managed to get the SPD nearly as many votes as the CDU, clawing back a significant advantage the party had over his entering the campaign.

Schröder announced that he will give up his seat in the Bundestag and practice as a lawyer again.

Franz Müntefering (SPD)
Vice chancellor and minister of labour

Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD)
Foreign minister

Michael Glos (CSU)
Minister of economy

Peer Steinbrück (SPD)
Minister of finance

Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU)
Minister of the interior

Brigitte Zypries (SPD)
Minister of justice

Franz Josef Jung (CDU)
Minister of defense

Ulla Schmidt (SPD)
Minister of health

Sigmar Gabriel (SPD)
Minister of environment

Ursula von der Leyen (CDU)
Minister of family and women

Horst Seehofer (CSU)
Minister of consumer protection and agriculture

Annette Schavan (CDU)
Minister of education

Wolfgang Tiefensee (SPD)
Minister of construction and transportation

Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul (SPD)
Minister of international development

Thomas de Maizière (CDU)
Head of the chancellor's office with cabinet rank

Christmas Island detention centre reopened

Australia's Immigration Detention Centre on Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean has been reopened to detain a group of seven Indonesian asylum seekers. The Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) said four men, one woman and two infants from West Timor were taken from Darwin to the remote detention facility, 2,600km north-west of Perth on November 17.

The group arrived on a small boat at Honeymoon Beach, near Kalumburu a remote Aboriginal community on the northern coast of Western Australia's far north, on November 5. Locals were startled when three of the men waded ashore to ask for directions to the nearest city. After returning to sea with directions to Wyndam, 400km south-east of Kalumburu, the Australian Navy's HMAS Geraldton caught up with the group and tethered their boat alongside. The group were taken into detention in Darwin.

The Australian government enforces a policy of mandatory detention of unauthorised arrivals. Christmas Island is an Australian Territory, its closest neighbour is Java, 360km away.

DIMIA, which had originally planned to deport the group, say the West Timorese will remain on Christmas Island while their claims for refugee protection are assessed. "The group was going to be removed having initially not raised claims or information engaging Australia's protection obligations, but since that initial screening the group raised new issues and so their claims will be further examined now," a DIMIA

spokesman said.

Democrats Senator Andrew Bartlett said he was concerned the children were in detention despite a government promise that such an arrangement would be a last resort. "We want to know exactly what the cost has been to unnecessarily fly these people over to Christmas Island and why, seeing that they managed to arrive within the accepted migration zone and should be processed here," he said.

DIMIA said the cost of housing the group in the reactivated Christmas Island facility was not yet known, and that such transfers were standard practice. DIMIA said the children would be in the facility on a short-term basis.

"Once initial processing is complete - a week or two weeks probably - it is planned that the family of four who are within that group of seven ... will live in the Christmas Island community under residents determination arrangements, while the three single men will be accommodated in the centre there," the DIMIA spokesman said.

"Following consultations with their lawyer, they will be interviewed by an experienced protection visa case manager assisted by a qualified interpreter to establish whether they are in need of protection."

In a May 2004 report, the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) found that children in Australian immigration detention centres have suffered numerous and repeated breaches of their human rights. The report stated that the

long-term impact of Australia's immigration detention system meant that these children "will carry the scars of their detention experience throughout their lives."

The report said, "Despite ten years of a mandatory detention regime, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs' own administrative measures and instructions virtually ignored the special needs of children. There was also little regard paid to obligations arising from the Convention on the Rights of the Child."

The West Timorese group are the first asylum seekers apprehended in Australian waters since a group of Vietnamese people arrived off Broome, on Western Australia's west coast more than two years ago.

The Christmas Island detention centre also was re-opened for the Vietnamese asylum seekers - who are now living in the Australian community under refugee protection status. The 54 Vietnamese people were detained for over two years were fleeing political persecution. The federal government granted protection visas (TPVs) to the Vietnamese detainees in July this year.

In July, West Australian refugee advocate Kaye Bernard, slammed the two-year remote detention as an expensive, unfortunate mess. "It is clear now that this whole sorry mess of two years of unnecessary detention for the Vietnamese kids and their families, costing in excess of \$50 million, leaves a bad taste in the mouths of many Australians," she said. "This decision shows that the processing of these people by DIMIA was 100 per cent wrong and requires examination under

the scrutiny of a royal commission."

The Christmas Island detention centre is part of the Australian government's Pacific Solution. The federal government is spending over AU\$200 million to build a new 800 bed detention centre on the remote island.

Australian Greens Senator Kerry Nettle called on Amanda Vanstone the Immigration Minister in April 2005, to explain the government's plans for Christmas Island detention centre following reports that all Australia's immigration detainees will be held on the island. There are plans to shift all detainees to the island, according to the Shire President of Christmas Island, who says that all future unauthorised boat arrivals will be detained there.

"The government should be closing detention centres, not building new ones," Senator Nettle said. "Christmas Island's new detention centre serves no purpose beyond furthering the Coalition's political ends at a cost of over \$300 million dollars to the public. If there are no plans to change the role of Christmas Island's detention centre why is the government spending \$300 million on an upgrade? "

Fischer suffers seizure, collapses during Red Wings game

Detroit Red Wings defenseman Jiri Fischer was hospitalized Monday night after suffering a seizure while on the bench during a game in Detroit. He is listed in stable condition.

Late in the first period in a game against the Nashville Predators at Joe Louis Arena, Fischer collapsed

on the bench. According to Red Wing coach Mike Babcock, Fischer suffered a seizure, and went into cardiac arrest. He was revived by team medical staff, who used a defibrillator to restart Fischer's heart. He was taken by ambulance to Detroit Receiving Hospital. Fox Sports Detroit reported that he was awake and talking to hospital staff.

As of Monday night, Fischer's condition was listed as stable.

In September 2002, Fischer had an abnormal electrocardiogram reading, forcing him to miss two days of training camp. A subsequent follow-up test was passed.

The game, which was officially stopped with 7:30 left in the first period, was cancelled. No make up date has been announced.

Electronic Frontier Foundation sues Sony over CD technology

The California-based non-profit organization Electronic Frontier Foundation, as well as the Attorney General of Texas, has filed a law suit against Sony Computer Entertainment of America for their controversial use of anti-piracy software.

The EFF claims that the digital rights management software on the CDs BMG Music (a subsidiary of Sony) produces acts as spyware, which the EFF claims is against Texas law. The program, known as XCP, is said to install software on one's system when they insert the CD into their computer for purposes such as adding to iTunes music software.

Sony currently rejects the idea of XCP technology being considered as spyware, however they have

agreed to replace CDs with the software and to temporarily discontinue the installation of it on their CDs.

Among the controversy that Sony's moves to counter piracy have raised is the accusation that their software leaves a machine more vulnerable to attacks across the Internet. A trojan horse has already been found in the wild that utilizes one of the anti-piracy software's functions.

Today in History

1644 - John Milton published *Areopagitica*, arguing for the right to free speech and against publication censorship during the English Civil War.

1869 - The clipper *Cutty Sark* was launched at Dumbarton in Scotland.

1971 - The People's Republic of China was given China's permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

1985 - Omar Rezaq and two others from the Abu Nidal terrorist group hijacked EgyptAir Flight 648 over the Mediterranean Sea.

2003 - Rose Revolution: Eduard Shevardnadze resigned as President of Georgia following weeks of mass protests over disputed election results.

November 24 is St George's Day in Georgia.

Quote of the Day

"As good almost kill a man as kill a good book. Who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye." ~ John Milton in *Areopagitica*

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