

Top Stories

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 Saturday morning. Strongest hit was apparently Kashmir. Between 20,000 and 30,000 people are thought to have perished.

Moderate earthquake hits Indonesia

An earthquake with a magnitude of 6.0 has hit the Northern Sumatra region of Indonesia. No news yet on casualties or damage.

Featured story

Weekend violence in Darfur complicates peace talks

On Sunday, armed men kidnapped eighteen African Union personnel (including military observers and civilian police) in the war-torn



Darfur region of Sudan. According to AU commission spokesperson Adam Thiam,

"They were taken by a dissident group of Jem." The Justice and Equality Movement, or Jem, is an Islamic rebel force deeply involved in the ongoing conflict in the region.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Conflict in Iraq: Insurgent suicide bomb attacks leave over 30 people dead in Talafar, North West Iraq.
- Conflict in Afghanistan: 18 Afghan police die following an ambush in Halmand, southern Afghanistan.
- 2005 Malawi food crisis: SOS Children launches emergency food program around Lilongwe and Mzuzu Malawi Crisis

African Union hostages freed by Darfur rebels



Darfur refugees

Forces from the Sudanese rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement have assisted in liberating 38 African Union personnel that were taken hostage on Sunday. The kidnapped, which consisted of the original 18 hostages and later a 20 man rescue team, were released on Monday. Initially, two hostages remained but were freed following a reported shootout with the kidnapers.

A splinter group of the JEM was blamed for the attack but Mohamed Saleh, the head of the

dissident faction, has denied the allegations.

Saleh was the military head of the Justice and Equality movement when it signed a ceasefire agreement in April but later split with the group's leadership. It is said that he now commands "thousands" of troops in the Darfur region and is looking for a seat at the ongoing peace talks. He has accused the AU of taking sides and has stated that he will not honour the ceasefire.

While speaking with Reuters Saleh said, "We want the AU to leave and we have warned them not to travel to our areas. We don't know and don't care what is happening to the AU, they are part of the conflict now."

Violence in the region has continued to rise. According to BBC correspondent Jonah Fisher, attacks and harassment against AU peacekeepers is becoming more common. It has been noted that aid agencies are refusing to travel with African Union personnel, stating that the mere presence of the peacekeepers may draw fire.

Kofi Annan, at a press conference in Geneva, responded to the rising violence by suggesting aid to the region may be partially suspended. "Both rebels and government must understand that, if these incidents continue, it will impede humanitarian assistance and delivery."

This weekend marked the first time the African Union has

suffered casualties in the region. Three personnel were killed in attacks believed to be perpetrated by the Sudan Liberation Army. Despite the violence, the SLA, JEM, and the AU have promised to continue the peace talks which are being held in Abuja.

Key Australian senator Barnaby Joyce crosses floor for first time

Barnaby Joyce, an Australian National Party member of Parliament crossed the floor in the Australian Senate October 11 over legislation proposed to authorize mergers without the agreement of the competition watchdog body, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

The question over the proposed changes was put at 9.26pm when Joyce crossed the floor to vote against them. The vote was tied with 32 for and 32 against and thus the question was not carried by the government (the President of the Australian Senate does not hold the casting vote as in the Australian House of Representatives).

The Australian Liberal Party/National Party coalition of which Joyce is a member holds a narrow majority of one seat in the Senate and Joyce has stated that he has chosen to exercise his vote in support of the promises made to his electorate prior to the election, rather than be obedient to the directions of the party executive. This is the first time Joyce, a recently elected senator, has crossed the floor in the Senate, and Joyce has expressed that this may not be the last.

Today in History

1810: The first Oktoberfest was held in Munich, to celebrate the wedding of Prince Ludwig I of Bavaria.

1859: Self-described "Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico" Joshua A. Norton (pictured) 'ordered' the United States Congress to dissolve.

1984: The Provisional Irish Republican Army failed in its attempt to assassinate British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and most of her cabinet in the Brighton hotel bombing.

1999: A military coup in Pakistan led by General Pervez Musharraf ousted the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

2002: A series of car bombs exploded in Bali, Indonesia, killing 202 people and injuring a further 209.

October 12 is Yom Kippur begins at sunset in Judaism, Dussehra in Hinduism (2005); Hispanic Day in Spain and Día de la Resistencia Indígena in Venezuela.

Quote of the Day

"Tragedy blows through your life like a tornado, uprooting everything, creating chaos. You wait for the dust to settle, and then you choose. You can live in the wreckage and pretend it's still the mansion you remember. Or you can crawl from the rubble and slowly rebuild." ~ Kristen Bell, as "Veronica Mars

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