



### Top Stories

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#### Rep. Hunter calls for hearings about alleged "cold-blooded killings" of civilians by US Marines

Duncan Hunter said Thursday that incident with Marines firing on unarmed Iraqi civilians near the Iraqi town of Haditha will be subject to Congressional hearings. John Murtha said that what happened was "much worse than was reported in Time magazine".

### Featured story

#### China completes "mammoth" Three Gorges Dam hydro-electricity project

China has announced the completion of an enormous dam across the Yangtze River. The gigantic project is expected to generate around 15 million megawatts of electricity, 84.7 billion kWh annually.

### Wikipedia Current Events

•Campaigning in Montenegro's referendum on independence ends at midnight local time, with voting scheduled to begin the following morning. A final poll

### Wikipedia Current Events

shows the independence forces with 56% support, slightly above the internationally-imposed threshold of 55%.

•The construction of the Three Gorges Dam wall, the largest dam in the world, is completed in China.

•5,000 medical students, doctors, and lawyers rally in New Delhi, India against the boosting of quotas for lower-caste students in medical, engineering and other colleges from 22.5% to 49.5%.

•The Iraqi National Assembly votes in a new Iraqi government, leaving the ministers of Defense, National Security and Interior in temporary hands.

•A United States Congressman (Duncan Hunter, R-CA) states American troops in Iraq killed 24 civilians in an incident in 2005. Earlier Rep. John Murtha (D-PA) had said even innocent women and children were killed in cold blood.

•Finnish rock band Lordi wins the Eurovision Song Contest 2006.

•Thoroughbred racehorse Barbaro suffers a career-ending injury in the Preakness Stakes at Pimlico Race Course in his quest to become the 13th winner of the Triple Crown of Thoroughbred Racing.

#### Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro injured in Preakness, does not finish race

Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro,

sent as the post-time odds-on favorite in this year's Preakness Stakes at Pimlico Race Course in Baltimore, Maryland, breaks down in the opening stretch of the race, shattering any chance of a Triple Crown winner this year. Bernardini, the 12-1 4th choice out of 9, ends up winning this year's Preakness, stopping the clock at 1:54.65. Following up 5 1/4 lengths behind was Sweetnorthernstain, sent to the post at 8-1, and Hemingway's Key at 29-1, six lengths further back.

According to Dr. Larry Bramlage, the on-call veterinarian for the American Association of Equine Practitioners, Barbaro's injury was "significant" and "would require major stabilizing surgery." Barbaro's injury effectively ended the horse's racing career.

Bernardini, a colt by A.P. Indy out of Cara Rafaela, by Quiet American, was bred and is owned by the Darley Stable of Sheikh Mohammed, is trained by Tom Albertrani, and was ridden to victory by Javier Castellano. Today's Preakness marks the first Preakness win for jockey Javier Castellano, who previously rode Ghostzapper to a win in the 2004 Breeders' Cup Classic. The Preakness was only Bernardini's 4th career start.

Bernardini paid \$27.80 on a \$2 win bet. The \$2 Exacta of Bernardini and Sweetnorthernstain (8-7) paid \$171.60, the \$1 Trifecta with Hemingway's Key in third (8-7-3) paid \$1,956.40, and the \$1

Superfecta with 2nd-favorite Brother Derek (8-7-3-6) paid \$11,151.20.

### **Finland's monsters won the Eurovision Song Contest**

Lordi, the Finnish hard rock group are this year's winners of the 51st Eurovision Song Contest, which took place in Athens. European viewers voted for Lordi's song Hard Rock Hallelujah in a show that is normally associated with catchy pop and big ballads. Second came the Russian entry Never Let you Go with Dima Bilan and third the song of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In a spectacular show, hosted by Maria Menounos and Sakis Rouvas, Lordi amassed 292 points after a public vote - 44 ahead of Russia. Greece's singer Anna Vissi, who was one of the favourites to win, came 9th, followed by Ireland's Brian Kennedy. From the start of the song contest as well as during the televoting, the Greek organisers presented viewers choreographies and dances inspired by Greek culture and music, both ancient and modern. In addition, the world famous Greek singer Nana Moushouri was presented by the hosts and gave the sign for the start of televoting.

Next year, due to the victory of Finland's rock group, the 52nd Eurovision Song Contest will take place, for the first time, in Helsinki, Finland.

### **China completes "mammoth" Three Gorges Dam hydro-electricity project**

China has announced the completion of an enormous dam across the Yangtze River, an important milestone for the world's largest hydroelectric project. The official Xinhua News Agency reports the event as a

"landmark in the construction of the project."

Launched in 1993, the Three Gorges Project, including the 2,300 metre long, 185 metre high dam with 26 power generators, is being built in three phases on the middle reaches of the Yangtze River - China's longest river (specificly at 30°49'40"N, 111°00'33"E). Built with over 16 million m3 of concrete, the Three Gorges Dam is considered the biggest reinforced concrete dam in the world.

The Three Gorges Reservoir is capable of holding nearly 40 billion m3 of water, including a space of 22.15 billion m3 for extra flooded water. With a length of more than 6,300 Km and a natural fall of 5,400 metres from the west to the east, the flood-prone Yangtze River is the third largest in the world.

The gigantic project is expected to generate around 15 million megawatts of electricity, 84.7 billion kWh annually when the entire project is completed by 2008. But whilst proponents of the world's largest hydropower project laud the increased electricity generation and improved flood control as benefits to China, opponents claim destruction of the environment, ruin to China's cultural heritage - disaffecting millions of local residents.

"In my view, building the Three Gorges dam is a ridiculous and evil farce," says dam opponent Dai Qing. "Many people have known something is wrong with the project, but few have dared to speak up," she said. After it becomes operational, the 660km reservoir created by the dam will drown 13 towns, 4500 villages and 162 archaeological sites.

Friends of the Earth (FoE) are also strident vocal critics. "The dam is having a titanic social and environment impact," the group said this week. "Sometimes people are being moved out by truncheon and bulldozer because they refuse to leave their home for fear of not being rehoused. Human rights violations are massive and brutal," it said. FoE pointed to evidence that the dam was already having a serious environment impact.

FoE points to a scientific study by the East China Normal University in Shanghai, published in March in Geophysical Research, which said that in 2004, the Three Gorges dam has reduced the supply of sediment to the Yangtze delta to just 35 per cent of the norm.

Millions of tonnes of silt are drawn along the Yangtze river every year, and critics argue the dam will intercept much of it - with potentially disastrous consequences. They say the lack of sediment further downstream would lead to soil erosion, and the accumulation of sediment in the reservoir could raise the dam level, submerging even more land.

Opponents say the reservoir could fill with the accumulated garbage from tens of millions of households. The China Yangtze River Three Gorges Project Development Corp. has spent \$2.5 million on a vessel to collect as much as 7 million cubic feet of garbage that accumulates at the dam each year, according to Xinhua. Some argue that the impact of the dam project will contribute to the extinction of the rare Yangtze river dolphin.

The dam project will force the relocation of a total of 1.13 million people, and communities that

have lived in the area for millennia will disappear. Researchers warn sedimentation and rising water levels in the reservoir will lead to the evacuation of tens of thousands more people.

But as the waters rise, that which can not be saved will disappear along with some world famous natural scenery. Critics say the dam is under threat from earthquakes, with two geological fault lines nearby. Officials working on the project counter this by saying the worst that can happen is a tremor measuring 6.0 on the Richter scale, while the dam is built to withstand force 7.0.

"Although the dam is now complete, we still have a long way to go and cannot become self-satisfied or relax our efforts in the least," Li Yongan, general manager of the Three Gorges Project Development Corp, said. The official China Daily in an editorial called for people to remember the more than 100 people who died during the dam's construction. "The best possible way to repay such a debt of gratitude is to make sure the highest safety and quality standards are observed up till the very end of the entire building process," the editorial said.

### **Iraq swears in first full-term government**

The Iraqi parliament approves the new government - the first full-term government since the US-led invasion in 2003 - consisting of 37 ministers which now holds members from Kurdish, Shiite and Sunni sects including Foreign Minister Hoshivar Zebari (Kurd), Deputy Prime Minister Salam Zaubai (Sunni) and Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani (Shia).

Due to disagreements the

positions for the Interior, National Security and Defence Minister roles have been left vacant. For now the new Prime Minister, Nouri Maliki (Shia) is also taking the role of Interior Minister while Sunni Deputy Prime Minister Salam Zaubi will take the role of Defence Minister. Kurdish Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh has taken the role of acting National Security Minister. The mixed Cabinet of Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish sects also includes two women, the Human Rights Minister Wijdan Mikaeil and Women's Affairs Minister Fatin Abdel-Rahman.

Several members of the Sunni factions led a walk-out before the approval of the new Cabinet after their proposal to postpone the event was turned down.

Mr Maliki hopes that these positions will in time be filled by people not associated with any or Iraq's militia groups.

The progress so far has been hailed as "a very, very crucial change in Iraq" by British Prime Minister Tony Blair. The news has also prompted a response from the new Italian Prime Minister - "Italy supports Iraq in this direction", Romano Prodi, Italian Prime Minister - after Mr Romano said he would propose the withdrawal of Italy's 2,600 troops in Iraq.

In the following speech to the 275-seat assembly by Prime Minister Nouri Maliki announced that his government will focus on the issues of stability and security by working with the occupying forces, putting in place new laws to break up militias and integrate them into the federal forces. In his speech Mr. Maliki also mentioned other issues such as terrorism and "an objective timetable" for

multinational forces to leave Iraq.

There are mixed feelings about whether the formation of the new government can bring peace amongst the religious factions. Many people hope however that these are the first steps to quell the resent escalating sectarian violence that has spread across the country. Some of the recent violence includes a bomb blast in a predominately Shia presinct of Baghdad, a suicide bomb attack on a police station in Qaim and numerous accounts of dumped bodies bearing evidence of torture and execution. Hundreds of people have been killed and even more have fled their homes since the bombing of a Shiite shrine in February, 2006 in fear of more sectarian violence.

Allegations have been made by Sunni politicians that death squads are operating as part of the security forces and are to blame for many of the killings.

### **Explosion blasts Palestinian intelligence service HQ**

An explosion has ripped through the headquarters of the Palestinian general intelligence service in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian officials say several people were wounded in the explosion, including intelligence chief Tareq Abu Rajab.

Abu Rajab, the head of the "mukhabarat" intelligence service, was among 11 people wounded at his heavily guarded headquarters in northern Gaza. He was with several bodyguards in an elevator when an explosion blasted the building. Abu Rajab's bodyguard and nephew, Ali Abu Hassira, died shortly after the blast. At least eight other people, most of them bodyguards, were wounded in what has been called an assassination attempt.

Unidentified gunmen opened fire on the convoy of vehicles transporting Abu Rajab to hospital, causing no injuries. The explosion followed a night of armed clashes between gunmen from the rival Hamas and Fatah factions.

Presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeina condemned the blast and called for launching an immediate inquiry into the bombing. "The assassination attempt of the head of the Palestinian intelligence services chief Tareq Abu Rajab is a serious escalation and an attempt to undermine national security," Abu Rudeina said.

The attack "will lead to a degeneration of the situation in the Palestinian territories" added Abu Rudeina, currently with Palestinian Authority president Abbas in the Red Sea resort of Sharm El Sheikh ahead of an international economic conference. "President Abbas ordered an immediate investigation," he said.

Tawfiq Tirawi, a top security official in the West Bank who serves as Rajab's deputy, indicated at a news conference that an alternative security force of Hamas militants might be responsible. Hamas government spokesman Ghazi Hamad was cautious not to call the blast an assassination attempt, saying that "hasty accusations" should be avoided.

Some Fatah members demanded that Abbas dissolve the Hamas government and call a new election. A group calling itself the Fatah Protection Unit demanded that Hamas disband its 3,000-strong militia within three days. The militia was deployed earlier this week, despite Abbas' vehement opposition.

Reuters reports that the Hamas-led Palestinian government faces international action unless the militant Islamist movement renounces violence, recognises Israel and embraces existing peace plans.

### **Munster win 2006 Heineken Cup**

Munster have won the 2005-06 Heineken Cup, beating Biarritz 23 to 19 at Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, Wales. The match is Biarritz's first Heineken Cup final appearance. It is Munster's fourth, after three final losses in the past. A jumbo screen was placed in the streets of Limerick, where thousands of Munster fans gathered.

Scoring opened up just after three minutes, when Biarritz winger Sireli Bobo scored a try down the left sideline. The try, which came in centimeters of the touchline, was converted from the sideline by Dimitri Yachvili, taking Biarritz to seven points to nil. Ronan O'Gara landed a penalty in the 7th minute, putting three points on the board for Munster. Biarritz held out a Munster offense for eight minutes, before taking the ball in their own in-goal area to take the ball to their 22. Munster regathered the ball, Trevor Halstead planted the ball down on the left corner to scored Munster's first try. O'Gara converted the try, taking Munster to the front, leading 10 points to seven, 18 minutes in.

A penalty on Munster's tryline in the 21st minute saw Biarritz go for a penalty kick. The kick, just left to the posts was converted by Yachvili, taking the game to 10 points all. Biarritz kept the pressure on Munster, coming close to scoring another try in the 27th minute. Peter Stringer dashed

from a Munster scrum on the Biarritz try line to score a try. O'Gara converted the kick, putting Munster at 17 points to 10. Biarritz kicked the ball out on the 40th minute, taking the game into halftime.

Munster opened up the scoring in the second half, with O'Gara slotting a penalty goal two minutes in, taking Munster 10 points in front of Biarritz, leading 20 points to 10. A penalty went to Biarritz in the 47th minute, with Biarritz opting for a kick. Yachvili was successful with the kick, giving Biarritz three points, taking the game to 20 to 13 to Munster. Less than three minutes later, Yachvili slotted another penalty goal over, taking Biarritz within four points of Munster, who were leading 20 to 16 after the goal.

The scoring tightened up for the following 10 minutes, until Biarritz were awarded a penalty in the 69th minute. Yachvili landed the penalty kick, putting Biarritz just one point behind Munster, the score now being 20 to 19 with 10 minutes remaining. Munster, searching for a way to further their lead, were awarded a penalty in the 73rd minute. O'Gara was successful, taking Munster to 23, with Biarritz on 19. Munster held on to the game, winning their first Heineken Cup.

### **5 killed in Kentucky coal mine explosion**

There has been an explosion in a coal mine in eastern Kentucky, located in the United States, killing 5 miners. One miner was able to walk out of the mine. The explosion occurred at Darby Mine No. 1, owned by Kentucky Darby LLC and located in Harlan County. Federal Mine Safety officials say the explosion happened sometime between midnight and 1 a.m. local

time Saturday.

According to Kentucky Governor Ernie Fletcher, they "don't know the details of the cause," of the explosion.

The miners were part of a maintenance crew that was on duty during the time of the explosion. It is not known how many miners were inside the mine when the explosion happened; however, no mining was in progress when the explosion occurred.

Rescue crews are on scene. The names of the miners are not known.

The law issues have been actualized since 14 coal miners been killed in West Virginia in two accidents last January. A bill was endorsed by a Senate committee to make coal mining safer. It is now required that miners have at least two hours of oxygen available instead of one. Mine operators are also required to keep extra oxygen packs accessible along escape ways in the mine. A temporary rule by the Mine Safety and Health Administration requiring coal operators to give miners extra oxygen was earlier issued but miners pressed Congress for a permanent legislation.

### **US Navy sailors jailed in Australia on drug smuggling charges**

Two sailors from the USS Boxer, and a Canadian man living on Queensland's Gold Coast have been sentenced to jail for bringing seven kilos of the drug commonly known as 'ice' (methamphetamine), valued at about AUD\$1 million, into Australia in June last year.

A court in Townsville, Queensland

heard that seven kilograms of methamphetamine were hidden in the radar compartment of the USS Boxer. ABC radio reported that the drugs were taken ashore by sailor Andrew Labanon and handed to Chief Petty Officer Daniel Maio at a Townsville motel. Maio had arranged to pay Labanon \$10,000 to bring the drugs ashore when the Boxer was visiting Townsville. Maio and a third man, Iranian-born Canadian Mehdi Mohammadi, attempted to travel to the Gold Coast before they were arrested by Australian police.

Maio, changed his plea to guilty during the trial, and was sentenced to 12-and-a-half years in jail, with a non-parole period of six years. Judge Kerry Cullinane sentenced Labanon to six years jail, He was ordered to serve at least three years before being eligible for parole. Mohammadi was given a sentence of 14 years, with a minimum non-parole period of seven years.

A task force of more than 20 undercover federal police agents intercepted the drug smuggling operation last June. Australian Federal Police (AFP) welcomed the jail terms. AFP spokesman Jason Byrnes said: "We've taken almost seven kilos of ice off Australian streets..."

He said the Australian police were "very satisfied with the three convictions and this was another great example of federal police with Customs' support targeting main offenders of drug crime against Australia and Australians."

### **Crusaders to meet Hurricanes in Super 14 final**

The Crusaders are to meet the Hurricanes in Christchurch on Saturday night for the 2006 Super 14 final after defeating the Bulls

35-15 at Jade Stadium.

The match started with both sides being lead out by regular field players, as opposed to the traditional captains leading out their respective sides. Greg Sommerville lead out the Crusaders, in honour of his 100th match for the side, while Bakkies Botha lead out the Bulls in recognition of his 50th match milestone.

The Bulls were on the back foot immediatly after Fourie du Preez knocked on a Daniel Carter kick. The Bulls also failed to capitalize early on, with Morné Steyn missing a 35m penalty kick straight in front in the 7th minute.

The scoring opened up in the 16th minute, with All Black flyhalf and 2005 IRB World player of the year Daniel Carter kicking a penalty for the Crusaders, as well as taking his own season tally to 200 points.

After a Leon MacDonald chip kick, which he managed to regather, the Crusaders were able to produce quick ruck ball which ended with a grubber by centre Casey Laulala for winger Rico Gear to run on to and place down for the first try of the match. Carter subsequently missed the resulting conversion.

The Bulls' first points came in the 29th minute with Steyn kicking a 40m penalty to put three points on the board for the South African team. However, nearly straight after the kickoff, the Crusaders forced a turn over and again were able to produce quick ruck ball for Laulala to put away Gear for his second try of the night. Carter missed the conversion, which was in a similar position to the first.

Carter was then able to lengthen the Crusaders' lead with a dropped

goal 35m out. After some good mauling, Springboks' winger Bryan Habana was able to score a try for the Bulls in the corner just before the stroke of halftime. Steyn missed the conversion, leaving the score 16–8 in favour of the Crusaders at half time.

In the second half, the Crusaders scored a try through lock Chris Jack after 17 phases, most of which consisted of pick and goes. This drew the Bulls forwards in and allowed half back Andrew Ellis to pass out to Jack who scored. Carter kicked the conversion to make it 23–8.

Four minutes into the second half, promising young scrum half Andrew Ellis went down with what appeared to be an injury to his right knee. He was ably replace by All Black scrum half Kevin Senio. Three minutes later, Habana went down with a leg injury. This could be potentially devastating news for Springboks coach Jake White. Reserve scrum half Senio later went off to the blood-bin, forcing Cameron McIntyre on. Carter then switched into scrum half until Senio returned for McIntyre.

After the Bulls managed to control the ball for the next 20 minutes, the Crusaders forced a turn over. Fullback MacDonald was able to place a grubber into the corner, going out off a Bulls player. Some quick thinking by Aaron Mauger to throw the ball in quickly resulted in try to hooker Corey Flynn, which is his second in two weeks. Carter missed the subsequent conversion.

Mauger was again involved in the action later, this time scoring himself an impressive try in the 67th minute. After receiving a high pass from Carter, Mauger ran 51

m to score, beating 4 tacklers in the process and scoring the try in the 5th tackle. Carter converted and in doing so eclipsed Andrew Mehrten's record of 206 points in a season.

Late in the game, Pierre Spies scored a consolation try after quick ruck ball and breaking a Senio tackle. Steyn converted. This left it a 35–15, the final score.

After the match, Bulls captain Victor Matfield praised the Crusaders: "They punished us like they always do".

The Bulls loss continues their poor run at Jade Stadium, having won only once, back in 1996. In fact, the Crusaders have not lost at Jade since round 2, 2004. It also continued the run of New Zealand teams - no New Zealand team has lost to a South African team in a semi.

The Crusaders started the match as large favourites, paying \$1.07 compared to the Bulls \$7.00.

The final will be held at 7.35 pm, Saturday 27 May at Jade Stadium. It is the fourth all New Zealand final in 11 seasons of super rugby. It is expected to be a sell out.

### **Australian Democrats in "continuous downward spiral": Founder**

Australian Democrats founder, Don Chipp has told patrons at the party's national conference in Melbourne that "the party is not only in a low position in the public esteem but it seems to be in a continuous downward spiral". Chipp helped found the party in 1977 after becoming discontent with the Liberal Party.

Mr Chipp told patrons at the

conference that the party has suffered recently due to public personality clashes and a lack of unity and that the 2007 election would determine the party's future.

Mr Chipp said that the party had deteriorated over the past few years and that the party could have capitalised on public dissatisfaction with both the government and opposition, which he says is at its highest level in 30 years. "Why has this wonderful creation ... deteriorated to such an extent that almost all political commentators forecast its death at the election to be held next year" he said.

"The voters' disgust and resentment of the two major parties is infinitely greater than 30 years ago." Mr Chipp told the conference.

The party has been in steady political decline since 1998. Under the Senate electoral system in Australia, at each general election only half the Senate is elected. At the 2004 election, no Democrats were elected, leaving only the four members elected in 2001 and the lowest number of Democrat members since 1977.

Mr Chipp urged the party to embrace change. He said that those who do not believe they could successfully contest their seat at the next election or who were considering retiring from politics should "resign immediately".

"Perhaps all the current senators should ask themselves if they think they can personally retain their seat at the next election," he said.

"If they believe they cannot win, or if they decide they will not

stand for the next re-election, they should give consideration to resigning from the Senate immediately." said Mr Chipp.

"The Democrats are a fragile institution with few members and limited resources, (and) one must ask, 'Is it moral that a senator be allowed to sit out their term in comfort while the party disintegrates around them?'" Mr Chipp said.

### **Rep. Hunter calls for hearings about alleged "cold-blooded killings" of civilians by US Marines**

Duncan Hunter, a Republican member of the United States House of Representatives from California and the House Armed Services Committee chairman, said Thursday that the incident involving Marines firing on unarmed Iraqi civilians in the town of Haditha on 19 November 2005 will be subject to Congressional hearings as soon the criminal investigation is completed.

"If there were problems in the chain of command, if there was a cover up, if there was anything that wasn't reported, let the chips fall where they may but don't presume anything," Mr. Hunter said.

The incident is the subject of an ongoing investigation by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and Multi-National Forces Iraq. No official investigation report has been released yet.

Some military commanders have said that it appears the Marines did not follow the rules of engagement. "This report is going to be ugly," one commander said.

John Murtha, a Pennsylvania Democrat and member of the

House of Representatives, said earlier on Wednesday that what happened near the Iraqi town of Haditha was, "much worse than was reported in Time magazine". On March 21, Time reported that "U.S. Marines killed 15 Iraqi civilians in their homes", including "seven women and three children". Time also reported that U.S. troops were responding to an IED and insurgent fire.

Murtha, referring to preliminary military investigation reports, said "There was no firefight. [...] There was no IED that killed these innocent people. Our troops over-reacted because of the pressure on them. And they killed innocent civilians in cold blood." He also said that the civilian death toll was 24 and not 15 as reported by Time magazine.

According to the New York Times, Murtha stated that he himself did not read official findings of the military inquiry, but had been told about the inquiry by commanders due to his background of military service and connections to its workings.

Marine Corps Central Command spokesperson Lt. Col. Sean Gibson would not confirm or deny Murtha's charges.

Duncan Hunter said in response to Murtha on Friday "I don't want to see these troops who have done such a magnificent job end up being portrayed in the American media by what comes out of the Haditha investigation".

### **Sydney off-ramp to charge \$1.20 for 200m drive**

The New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority announced Friday night that a AUD\$1.20 toll will be charged on a pair of new 200 metre long on and off ramps from

the Warringah Freeway to Falcon Street, North Sydney.

According to the RTA the ramps are part of the Lane Cove Tunnel project. The new ramps are being constructed so that traffic can enter and leave Falcon Street from the Northern side of the Warringah Freeway. At present, there are only on and off ramps on the Southern side of the intersection.

The Southern ramps will remain toll-free.

According to the RTA, the toll was set at \$1.00 in 1999. Inflation has been applied to that value to bring it to the \$1.20 that will be charged when the ramps open. Heavy vehicles will pay \$2.40 to use the ramps, although commercial buses will not be tolled.

As with all of Sydney's newest toll roads, tolls will be collected electronically.

Neither NSW Premier Morris Iemma or transport minister Eric Roozendaal have commented on the tolling arrangements for the ramps.

### **Australian PM pushes for "full-blooded" nuclear energy debate**

Australian Prime Minister John Howard has told media in Canada that he wants "a full-blooded debate" in Australia about the issue of nuclear power. "I have a very open mind on the development of nuclear energy in my own country," he said. "That includes an open mind on whether or not Australia should in fact process uranium for the purposes of providing fuel for nuclear power in the future in Australia."

Australia and Canada are two of the world's largest uranium

producers, and the nuclear energy issue was discussed at length during Prime Minister Howard's visit to the country this week. Mr Howard said that soaring oil prices and environmental concerns from fossil-fuel energy are adding pressure towards the debate in Australia. "I think it is inevitable. The time at which it will come should be governed by economic considerations," Mr Howard said from Ottawa.

Australian Greens leader Senator Bob Brown labelled the Prime Minister's call "a sham". Senator Brown says the Prime Minister has already made up his mind. "His talk about a public debate is a complete sham, he's made up his mind," he said. "He's had no mandate, but he's got control of the Senate and therefore we are going headlong into becoming a major agent in the nuclear proliferation right around the world."

Scientists have said that Australia could not develop a nuclear power industry in time to stave off the effects of climate change.

Greenpeace Australia says that even if there was a doubling of nuclear energy by 2050 it would only reduce greenhouse gas emissions by five percent, well below the large cuts scientists say are necessary. Academics at NSW University and the University of Technology Sydney have said that "no private investor would take on the risk without huge government subsidies."

The NSW Greens MLC Ian Cohen said that after 50 years, the nuclear industry still had not found a way to store its waste safely. "We don't want it back and we don't want to create it here."

Steve Shallhorn, chief executive of

Greenpeace Australia Pacific, said "even if there was a doubling of global nuclear energy output by 2050, it would only reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 5 per cent." Greenpeace say the Prime Minister should have used his trip to Canada to learn why "nuclear power is not a viable option." Mr Shallhorn said that, in Canada, nuclear power has driven up the price of electricity and created dangerous amounts of waste. He says its effect in reducing greenhouse gas emissions is also negligible.

"Nuclear power can only solve a very tiny portion of greenhouse gas problems because electricity is only one source of the problem," said Mr Shallhorn. "Nuclear power is not going to solve emissions from aircraft, from the industrial sector or from industrial processes."

"I think it is inevitable. The time at which it will come should be governed by economic considerations," Mr Howard said from Ottawa.

Australia is one of the world's top coal producers. The Howard government have supported the coal industry in the face of calls for more renewable energy. Treasurer Peter Costello, next-in-line for the prime minister's job, has said "nuclear power would cost twice as much as coal power, adding that nuclear energy was not economically right for Australia at the present time because it had such large resources of gas and coal."

John Howard said nuclear power in Australia "could be closer than some people would have thought a short while ago." Federal Industry Minister, Ian Macfarlane, claimed it could be as early as 2020.

The Opposition's environment spokesman, Anthony Albanese, said Labor opposed nuclear power on cost, safety, waste and proliferation grounds. "Labor will not change that view." He said he looks forward to "Labor ending John Howard's nuclear fantasy." Energy experts say that Australia could not develop a nuclear power industry in time to stave off the effects of climate change, and such a program would be prohibitively expensive.

A 2005 survey found 47 percent of Australians supported nuclear power and 40 percent opposed it. The federal opposition party, and all six state governments, oppose nuclear power. Australia has a strict "no new mines" uranium policy.

### **Two Christchurch, New Zealand, hospitals have a virus outbreak**

Two Christchurch hospitals, Christchurch Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital, have had an outbreak of norovirus.

A special isolation ward in the Christchurch Hospital has been setup for 20 patients and 12 staff, who have contracted the disease. Princess Margaret Hospital have also setup similar conditions.

Norovirus causes severe vomiting and diarrhoea, people who get this disease usually recover within 48 hours.

It is possible to get this disease from infected's vomit or faeces. Or contact with the sick, eating infected food or touching infected surfaces.

Visitors are urged to stay away from wards 23 and 29, where the outbreak occurred, unless it is



absolutely necessary.

This happened in 2004, as well, where 200 patients and staff got the disease.

**'Da Vinci Code' opens in theaters, sparks controversy** Moviegoers around the world are expected to queue into movie theaters during the opening weekend of the movie "The Da Vinci Code," despite the disapproval of both critics and clerics.

The film, directed by Ron Howard, is an adaptation of the novel of the same name by Dan Brown, which has sold over 60 million copies worldwide. Officials at Sony-owned Columbia Pictures, which distributed the film, expect the film to gross US\$50 million to US\$80 million during its first weekend in the United States, based on figures from early matinees on Friday. "The early matinees are very strong and extremely encouraging," said Steve Elzer, a spokesman for Columbia.

Outside the United States, the film is also proving controversial, as long lines formed outside theatres in China, while the movie's release has been postponed indefinitely in India and banned outright in the Philippine capital of Manila.

"The Da Vinci Code" stars Tom Hanks and Audrey Tautou, who respectively play a Harvard professor on religious symbols and a French cryptologist who become involved in a murder mystery revolving around the works of Leonardo da Vinci, a secret that could rock the foundations of the Roman Catholic Church if revealed, and a society formed to protect that secret.

The film was previewed at the Cannes film festival to mixed reviews, and critics have generally given the film a cool reception.

Certain thematic elements in the film and novel have caused a religious backlash, as Catholic officials call the movie blasphemous. "'The Da Vinci Code' gratuitously insults Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church," said Vincent Nichols, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Birmingham, England. "It deliberately presents fiction as fact."

The Catholic Church in China called on its followers to boycott the film, while a Catholic lay group in the United States plan is planning rallies outside 1,000 theatres nationwide. Francis Slobodnik, who is coordinating the campaign for the Pennsylvania-based group, called the film "an insult directed towards God."

### **Riot at Guantanamo Bay detention camp**

Inmates at Guantanamo Bay detention camp in Cuba have attacked guards with fan blades and other makeshift weapons. Rear Admiral Harry Harris, the commander of Joint Task Force Guantanamo says some detainees were injured in "the most violent outbreak" at the facility since it was opened in 2002.

Officers fired rubber bullets at the detainees after the guards were attacked with "broken light fixtures, fan blades" and other improvised weapons. Rear Admiral Harris says "minimum force was used to quell the disturbance".

The New York Times reports that Thursday's disturbance was quelled by a riot-control unit with batons and shields. Another

episode involved two other groups of inmates who tore apart their quarters and attacked guards.

Military officials said the detainees' actions were designed to draw attention to the plight of the terror suspects detained indefinitely in "Gitmo". Rear Admiral Harris, said that a prisoner was pretending to hang himself to lure the guards into the room. "The detainees had slickened the floor of their block with faeces, urine and soapy water in an attempt to trick the guards," he said. "They then assaulted the guards with broken light fixtures, fan blades and bits of metal."

The guards used pepper spray and blasted the detainees with several shots from a shotgun, firing rubber balls during the five-minute fight. No guards were hurt, but six inmates were treated for "minor injuries," he said.

Colonel Mike Bumgarner said guards shot five rounds of "nonlethal" pellets from a 12-gauge shotgun, and a rubber grenade from an M-203 launcher. He said rioting then broke out in two other blocks of Camp Four when around 50 detainees damaged their quarters and made weapons to attack the guards. Colonel Bumgarner said it took an hour to bring the disturbances were under control. He says the six detainees received minor injuries.

A military spokesman said 60 of the detainees were later transferred to more secure areas of the camp. Colonel Bumgarner says "detainees were jumping out of the beds on top of the guards" and some guards were knocked to the floor. "Frankly we were losing the fight at that point," he said. "This illustrates to me the dangerous nature of the men we

have detained here," Rear Admiral Harris told reporters in a teleconference.

Earlier in the day, two other detainees attempted suicide by overdosing on hoarded prescription drugs. Guantanamo officials said there have been 41 suicide attempts by 25 detainees and no deaths since the camp opened in January 2002. Defense lawyers contend the figure is higher.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Committee Against Torture has called on the United States to shut down Guantanamo and close any other "secret prisons" it operates. The UN declared the indefinite detention of suspects without charge a "violation of the UN Convention Against Torture."

"The State party should cease to detain any person at Guantanamo Bay and close this detention facility, permit access by the detainees to judicial process or release them as soon as possible," the committee said. They called on the US to "ensure that no one is detained in any secret detention facility under its de facto effective control".

### Today in History

1674 - Jan III Sobieski, elected by the szlachta, became the King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

1879 - War of the Pacific: Two Peruvian ironclads attempted to lift the blockade of Iquique by Chilean battleships in the Battle of Iquique.

1894 - The Manchester Ship Canal was officially opened, linking the city of Manchester to the Irish Sea.

1927 - Aboard the Spirit of St. Louis, Charles Lindbergh completed the first solo non-stop

transatlantic flight.  
1991 - Former Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a female suicide bomber.  
May 21 is Navy Day in Chile.

### Quote of the Day

"A man should never be ashamed to own he has been in the wrong, which is but saying, in other words, that he is wiser today than he was yesterday."  
~ Alexander Pope

### Word of the Day

whosoever; *pron*

Definition

1. Whichever person; any person.

### About Wikinews

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