SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket blasts CEO Elon Musk's personal Tesla sportscar into solar orbit

At 3:45 p.m. Tuesday, February 6, Eastern Time (2045 UTC), the SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket launched from Kennedy Space Center in Florida, US. Its cargo: a US$100,000 Tesla sportscar, the personal property of SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, which he hopes will soon be in its own orbit around the Sun. This is the most powerful rocket since the Saturn V of Project Apollo.
was retired in 1970. The rocket is meant to follow a course called a Hohmann transfer orbit. "It'll be a really huge downer if it blows up," Musk told the press the day before the launch, but went on to say, "If something goes wrong, hopefully it goes wrong far into the mission so we at least learn as much as possible along the way. I would consider it a win if it just clears the pad and doesn't blow the pad to smithereens. That's four million pounds of TNT equivalent so there's probably not going to be much left if that thing lets loose on the pad." The car was equipped with a fully space-suited dummy, cameras to monitor its trip into space, a copy of Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and a radio blasting *Space Oddity* by David Bowie.

The Falcon Heavy has a total of 27 engines and stands 230 feet (70.1 m) tall. According to SpaceX, the Falcon Heavy uses three boosters, the same kind as the company's smaller cargo rockets. After the rocket exited the Earth's atmosphere, two of these boosters detached from the main body of the rocket and, in a first for space technology, were successfully guided back down to the landing pad about ten minutes after launch. The third was to have landed on a drone ship, but missed by around 100 yards (about 90 meters) and hit the ocean "at around 200 miles per hour," according to Musk. The reusability of the boosters makes an enormous difference in the cost of the launch.

Even the relatively heavy-hauling US Space Shuttle program, which was closed in 2013, did not rely on rockets as powerful as those used in Project Apollo, the program in which NASA, the US Government space agency, sent manned missions to the Moon in the 1960's and 70's. Most recent space projects have focused on smaller, lighter machinery, such as Scaled Composites' SpaceShipOne in 2004, which reached space after being carried part of the way by a carrier jet instead of launching from the ground. As of last week, the most powerful rocket in use was the Delta IV, operated by the United Space Alliance. It costs about US$435 million per launch, while SpaceX says the Falcon Heavy will cost US$90 million per launch.

NASA is also working on a heavy-duty rocket, the Space Launch System, but there have been delays.

**Former Irish footballer Liam Miller dies at 36**

On Friday, February 9, former Irish footballer Liam Miller died aged 36, his first professional club Celtic FC said. The Scottish club tweeted, "Everyone at Celtic FC is deeply saddened to hear of the passing of former midfielder Liam Miller. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends at this time. RIP"
Liam, YNWA." According to reports in November, Miller was suffering from pancreatic cancer.

The Irish international joined Celtic at the age of sixteen, making his professional debut in 2000. He spent four years at the Glasgow club, and won the Scottish Premiership title in 2004. He then moved to English club Manchester United on a free transfer in 2004 under Sir Alex Ferguson's management; the same year he made his international debut for the Republic. Miller was briefly with Leeds United on loan, before moving to Sunderland AFC, Queens Park Rangers, and then Hibernian FC. Liam Miller also played in Australia for Perth Glory, Brisbane Roar and Melbourne City FC, before playing for his hometown club Cork City FC, and moving to the US to play for Wilmington Hammerheads.

Internationally, he had featured in 21 matches from 2004 to 2009. He retired in 2016 after a spell at Wilmington Hammerheads. His former international teammate Kevin Kilbane said, "Sad hearing the awful news that Liam Miller has passed away this evening, taken far too soon by a terrible disease. Proud to have shared a dressing room with him over the years."

Imran Sultan Mohammad, who had confessed about shooting Mashal Khan, was sentenced to death by judge Fazal-e-Subhan. Khan was a journalism student in Mardan's Abdul Wali Khan University, who was accused of blasphemy, an offense punishable by death in Pakistan, and was killed in mob violence on April 13. Later in June, police investigation revealed it was a false accusation as they found no evidence of blasphemy. Khan was stripped, beaten by dozens of people in the boys hostel, thrown from the second floor and shot dead — which was videographed and posted on social media.

Defense lawyer Saad Abbasi said 25 accused were sentenced to three-year prison, and 26 accused were released free from charges. Mashal Khan's brother Aimal Khan said, "Our demand was that all of the suspects should have been convicted [...] We ask the police to arrest the remaining suspects who are still at large and to bring them to trial." Police had arrested one suspect recently, who is yet to face the trial.

Last year after the death of Mashal Khan, speaking to BBC Urdu, his father Iqbal Khan said, "This issue is not just about my son. The issue is the mob came to the university, and challenged the government. So the government should question themselves, or do justice." He had also said, "In this country, freedom of speech, those who speak the truth, is restricted. They cut people's tongue. So I say they killed [my son], and then accused him [for such a serious crime]." (Hindustani language: "इस मुल्क में इज़हार-ए-राइ पर, जो सही बयां करते है, उस पर पाबंधी है। उसे जबान काटने है लोगों की। तो हम ये कहते है कि मार भी विया और फिर इलज़ाम भी ऐसा लगाया।")

According to police findings, the false accusation of blasphemy was started by a student group after Mashal Khan had criticised the university for hiking the fees, asserting corruption in the university. Some students had complained about
Khan's alleged secular views to the university authorities.

Reportedly around a hundred relatives of accused waited outside the premises, for the verdict. "A day will come that the judge will answer the God. The verdict he has announced is unjust", said a guardian whose son was sentenced to three years' jail.

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif condemned the lynching last year and said, "Let it be known to the perpetrators of this act that the state shall not tolerate citizens taking the law in their own hands. No father should have to send his child off to be educated, with the fear of having him return in a coffin."

**Competition Commission of India fines Google ₹1.36 billion for 'search bias'**

On Thursday, February 8, the Competition Commission of India (CCI), a government anti-trust watchdog, fined US-based internet technology company Google, a subsidiary of Alphabet, Inc. ₹135.86 crore (about ₹1.36 billion, US$21 million) for manipulating their search results in favour of its products and syndicates, which affected business of rival companies. In the 190-page long decision, CCI said, "Google was leveraging its dominance in the market for online general web search, to strengthen its position in the market for online syndicate search services".

In the ruling passed 4–2, the watchdog said, Google's "search bias" caused "harm to its competitors as well as to users". In 2012, Consumer Unity and Tests Society (CUTS), which is a non-profit organisation, and Bharat Matrimony filed a complaint against the search engine for manipulating the search results.

Google is to pay the fine within 60 days. CCI had fined them five percent of the average profit Google made over three fiscal years due to Indian user base. Per the law, CCI could have fined Google up to ten percent of the profit.

Last year, Google was fined by the European Commission (EC) for favouring certain shopping services for the amount of €2.42 billion (about US$3 billion). That accounted for five percent of "average daily worldwide turnover of Alphabet", EC's official statement read. Google was also fined by Russian Federation Antimonopoly Service for US$6.8 million in 2016 for favouring its own digital services.

"Whilst finding Google to have abused its dominant position, the CCI has nonetheless exercised restraint in recognizing the dynamic nature of online markets and not found Google guilty of every allegation", Naval Shah, who was representing Bharat Matrimony from Shardul Amarchand law firm, told Reuters News agency.

A Google spokesperson said, "We have always focused on innovating to support the evolving needs of our users. The Competition Commission of India has confirmed that, on the majority of issues it examined, our conduct complies with Indian competition laws".

**Dhaka court sentences former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to five years on corruption charges**

On Thursday, February 8, Dhaka high court sentenced former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to a five year prison term for corruption. Her son Tarique Rahman and four others involved in the case were each sentenced to ten years.

Zia was prosecuted for embezzling ভূ.২১ million (Bangladeshi taka; about US$250 thousand) from foreign donations to an orphanage while she was prime minister. 72-year-old Zia, who
became the first female to head the Bangladeshi government in 1991, was sent to jail minutes after the ruling. Her son Tarique Rahman, who lives in England, was not present for the hearing.

Judge Mohammad Akhteruzzaman said Zia "was given a shorter term considering her health and social status". According to the Law Minister Anisul Huq, Zia can apply for bail and also go to the Supreme Court. Zia’s lawyer Khandker Mahbub Hossain said, "We didn't get justice. We'll go to the higher court". Per Bangladeshi law, if a person is jailed for over two years, they are ineligible to stand in election for a period of five years. Parliamentary polls of Bangladesh are scheduled to be conducted in December.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said the ruling was "an attempt to eliminate the opponent" for the upcoming polls. Anisul Huq said the verdict "proves that Bangladesh has the rule of law and that no one is above the law". Huq also noted Zia would not be eligible to run for the December polls if she loses the case in the Supreme Court after the appeal.

PNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said, "this verdict will deepen the country's existing political crisis and will damage people's faith in judiciary". Thousands of supporters of Zia gathered and protested against the ruling. According to news reports, protesters set fire to motorbikes, and police used teargas to disperse some crowds.

**Russia: ex-governor of Sakhalin region Alexander Khoroshavin sentenced to thirteen years for bribery**

On Friday, February 9, a court in the Sakhalin region of Russia sentenced former governor Alexander Khoroshavin to thirteen years prison term and a fine of ₽500 million (US$8.6 million) on corruption charges. Judge Elena Polikina said Khorodhavin was guilty of "Bribe-taking" and "Money laundering".

Khoroshavin’s case started consideration on the merits on March 6, last year. The 58-year-old, who served as the region’s governor from 2007, was arrested in 2015 for bribery when he allegedly received a sum of US$5.6 million.

Per the ruling, Khoroshavin cannot take up a state post for a period of five years after finishing his jail term.

Along with Khoroshavin, deputy governor Sergei Karepkin was sentenced to eight years and fine of ₽4 million (US$69 thousand); and governor’s advisor Andrei Irkamov was sentenced to 9.5 years and fine of ₽176 million (US$3 million). Former Food minister Nikolai Borrisov has to pay a fine of ₽4.5 million (about US$ 77 thousand).

**Poet, lyricist, and digital activist John Perry Barlow dies, aged 70**

On Wednesday morning, February 7, US poet, lyricist, and digital rights activist John Perry Barlow died in his sleep at his San Francisco home. The announcement of his death specified no cause, but reportedly Barlow had recently experienced debilitating health problems. The co-founder of the digital rights legal defense non-profit Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) and former lyricist of rock band Grateful Dead was 70. The EFF announced his death.

Barlow composed lyrics for the Grateful Dead, several songs for the psychedelic rock band over almost 25 years. In the 1990s, he shifted his focus to the Internet, composing essays on Internet culture and working with the EFF to protect digital rights.
Born to Republican state legislator Norman Barlow and his wife Miriam, Barlow was raised on the Bar Cross Ranch in Pinedale, Wyoming. Barlow became friends with future Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir in high school before attending Wesleyan University in Middleton, Connecticut, where he studied comparative religion. During his studies, Barlow began visiting LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) drug advocate Timothy Leary.

After graduation in 1969, he opted to travel the world and returned to his family's ranch in 1971. With his father ill from a stroke, the younger Barlow began ranching before Weir contacted him to finish songs for the latter's solo album *Ace*. The collaboration continued with the Grateful Dead and their individual members, with Barlow contributing occasional lyrics until the band's 1995 dissolution. In 1977, he married Elaine Parker. He sold the family ranch in 1988 due to financial strain.

Barlow became interested in the online world in the 1980s, including becoming a leader at online forum the WELL. In 1990, Barlow was interrogated by a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent about possible connections to underground hackers. He posted his experience to the WELL and discovered that Mitch Kapor had had a similar encounter. The duo decided to join together to help provide legal defense for the hackers and formally incorporated the EFF, adding to the EFF board Stewart Brand, John Gilmore, and Apple Inc. co-founder Steve Wozniak. He served on the board of the EFF until his death. He and Elaine divorced in 1995. He met Cynthia Horner in 1993 and was briefly engaged to her before her unexpected death from an undiagnosed health condition at the age of 29.

In addition to digital activism, Barlow was an early commentator on Internet culture, writing several pieces for *Wired* in its early years and penning essays such as "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace" (1996) that helped define digital citizenship. In 1998 he became a fellow of Harvard University's Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society and in 2013 he was inducted into the Internet Hall of Fame. Barlow stayed active in issues related to civil liberties and rights, helping to create the Freedom of the Press Foundation in 2012. Although he had mostly retired from songwriting, he contributed to several songs by jam band The String Cheese Incident.

Barlow suffered a major heart attack in 2015. By late 2016, he faced several serious health conditions, leading several musicians to hold a benefit concert for him to raise funds for his medical bills. He recently completed his memoir *Mother American Night*, slated for release on June 5.

Barlow is survived his ex-wife Elaine Parker Barlow; the couple's three daughters Leah Justine, Anna Winter, and Amelia Rose; and a granddaughter.
**Chinese Foreign Ministry confirms arrest of bookseller Gui Minhai**

On Tuesday, February 6, the Chinese Foreign Ministry confirmed they had detained Hong Kong-based bookseller Gui Minhai. Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said, "Gui Minhai broke Chinese law and has already been subjected to criminal coercive measures in accordance with the law by relevant Chinese authorities".

According to Minhai's daughter, Chinese police arrested Gui in Beijing in January. 53-year-old Minhai, who was diagnosed with a progressive neurodegenerative disease, was travelling to the Chinese capital to see a Swedish doctor. Minhai holds dual citizenship of Sweden and China, and has written about the Chinese Communist Party leaders of China, amongst them Xi Jinping, the president of China. Geng Shuang in his statement said, "I want to once again stress that China opposes any form of speech or actions that ignore China's legal sovereignty."

On Monday, February 5, Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom stated, "Chinese action was contrary to basic international rules on consular support." The current situation also raises questions about the application of the rule of law, including the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of liberty. We demand that our citizen be given the opportunity to meet Swedish diplomatic and medical staff, and that he be released so that he can be reunited with his daughter and family", Wallstrom added.

In October 2015, Gui disappeared in Thailand, and months later, he was found in China and stated he had surrendered for a 2003 case of driving under the influence of alcohol, in which reportedly a student died. He was imprisoned for two years, and was released in October, last year. He was not permitted to leave China.

Geng Shuang said, "Although Gui Minhai is a Swedish citizen, the case he is involved in must be handled in accordance with Chinese law. China and Sweden are maintaining open communication channels on this case."

**Dutch Football Association appoints Ronald Koeman manager of men's national team**

On Tuesday, February 6, the Royal Dutch Football Association (Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbalbond; KNVB) announced Ronald Koeman as the new manager of the men's national team. The 54-year-old signed a four-and-half year contract, which is under "immediate effect up to and including the 2022 World Cup [onmiddellijke ingang tot en met het WK 2022]", KNVB's official statement read.

Koeman has previously managed nine football clubs, and his most recent spell was in England, where he managed Southampton FC and Everton FC. In 2016–17, he guided Everton to a seventh place finish in the first season in-charge, but was sacked in October.

Featuring in 78 matches for the Dutch national team, Koeman won the Euro 1988. KNVB also appointed 49-year-old Nico-Jan Hoogma as the director. After signing the contract, Koeman tweeted, "I am proud to finally announce that I am the new manager of the Dutch national team. Happy to be here and serve the country in our road to UEFA Euro 2020".

Netherlands had finished as the runners up at the 2010 FIFA World Cup, and third at the 2014 World Cup under management of Louis van Gaal. But The Oranje failed to qualify for the UEFA Euro 2016 under Danny Blind's management, and last year, they failed to qualify for this year's World Cup in Russia. That was
their second consecutive failure to qualify for a major tournament.

Koeman, who succeeds Dick Advocaat as the manager of the national team, is to face England in a friendly match to be played on March 23 in the Dutch capital Amsterdam.

**Margot Duhalde, Chile's first female military pilot, dies aged 97**

On Monday, February 5, Margot Duhalde, Chile's first female military pilot, died at the age of 97, the Chilean government said. Duhalde volunteered for the Free French Forces, and served with the British Royal Air Force and British Air Transport Auxiliary during the second World War.

Duhalde, who learnt to fly an airplane at the age of sixteen, got her license to fly aircraft in 1938. She had left her home in Rio Bueno to undertake pilot's training at the Chilean Air Club in the capital city of Santiago.

In 1940, Duhalde volunteered for the Free French Forces in Santiago. She worked with the British Royal Air Force where she helped the mechanics and looked after the sick. She then joined the Air Transport Auxiliary of Britain and flew aircraft between British airfields during World War II.

In 1946, a year after the war ended, Duhalde was titled Knight of France's Legion of Honour. She returned to her homeland in 1947 and was made an honorary colonel by the *Fuerza Aérea de Chile* (FACh; Chilean Air Force). She served as a commercial pilot and instructor as well as air traffic controller. She was Chile's first female air traffic controller.

In an interview with Canal 13 last year, Duhalde said, "the men were convinced that they were the only ones who could do things. They were raised like that, it's not their fault either. [...] Women have always looked at us less and now, recently, they are realizing that we are equal or even better" [Spanish language: los hombres estaban convencidos de que ellos eran los únicos que podían hacer las cosas. Los criaron así, no es culpa de ellos tampoco. [...] A nosotras las mujeres siempre nos miraron en menos y ahora, recientemente, se están dando cuenta que somos iguales o incluso mejores]. She was the...
only female from Chile to volunteer to join the Free French Force.

In an official statement, the government said, "We are grateful for the huge contribution she made to Chilean aviation and recognise the courage she had to fulfil her life's dream, breaking stereotypes and showing the way to other women." Chilean president Michelle Bachelet tweeted, "Pioneer of our aviation, first female fighter pilot in the Chilean Air Force [CAF], combatant against Nazism in the French and British air forces in World War II. Margot Duhalde demonstrated in a world of men that nothing is impossible for women. My condolences to her family." [Spanish language: Pionera de nuestra aviación, primera piloto de guerra mujer en la FACH [Fuerza Aérea de Chile], combatiente contra el nazismo en las fuerzas aéreas francesa y británica en la II Guerra Mundial. Margot Duhalde demostró en un mundo de hombres que no hay imposibles para las mujeres. Mi pésame a su familia.]

Duhalde retired at the age of 81. In 2007, she flew a plane for the last time.

United States: Two killed, more than a hundred injured in Amtrak train collision in South Carolina

Early on Sunday morning, February 4, Amtrak's passenger train number 91, the Silver Star, bound for Miami from New York, slammed into a stationary CSX freight train in Cayce, about ten miles (16 km) south of Columbia, capital of the US state of South Carolina. Two Amtrak employees were killed and at least 116 were injured, some seriously.

The two killed were 54-year-old engineer Michael Kempf of Savannah, Georgia, and 36-year-old conductor Michael Cella of Orange Park, Florida. Robert Sumwalt, chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, told a press conference the passenger train had been diverted into a siding by a switch left "literally locked, with a padlock" in that position.

The collision happened at about 2:35 am local time (0735 UTC) at a switching yard in the small city of Cayce. The Amtrak train, with reportedly 139 passengers and eight employees aboard, collided head on with the freight train, which was parked with no one on board. The Amtrak locomotive and the leading locomotive on the freight train were destroyed; the Amtrak locomotive and some of its passenger cars derailed, and one of those cars was folded in half. Several freight cars were crumpled, Reuters reported. In a press conference, the state governor, Henry McMaster, said the Amtrak locomotive was "barely recognizable" and described it as "a horrible thing to see, to understand the force involved".

Harrison Cahill, a spokesman for Lexington County, gave a count of 116 injured, up from an initial report of 70; according to Derrec Becker, public information officer for the South Carolina Emergency Management Division, injuries ranged "from cuts and bruises to severe broken bones". On Monday, February 5, a Palmetto Health spokesperson said two patients were in serious and two in critical condition at their facilities. A spill of approximately 5,000 gallons of fuel from the freight train posed no safety hazard, according to officials.

Passenger Derek Pettaway told the CNN network that like most others, he had been sleeping when the collision happened. He said Amtrak staff cleared the passengers from the train rapidly, and there was no panic; "I think people were more in shock than anything else", he said.

"Key to this investigation is learning why the switch was lined that way", Sumwalt said. Amtrak's CEO, Richard Anderson, speaking to reporters on Sunday, held CSX responsible; he
stated the track in that area is operated by CSX and the signals, which CSX operates, were not working at the time of the collision and a CSX dispatcher was therefore directing the Amtrak train's movements. Sumwalt noted an automatic monitoring and braking system called positive train control, which was not in use on the stretch of line, could have forestalled the collision.

Several fatal incidents involving Amtrak trains have occurred in the past three months. On December 18, the inaugural train on a new route in Washington state derailed at high speed while crossing above a highway, killing three; on January 31, the driver of a garbage truck was killed in Virginia when he collided with an Amtrak train chartered to take Republican lawmakers to a retreat.

**North Korea to send head of state to South Korea for Olympics**

On Sunday, February 4, North Korea announced head of state Kim Yong Nam is to attend ceremonies in Pyeongchang, South Korea, for the upcoming Winter Olympics. The proposed visit would make Kim the highest-ranking North Korean official to go to the South in several years.

The move comes after the two Koreas announced a unified team to play women's ice hockey in the games and the North canceled a scheduled joint ceremonial display, opting instead for a military parade on their side of the Korean Demilitarized Zone.

Kim holds the title of President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea, a purely ceremonial role in the legislative body of North Korea. He is to head a 22-member delegation supplementing artists, athletes, coaches, and a cheer squad of over 200. The last time a high-ranking official visited the South was the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon when army leader and Workers' Party's Central Committee member Hwang Pyong So came to the closing ceremony. Hwang was purportedly the second most powerful man in North Korea behind supreme leader Kim Jong-un until he disappeared in late 2017.

South Korea's Ministry of Unification announced the delegation after the unified Korean women's ice hockey team lost to Sweden 3–1. The two nations plan to march together on February 9's opening ceremony but the North canceled a joint cultural event, instead announcing a military parade for the day before. The allies are to hold annual joint military exercises after the Paralympics which follow the Olympic Games.

**United States: Four injured in Los Angeles school shooting**

Thursday morning, February 1, at Salvador Castro Middle School in the Westlake District, Los Angeles (LA), California, US, four students were injured when a gun went off in a girl's backpack, according to police. L.A. police took a suspect into custody, a twelve-year-old female student, and recovered the gun at the scene.
The four injured students were transported to a local hospital. A fifteen-year-old boy suffered a gunshot wound to the head and was recovering according to a Los Angeles County-USC Medical Centre spokesperson on Wednesday. A fifteen-year-old girl was shot in the wrist, and two other students were grazed. The girl and two other students were hospitalised for their injuries.

A 30-year-old staff member was also injured, but reports were unclear whether she was injured by gunfire.

Police officials charged the twelve-year-old girl with negligent discharge of a firearm and she was taken to a juvenile detention center. Police said they did not believe the shooting was intentional, but suspected the girl had the gun in her backpack and it fired off when the bag dropped on the ground.

The Westlake middle school is located near downtown L. and is located on the campus of Belmont High School and had an enrolment last year of 355 students.

**Wikinews is a free news source, that you can write!**

We are a group of volunteer journalists whose mission is to create a diverse community where citizens from around the globe (including you) can collaborate to report the news on a wide variety of current events. By making our content perpetually available for free redistribution and use, we hope to contribute to a global digital commons.

**License**

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License. Articles published in this Print edition were created by Wikinewsies. Other content released under the Creative Commons CC-BY-2.5 license. The text is released under the CC-BY-2.5 license. To read about the license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/

Various images in this document are available in different Creative Commons license.

*Wikinews®,* and the *Wikinews* logo are registered trademarks of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.