



Top Stories

Number of cholera cases in Zimbabwe reaches 80,000

According to the World Health Organisation, a cholera epidemic in the African country of Zimbabwe has now infected upwards of 80,000 people. The epidemic is the worst cholera outbreak in Africa for fifteen years.

At least 73 dead after blast in Chinese coal mine

According to the Chinese state news agency Xinhua, no less than 73 miners have been killed and a further 113 hospitalised after a gas blast in a coal mine in the Shanxi province of China.

Over a dozen injured, one killed in bomb blast in Egypt

17 people have been injured and one has been killed in a bomb blast targeting Western tourists in Cairo, Egypt. Among the dead are a French woman and another foreign tourist. People from five different countries, including Austria, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, have been injured in the attack.

Wikipedia Current Events

A bomb kills four people and injures 17 in the Khan el-Khalili souq of Cairo, Egypt.

•An Al-Shabaab suicide attack kills at least 11 and injures 15 more Burundian peacekeepers on an African Union military base in Mogadishu, Somalia.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Greek convicts Vassilis Paleokostas and Alket Rizai escape from Athens' Korydallos Prison via a helicopter.
- Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison reopens under the new name Baghdad Central Prison.
- Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng inaugurates the country's first oil refinery.
- At least 73 miners die following an explosion in a coal mine in Gujiao, Shanxi, China.
- Australia holds a national day of mourning for the 209 confirmed victims of recent bushfires in Victoria.
- The Tamil Tigers kill 10 people in Kirimetiyyagara, Sri Lanka.
- An outbreak of hepatitis B in Gujarat, India, kills at least 38 people.
- Somali pirates hijack Greece's MV Saldanha in the Gulf of Aden.
- The European Council meets in Berlin, Germany, to discuss the current economic crisis.

Over a dozen injured, one killed in bomb blast in Egypt

At least 20 people have been injured and at least one has been killed in a bomb blast targeting Western tourists in Cairo, Egypt. The death was a French woman who died after being transported to a hospital. Earlier reports put the death toll at four. People from five different countries, including Austria, France, Germany, Saudi

Arabia, and Egypt, have been injured in the attack.

The blast occurred at approximately 6:20 p.m. local time inside a cafe near a mosque in the Khan el-Khalili marketplace which is popular with foreign tourists. Authorities say the bomb was placed under a chair.

A second bomb was found, but authorities were able to disarm it before it could explode, though there were reports of a second, smaller explosion. There are no reports of injuries from the second blast.

The same marketplace was the focus of a previous attack in 2005 in which three people were killed and 18 injured in a suicide bomb attack. Among the dead were one American and two French citizens. The Khan el-Khalili marketplace is one of Cairo's biggest tourist attractions and has a history dating back to 1382.

Endangered Luzon Buttonquail photographed alive by Philippines documentary

According to ornithologists, a rare Philippines buttonquail feared to be extinct was found right before it was sold and headed for the cooking pot. Scientists had suspected the species—listed as "data deficient" on the 2008 International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List Category—was extinct.

Last month, native bird trappers have snared and caught the Luzon

Buttonquail (*Turnix worcesteri* or Worcester's buttonquail) in Dalton Pass, a cold and wind-swept bird passageway in the Caraballo Mountains, in Nueva Vizcaya, located between Cordillera Central and Sierra Madre mountain ranges, in Northern Luzon.

The rare species, previously known to birders only through drawings based on dead museum specimens collected several decades ago, was identified in a documentary filmed in the Philippines called *Bye-Bye Birdie*.

WBCP member, Desmond Allen, a British birder, was watching a January 26 DVD-video of a documentary, *Bye-Bye Birdie*, when he viewed a still image of the rare bird in the credits that lasted less than a second. Allen created a screenshot of the bird, which was photographed by their birder-companion, Arnel Telesforo, a WBCP member, in Nueva Vizcaya's poultry market, before it was cooked and eaten.

"i-Witness: The GMA Documentaries", a Philippine documentary news and public affairs television show aired by GMA Network, had incorporated Telesforo's photographs and video footage of the live bird in the documentary, that was created by the TV crew led by Mr Howie Severino. The Philippine Network had not realized what they filmed until Allen had informed the crew of interesting discovery.

Mr Severino and the crew were at that time, in Dalton Pass to film "akik", the traditional practice of trapping wild birds with nets by first attracting them with bright lights on moonless nights. "I'm shocked. I don't know of any other photos of this. No bird watchers have ever given convincing reports

that they have seen it at all... This is an exciting discovery," said Allen.

The Luzon Buttonquail was only known through an illustration in "A Guide to the Birds of the Philippines" by Robert S. Kennedy, et al, the Philippine birder's bible. The book has a drawing based on the skins of dead specimens a century ago amid the fact that the authoritative image bank of the Oriental Bird Club does not contain a single image of the Worcester's Buttonquail.

"With the photograph and the promise of more sightings in the wild, we can see the living bill, the eye color, the feathers, rather than just the mushed-up museum skin," exclaimed Allen, who has been birdwatching for fifty years, fifteen in the Philippines, and has an extensive collection of bird calls on his ipod. He has also spotted the Oriental (or Manchurian) Bush Warbler, another rare bird which he has not seen in the Philippines.

"We are ecstatic that this rarely seen species was photographed by accident. It may be the only photo of this poorly known bird. But I also feel sad that the locals do not value the biodiversity around them and that this bird was sold for only P10 and headed for the cooking pot," Wild Bird Club of the Philippines (WBCP) president Mike Lu said. "Much more has to be done in creating conservation awareness and local consciousness about our unique threatened bird fauna. This should be an easy task for the local governments assisted by the DENR. What if this was the last of its species?" Lu added.

"This is a very important finding. Once you don't see a bird species in a generation, you start to wonder if it's extinct, and for this

bird species we simply do not know its status at all," said Arne Jensen, a Danish ornithologist and biodiversity expert, and WBCP Records Committee head.

According to the WBCP, the Worcester's buttonquail was first described based on specimens bought in Quinta Market in Quiapo, Manila in 1902, and was named after Dean Conant Worcester.

Since then just a few single specimens have been photographed and filmed from Nueva Vizcaya and Benguet, and lately, in 2007, from Mountain Province by Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, Illinois.

Dean Conant Worcester, D.Sc., F.R.G.S. was an American zoologist, public official, and authority on the Philippines, born at Thetford, Vermont, and educated at the University of Michigan (A.B., 1889).

From 1899 to 1901 he was a member of the United States Philippine Commission; thenceforth until 1913 he served as secretary of the interior for the Philippine Insular Government. In 1910, he founded the Philippine General Hospital, which has become the hospital for the poor and the sick.

In October, 2004, at the request of Mr Moises Butic, Lamut CENR Officer, Mr Jon Hornbuckle, of 35 Grove Road, Sheffield, has conducted a short investigation into bird-trapping in Ifugao, Mountain Province, Banaue Mount Polis, Sagada and Dalton Pass, in Nueva Vizcaya.

"Prices ranged from 100 pesos for a Fruit-Dove to 300 pesos for a Metallic Pigeon. Other species that are caught from time to time

include Flame-breasted Fruit-Dove and Luzon Bleeding-heart; on one occasion, around 50 of the latter were trapped! All other trapped birds are eaten," said Hornbuckle. "The main trapping season is November to February. Birds are caught at the lights using butterfly-catching type nets. Quails and Buttonquails were more often shot in the fields at this time, rather than caught, and occasionally included the rare Luzon (Worcester's) Buttonquail, which is only known from dead specimens, and is a threatened bird species reported from Dalton Pass," he added.

In August, 1929, Richard C. McGregor and Leon L. Gardner of the Cooper Ornithological Society had authored a book entitled, "Philippine Bird Traps." The authors have described the Luzon Buttonquail as "very rare," and found twice only, August and September.

"They are caught with a scoop net from the back of a carabao. Filipino hunters snared them, baiting with branches of artificial red peppers made of sealing wax," wrote McGregor and Leon L. Gardner. "The various ingenious and effectual devices used by Filipinos for bird-trapping include 'Teepee Trap' which consists of a conical tepee, woven of split bamboo and rattan about 3 feet high and 3 feet across at the base, with a fairly narrow entrance. 'Spring Snares' were also used, where a slip noose fastened to a strongly bent bamboo or other elastic branch, which is released by a trigger, which is usually the perch of the trap," their book explained.

A passage from the bird-trap book, which explains why Filipinos had eaten these endangered bird

species, goes as follows: *"Thousands of birds appear annually in the markets of the Philippine Islands. Snipe, quails, wild ducks, silvereyes, weavers, rails, Java sparrows, parrakeets, doves, fruit pigeons, and many more are found commonly. Some of these are vended in the streets as cage birds; many are sold for food. Most of them are living; practically none has been shot. How are these birds obtained? The people possess almost no firearms, and most of them could ill afford the cost of shells alone. Nevertheless, birds are readily secured and abundantly exposed for sale. In a land which does not raise enough produce to support itself, where the quest for food is the main occupation of life, where the frog in the roadside puddle is angled, the minnow in the brook seined, and the all-consuming locust itself consumed, it is not surprising (though regrettable) that birds are considered largely in the light of dietary additions."* —"Philippine Bird Traps," by Richard C. McGregor and Leon L. Gardner, 1930 Cooper Ornithological Society

A global review of threatened species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) indicates drastic decline of animal and plant life. This includes a quarter of all mammals, one out of eight birds, one out of three amphibians and 70 percent of plants.

The report, Red List of Threatened Species, is published by IUCN every year. Additionally a global assessment of the health of the world's species is released once in four years. The data is compiled by 1,700 experts in 130 countries. The key findings of the report were announced at the World Conservation Congress held in

Barcelona, Spain.

The survey includes 44,838 species of wild fauna and flora, out of which 16,928 species are threatened with extinction. Among the threatened, 3,246 are tagged critically endangered, the highest category of threat. Another 4,770 species are endangered and 8,912 vulnerable to extinction.

Environmental scientists say they have concrete evidence that the planet is undergoing the "largest mass extinction in 65 million years". Leading environmental scientist Professor Norman Myers says the Earth is experiencing its "Sixth Extinction."

Scientists forecast that up to five million species will be lost this century. "We are well into the opening phase of a mass extinction of species. There are about 10 million species on earth. If we carry on as we are, we could lose half of all those 10 million species," Myers said.

Scientists are warning that by the end of this century, the planet could lose up to half its species, and that these extinctions will alter not only biological diversity but also the evolutionary processes itself. They state that human activities have brought our planet to the point of biotic crisis.

In 1993, Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson estimated that the planet is losing 30,000 species per year - around three species per hour. Some biologists have begun to feel that the biodiversity crisis dubbed the "Sixth Extinction" is even more severe, and more imminent, than Wilson had expected.

The Luzon Buttonquail (*Turnix worcesteri*) is a species of bird in the Turnicidae family. It is

endemic to the island of Luzon in the Philippines, where it is known from just six localities thereof. Its natural habitat is subtropical or tropical high-altitude grassland, in the highlands of the Cordillera Central, although records are from 150-1,250 m, and the possibility that it frequents forested (non-grassland) habitats cannot be discounted.

The buttonquails or hemipodes are a small family of birds which resemble, but are unrelated to, the true quails. They inhabit warm grasslands in Asia, Africa, and Australia. They are assumed to be intra-island migrants, and breed somewhere in northern Luzon in April-June and that at least some birds disperse southwards in the period July-March.

These Turnicidae are small, drab, running birds, which avoid flying. The female is the more brightly coloured of the sexes, and initiates courtship. Unusually, the buttonquails are polyandrous, with the females circulating among several males and expelling rival females from her territory. Both sexes cooperate in building a nest in the earth, but only the male incubates the eggs and tends the young.

Called "Pugo" (quail) by natives, these birds inhabit rice paddies and scrub lands near farm areas because of the abundance of seeds and insects that they feed on regularly. These birds are characterized by their black heads with white spots, a brown or fawn colored body and yellow legs on males and the females are brown with white and black spots.

These birds are very secretive, choosing to make small path ways through the rice fields, which unfortunately leads to their deaths

as well, they are hunted by children and young men by means of setting spring traps along their usual path ways.

Buttonquails are a notoriously cryptic and unobtrusive family of birds, and the species could conceivably occur in reasonable numbers somewhere. They are included in the 2008 IUCN Red List Category (as evaluated by BirdLife International IUCN Red List of Threatened Species). They are also considered as Vulnerable species by IUCN and BirdLife International, since these species is judged to have a ten percent chance of going extinct in the next one hundred years.

California's violent video game ban law ruled unconstitutional by US Court of Appeals

A U.S. Court of Appeals on Friday has declared unconstitutional California Assembly Bills 1792 & 1793, the California "ultraviolet video games law" that sought to ban the sale or rental of violent video games to minors.

Federal judge Consuelo M. Callahan has ruled that the 2005 statewide ban, which has yet to be enforced, violates minors' rights under the US Constitution's First and 14th amendment because even the most graphic on-screen mayhem, video game content represents free speech that cannot be censored without proper justification.

The Court has ruled that there's no convincing evidence it causes psychological damage to young people. The 3-0 judgment has affirmed an earlier ruling by a U.S. District Court, which barred enforcement of the law on the basis that it was "unduly restrictive" and "used overly broad definitions," and that the state

failed to show that the limitations on violent video games would actually protect children.

In 2005, Leland Yee (余胤良), a California State Senator (in District 8 which includes the western half of San Francisco and most of San Mateo County), Speaker pro Tempore of the Assembly (D-San Francisco/Daly City), introduced California Assembly Bills 1792 & 1793 which barred "ultra-violent" video games from minors under the age of eighteen in California and mandated the application of ESRB ratings for video games.

"California Assembly Bills 1792 & 1793" were commonly called the "ultraviolet video games bills" or simply "video game ban" bills. Bill 1792 banned the sales of such video games while Bill 1793 required signs explaining the regulations on said games to be placed where such were sold. Both bills were passed by the Assembly and signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger into law (AB 1179) on October 7, 2005.

Explicitly, these two bills provided that: AB 1792 will place ultra-violent video games into the "matter" portion of the penal code, which criminalizes the sale of said material to a minor. AB 1793 will require retailers to place M-rated games separate from other games intended for children, and will also require retailers to display signage explaining the ESRB rating system.

Yee, a former child psychologist has publicly criticized such games as Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas and Manhunt 2, and opposes the U.S. Army's Global Gaming League.

On October 17, 2005, before the

effectivity of the challenged Act, plaintiffs Video Software Dealers Association, the not-for-profit international trade association dedicated to advancing the interests of the \$32 billion home entertainment industry and Entertainment Software Association, a 1994 US trade association of the video game industry have filed lawsuit (D.C. No. CV-05-04188-RMW) against the defendants Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, CA Attorney General, Edmund G. Brown, Santa Clara County District Attorney George Kennedy, City Attorney for the City of San Jose, Richard Doyle, and County Counsel for the County of Santa Clara, Ann Miller Ravel.

Plaintiffs' counsel, Jenner & Block's Paul M. Smith has filed a declaratory relief to invalidate the newly-enacted California Civil Code sections 1746-1746.5 (the "Act"), on the grounds that it allegedly violated 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and the First and Fourteenth Amendments.

Plaintiffs have submitted that "the Act unconstitutionally curtailed freedom of expression on its face based on content regulation and the labeling requirement, was unconstitutionally vague, and violated equal protection.

California's restrictions could open the door for states to limit minors' access to other material under the guise of protecting children."

By December 2005, both bills had been struck down as unconstitutional, by Ronald M. Whyte, District Judge, Presiding in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California in San Jose, thereby preventing either from going into effect on January 1, 2006.

Judge Whyte has granted plaintiffs'

motion for a preliminary injunction in "Video Software Dealers Ass'n v. Schwarzenegger," 401 F. Supp. 2d 1034 (N.D. Cal. 2005), and cross-motions for summary judgment, in "Video Software Dealers Ass'n v. Schwarzenegger," No. C-05-04188, slip op. (N.D. Cal. Aug. 6, 2007).

Similar bills were subsequently filed in such states as Illinois, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Michigan and Louisiana have been ruled to be unconstitutional by federal courts on First Amendment grounds, according to Sean Bersell, a spokesman for the Entertainment Merchants Association.

The defendants, in the instant Case No. 07-16620, have timely appealed the judgment. On October 29, 2008, the appealed case was argued and submitted to the Sacramento, California's U.S. Court of Appeals, hence, the promulgation of the instant 30 pages decision (No. 07-16620; D.C. No. CV-05-04188-RMW) by Alex Kozinski, Chief Judge, Sidney R. Thomas and Consuelo M. Callahan (who wrote the court's opinion), United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit Judges.

In the ban's defense, Deputy Attorney General for the State of California, Zackery Morazzini has contended that "if governments restrict the sale of pornography to minors, it should also create a separate category for ultra-violent video games." Edmund Gerald "Jerry" Brown, Jr., California Attorney General, has also argued that "the Court should analyze the Act's restrictions under what has been called the 'variable obscenity' or 'obscenity as to minors' standard first mentioned in Ginsberg, 390 U.S. 629. The

Court's reasoning in Ginsberg that a state could prohibit the sale of sexually-explicit material to minors that it could not ban from distribution to adults should be extended to materials containing violence."

The "Fallo" or dispositive portion of the judgment in question goes as follows: *We hold that the Act, as a presumptively invalid contentbased restriction on speech, is subject to strict scrutiny and not the "variable obscenity" standard from Ginsberg v. New York, 390 U.S. 629 (1968). Applying strict scrutiny, we hold that the Act violates rights protected by the First Amendment because the State has not demonstrated a compelling interest, has not tailored the restriction to its alleged compelling interest, and there exist less-restrictive means that would further the State's expressed interests. Additionally, we hold that the Act's labeling requirement is unconstitutionally compelled speech under the First Amendment because it does not require the disclosure of purely factual information; but compels the carrying of the State's controversial opinion. Accordingly, we affirm the district court's grant of summary judgment to Plaintiffs and its denial of the State's cross-motion. Because we affirm the district court on these grounds, we do not reach two of Plaintiffs' challenges to the Act: first, that the language of the Act is unconstitutionally vague, and, second, that the Act violates Plaintiffs' rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.* —"Video Software Dealers Association; Entertainment Software Association v. Arnold Schwarzenegger and George Kennedy" - No. 07-16620; D.C.

No. CV-05-04188-RMW - Alex Kozinski, Chief Judge, Sidney R. Thomas and

"We need to help empower parents with the ultimate decision over whether or not their children play in a world of violence and murder," said the law's author, Sen. Leland Yee, announcing he wanted Edmund Gerald "Jerry" Brown, Jr., the current Attorney General and a former governor of the State of California, to appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Letting the industry police itself is like letting kids sign their own report cards and that a self regulating system simply doesn't work. I've always contended that the ... law the governor signed was a good one for protecting children from the harm from playing these ultra-violent video games. I've always felt it would end up in the Supreme Court," Sen. Yee explained. "In fact, the high court recently agreed, in *Roper v. Simmons* (2005), that we need to treat children differently in the eyes of the law due to brain development," he added.

According to Michael D. Gallagher, president of the Entertainment Software Association, plaintiff, the Court's ruling has stressed that parents, with assistance from the industry, are the ones who should control what games their children play. "This is a clear signal that in California and across the country, the reckless pursuit of anti-video game legislation like this is an exercise in wasting taxpayer money, government time and state resources," Gallagher said in a statement.

Entertainment Software Association members include Disney Interactive Studios, Electronic Arts, Microsoft Corp,

THQ Inc, Sony Computer Entertainment America, and Take-Two Interactive Software, the maker of "Grand Theft Auto" games.

Judge Callahan has also reprimanded state lawyers for having failed to show any reasonable alternatives to an outright statewide ban against the ultra-violent video games. "Ratings education, retailer ratings enforcement, and control of game play by parents are the appropriate responses to concerns about video game content," said Bo Andersen, president and chief executive of the Entertainment Merchants Association.

Andersen continues, "retailers are committed to assisting parents in assuring that children do not purchase games that are not appropriate for their age. Independent surveys show that retailers are doing a very good job in this area, with an 80 percent enforcement rate, and retailers will continue to work to increase enforcement rates even further; the court has correctly noted that the state cannot simply dismiss these efforts."

California was already forced to pay \$282,794 to the ESA for attorneys' fees, money that would've helped with the state's current budget difficulties. Andersen has urged California government officials not to appeal the case. "The estimated \$283,000 in taxpayer money spent by the state on this case is so far an 'ill-advised, and ultimately doomed, attempt at state-sponsored nannyism.' A voluntary ratings system already exists to avoid the state-sponsored nannyism of a ban," he explained.

"The governor believes strongly we

have a responsibility to our children and our communities to protect against the effects of video games depicting ultra-violent actions," said Governor Schwarzenegger spokeswoman Camille Anderson adding the governor was reviewing Friday's decision.

Deputy Attorney General Zackery Morazzini, the state's counsel in the appealed case, has stressed that "a law restricting sales of violent games is far more effective than industry self-policing, since the technological controls that the court cited as another alternative can be easily bypassed by any kid with an Internet connection."

According to Jim Steyer, Founder of Common Sense Media, a non-profit organization of 750,000 regular users dedicated to improving children's media lives, researches have shown that playing these violent video games are detrimental for kids mental and physical health. "The health threat involved with kids playing such games is equivalent to smoking cigarettes," Steyer said. "These violent video games are learning tools for our children and clearly result in more aggressive behavior," said Randall Hagar, California Psychiatric Association's Director of Government Affairs.

The Federal Trade Commission's data reveals that "nearly 70 percent of thirteen to sixteen year olds are able to purchase M-rated (Mature) video games, which are designed for adults; ninety-two percent of children play video or computer games, of which about forty percent are rated M, which are the fastest growing segment of the 10 billion-dollar video game industry; the top selling games reward players for killing police officers, maiming elderly persons,

running over pedestrians and committing despicable acts of murder and torture upon women and racial minorities."

Number of cholera cases in Zimbabwe reaches 80,000

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), a cholera epidemic in the African country of Zimbabwe has now infected over 80,200 people. The epidemic is the worst cholera outbreak in Africa for fifteen years.

The United Nations agency stated that approximately half of all the patients that died of the disease did not reach any of the 365 cholera treatment centers located in the country.

Since the outbreak began in August of last year, over 80,000 people have been infected and 3,759 people have died from the disease in Zimbabwe as of February 19. That compared with 3,172 deaths out of 78,882 cases that were recorded as of Tuesday.

The WHO said that the epidemic has spread to nearby states, with significant numbers of cases reported in Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique.

South Africa, which is Zimbabwe's neighbor to the south, also reported incidents of cholera, but has managed to limit the number of fatalities to less than 1% out of all people infected.

Australian football: Adelaide United defeat Queensland Roar, through to A-League Grand Final

Adelaide United will play in the A-League football preliminary final Queensland Roar in Adelaide on Saturday night. In a top four finals series, which the A-League uses, the preliminary final is a final

played between the qualifying Semi Final (1st vs. 2nd) and the winner of the elimination Semi Final (3rd vs. 4th) for the remaining spot in the Grand Final.

Adelaide qualified after losing to Melbourne Victory in the major semi final. Queensland qualified after winning the minor semi final against the Central Coast Mariners.

Adelaide United opened the scoring at the 25 minute mark through midfielder Fabian Barbiero. Barbiero's shot, which sailed into the top lefthand corner of goal, came from just outside the 18 yard box off to the right of the goals.

"I thought we were most probably the better team but we were beaten by a wonder strike, it was a fantastic strike," said Queensland coach Frank Farina.

Queensland rallied in the second half and continually took shots on goal. However, an indifferent Adelaide kept them out. Serginho Van Dijk fired some inaccurate shots while Mitch Nichols had a low trajectory shot saved by Adelaide keeper Eugene Galekovic.

"That's the biggest disappointment. The grand final's not a disappointment, to be totally honest," Farina said. "It's not qualifying for Asia, that was the biggest prize tonight. It's disappointing, but if we keep this current squad together it'll happen. We'll get to Asia and we'll get to a grand final."

Adelaide will now play Melbourne Victory in the Grand Final at the Telstra Dome.

Launch of space shuttle Discovery delayed indefinitely

NASA announced during a press conference on Friday night that that agency has decided to delay the launch of Space Shuttle Discovery, which was scheduled for takeoff on February 27. NASA cited the need for additional time to evaluate the shuttle's hydrogen fuel flow control valves. A new launch date has yet to be scheduled, though NASA is considering mid-March as an option. Another review of Discovery's flight readiness is scheduled for February 25.

Discovery had originally been scheduled for liftoff on February 12, but NASA wanted to perform additional tests on the valves which control the amount of hydrogen fuel pumped into the external tank when the shuttle is taking off. When Space Shuttle Endeavour went into space in November 2008, one of the valves broke. NASA fears that if one breaks off on this mission, then it could damage the outside of the shuttle.

"We need to complete more work to have a better understanding before flying," said Bill Gerstenmaier, associate administrator for Space Operations at NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. who chaired Friday's Flight Readiness Review. "We were not driven by schedule pressure and did the right thing. When we fly, we want to do so with full confidence."

The current scheduled mission, STS-119, is set to fly the Integrated Truss Structure segment ("S" for starboard, the right side of the station, and "6" for its place at the very end of the starboard truss) and install the final set of power-generating solar

arrays to the International Space Station. The arrays consist of two 115-foot-long arrays, for a total wing span of 240 feet, including the equipment that connects the two halves and allows them to twist as they track the sun. Altogether, the four sets of arrays can generate 84 to 120 kilowatts of electricity – enough to provide power for more than 40 average homes.

Commander Lee Archambault will lead Discovery's crew of seven, along with Pilot Tony Antonelli, and Mission Specialists Joseph Acaba, John Phillips, Steve Swanson, Richard Arnold, and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Koichi Wakata.

At least 73 dead after blast in Chinese coal mine

According to the Chinese state news agency Xinhua, no less than 73 miners have been killed and a further 113 hospitalised after a gas blast in a coal mine in China on Sunday. The incident occurred before dawn in the mine in Gujiao City, located in the Shanxi province. 436 miners were underground in the mine at the time.

Xinhua stated that 340 of the miners had been rescued following the explosion, 21 of which are reported to have sustained serious injuries.

The mine belongs to the Shanxi Jiaomei Group, which is the country's largest producer of coking coal, and operates 28 mines.

China's mining industry is the most dangerous in the world, with 3,200 fatalities recorded in 2008. The safety record is improving, however, as that figure is a 15 percent decrease over the previous

year.

Bulgarian chess grandmaster attempts to break chess record

Kiril Georgiev, a Bulgarian chess grandmaster, began playing 360 simultaneous games of chess on Saturday, in an attempt to break the world record for the most games played simultaneously. The games are being hosted at the Inter Expo Centre in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria.

The current record for the largest number of simultaneous games belongs to the Hungarian-American grandmaster Susan Polgar, who played 326 games in 2005, losing three games, drawing fourteen, and winning the other 309.

To beat that record, Georgiev must win at least four-fifths of his games.

According to the Bulgarian News Network, Georgiev is a former under-18 world champion, and won the Bulgarian national championship three times.

Adela Lupșe, outburst TV presenter, gives her side

The call-in quiz show is a staple of cheap programming throughout Europe. The format is simple: a question is displayed on screen, and callers phone in with their guesses – paying a premium rate to do so. The programs are often repetitive, the average question simple, the average prize small.

Once in a while, though, something unusual does happen.

On December 6 2008, Adela Lupșe, presenting the call-in quiz *Telepremii* on Național TV on Romanian television, had what The Daily Telegraph described as a "tantrum on air". As the final prize

became available, Ms Lupșe's show had no callers. Already excited, she began to shout. Throwing the telephone down on the studio floor and stomping on it, she admonished her viewers, "I want the telephone to ring now. Now. Call me now!"

Various reports in the English-speaking press went on to state that Ms Lupșe had been fired, or fired and re-hired, that the show had been fined heavily, forced to move to a late-evening time slot, or given an adults-only rating.

After presenting the broadcasts of this morning's call-in programs, including the same one she was supposedly fired from in January, Ms Lupșe spoke to Wikinews from her television studio in Budapest, Hungary to give her first full-length English interview and talk about her work and her version of events.

Adela Lupșe was born in 1988 to a miner's family in the village of Poiana, Bihor in Transylvania, Romania. A member of Romania's first post-Ceaușescu generation, she grasped the power of television at a young age: "I think television is the most interesting phenomenon that the modern day has given us....for my type of personality, I find it impressive, the power that television has worldwide....We dress like the people that television promotes. We want to look like the celebrities that television launches."

Knowing television was the career for her, Lupșe moved to the city of Oradea to study journalism, and began a job at a local television station as a health reporter. Using that position as a launching board, she found her way onto the national reality program *Noră pentru mama 1* (Daughter-in-law

for Mom) on Kanal D, a show in which mothers of single sons attempted to matchmake for their children. Lupșe unabashedly admits she took part in the show only for exposure: "Actually my goal from the start was not to win this thing or to find someone. I wanted to get some attention and get people to know my face. I want this attention because I'm aware of the fact that it is not easy to enter this world! And I was doing all this in order to increase my chances to get my dream job in television." That dream: to host a nationally-broadcast talk show.

After participating in *Noră pentru mama*, Lupșe was asked to audition for her first call-in program and was quickly hired. She describes a typical day: "One hour and a half before the show I'm in the make-up room. After I'm done with hair and make-up I go down to the studio for the before the show to talk to the producer. And then is the result that anyone gets to see." All of her banter on-air is improvised: "Definitely there is no script! Everything that you see comes out spontaneously during the show."

On any given day, Ms Lupșe is on camera for between one and five hours, presenting a number of different call-in shows on several different networks: not only Național TV but also Prima TV and Antena 1, all broadcast from the same studio. Despite the repetition, she doesn't get bored. "For me it's always exciting. I enjoy it very much! If I'm tired at the end of the show it means I've done a good show. But I'm never tired during the show." When I play a clip of one of her energetic show presentations – not the one she's become best known for – she elaborates on her exuberance. "I'm always excited when I'm

about to give big prizes! There is no show without winners!" Adela Lupșe's December 6 broadcast was a normal day. She went to the studio, prepared her hair and makeup, spoke to the producer, and went onscreen. The only thing out of the ordinary, she says, was the size of the prize: 1500 leu, about \$US 450, or roughly a year's wage for a typical Romanian. She describes the critical moment in nonchalant terms:

How did you feel, then, when you began shouting? Many people have said you seemed angry...
Adela Lupșe: I was just involved in the moment! People have different opinions.

WN: You weren't angry at all?
Adela Lupșe: I would rather use the word excited.

WN: Even when you put your foot on the telephone.
Adela Lupșe: Even then, the whole moment was just my way to express my excitement!

WN: All we in most countries have seen is those two minutes. What happened afterward?
Adela Lupșe: Well the show went on, I got my winner and moved on!

She says she and her show weren't fired or fined. The first inkling she had, in fact, that there was something unusual about that day's broadcast was when, on January 9 2009, MTV Russia aired the clip of her shouting and stomping on the phone, mixed with some dramatic orchestral rock music. That same clip, uploaded onto video service YouTube, quickly garnered over one million views. I think also I'm a little bit crazy. So it's all good!

Adela Lupșe says she's happy with the attention brought her from her outburst: she's been interviewed on talk shows in both Hungary and Romania so "people were able to see that I'm a normal, fun to be around person." She's occasionally recognized in the street, which she enjoys.

And as for the charge most frequently leveled against her, that she's "crazy": "I think it is normal that people have prejudices, everyone is free to express his opinion in the same way that I'm free to do my job the best that I can! I'm hurt if my family is unhappy with people's comments but I think I gain the wisdom to ignore the negative feedback!

Today in History

1820 – British authorities arrested the conspirators of the Cato Street Conspiracy, an attempt to murder Prime Minister Lord Liverpool and all the British cabinet ministers.

1903 – The Cuban-American Treaty was finalized, allowing the United States to perpetually lease Guantánamo Bay from Cuba for the purposes of operating coaling and naval stations.

1909 – The Silver Dart was flown off the ice of Baddeck Bay, a sub-basin of Bras d'Or Lake on Cape Breton Island, making it the first controlled powered flight in Canada and the British Empire.

1945 – American photographer Joe Rosenthal took the Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* during the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II, an image that was later reproduced as the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial.

2005 – The controversial French law on colonialism, requiring lycÉe teachers to teach their students "the positive role" of French

colonialism, was passed, creating so much public uproar and opposition that it was repealed less than one year later.

February 23 is Defender of the Fatherland Day in Russia; Mashramani in Guyana (1970); National Day in Brunei (1984)

Quote of the Day

We cannot avoid conflict, conflict with society, other individuals and with oneself. Conflicts may be the sources of defeat, lost life and a limitation of our potentiality but they may also lead to greater depth of living and the birth of more far-reaching unities, which flourish in the tensions that engender them. ~ Karl Jaspers

Word of the Day

banyan n

1. A tropical Indian fig tree, *Ficus bengalensis*, that has many aerial roots.

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