



### Top Stories

#### Rescuers find remains of West Virginia miners

The remains of 2 Melville West Virginia miners have been found. They are said to have been found in the area of the mine where firefighters have been battling a blaze for 40 hours.

#### Maryland Judge throws out law banning gay marriages

Judge M. Brooke Murdock of the Baltimore Circuit Court in Maryland struck down a 1973 law banning gay marriage yesterday, ruling the measure violated a state constitutional amendment prohibiting sex discrimination.

### Featured story

#### London whale dies

A Northern Bottlenose whale died at approximately 19:00 GMT in London today despite rescue efforts.

### Wikipedia Current Events

- The Russian choreographer Igor Moiseyev, who founded the genre of balletic folk dance back in the 1930s, celebrates his centenary with a flamboyant show in the Moscow Kremlin Palace of Congresses.
- Two miners, trapped after a coal mine fire on Thursday in Melville, West Virginia, are found dead.
- The "River Thames whale" dies during a rescue attempt.

#### London whale dies

A Northern Bottlenose whale died at approximately 19:00 GMT in London today despite rescue efforts. The whale had previously found its way up the River Thames and into the central portion of the British capital.

Despite whales' ability to breathe out of water, their skeletons are not designed to hold their own massive body weights, and so whales cannot spend long periods of time out of water.

The death of the whale saved the rescue team from having to make a call over whether it was advisable to release the whale in such a weak condition. A 'euthanised' killing had been considered.

The whale managed to gather two days worth of media attention, with Londoners and people all over the world captivated by the unusual story...

#### Rescuers find remains of West Virginia miners

In Melville West Virginia, the remains of two miners have been found.

"We have found the two miners we were looking for for the past 40 hours," said Doug Conaway, director of the state Office of Miners' Health Training and Safety. "Unfortunately we don't have a positive outcome."

Governor Joe Manchin, Massey Energy Chairman Don Blankenship and U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller

went to a church where the victims families were waiting to tell them the news.

"For over what 45 hours we've been together with the families, we do not have the outcome that we had desired, that we had been hoping for. We have two brave miners that have perished. These two men who perished in this mine, the 12 men who perished in the Sago Mine, I can only say to each of those families ... that they have not died in vain," Manchin said a press conference after receiving the news.

On Monday, Manchin plans to introduce legislation dealing with rapid responses in emergencies, electronic tracking technology and mandate reserve oxygen stations for underground miners.

He is expected to go to Washington D.C. on Tuesday to discuss with the state's congressional delegation the proposals he has.

The miners became separated from their team when fire broke out. Nineteen other miners were able to escape without injury.

The two have been identified as Don Bragg, 33, and Ellery "Elvis" Hatfield, 47.

They have been missing since Saturday.

#### Rescue teams try to save London whale

Rescue teams are attempting to save the life of the whale which has

been swimming in the London Thames river over the past few days. The northern bottle-nosed whale, which had gotten weaker and weaker, became beached this afternoon. Rescue teams quickly moved the whale onto an inflatable pontoon, keeping the whale in water but with its blowhole above the surface.

Experts then tried to evaluate the condition of the whale by performing ultrasound checks to see how much blubber and blood the whale has, and by taking some blood tests. The breathing rate of the whale was around four inhalations per minute.

The pontoon is currently being towed by a barge slowly downstream.

The British Divers Marine Life Rescue team lead the rescue effort. They hope to be able to release the whale in as deep water as possible, but only if it is in good enough health. If the whale is considered to be in too weak a condition to survive, it may be euthanised, experts have said.

The rescue mission is being filmed by television crews, including from helicopters, and broadcast live onto rolling news channels. Mark Stevens, a member of the British Divers Marine Life Rescue team reported on the situation live on TV using a mobile phone, direct from the scene where he was standing in the water. At one point he asked the BBC to tell their helicopter to fly higher, as the noise made the whale's breathing rate temporarily go up.

The whale sightings have captivated the British public, with spectators lining the banks of the Thames to take photographs and try and spot the whale. However,

the initial surprise at seeing the whale soon turned to concern as experts fear for the whale's long term health. Initial plans to transfer the whale from the barge "Crossness" to a deep-sea ship have been abandoned as the condition of the whale deteriorates, but it is still hoped to release the whale in the Thames estuary.

### **Many SAG Awards presenters announced**

A list of presenters at the 12th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards® were announced Thursday. The first roster of presenters will include Naveen Andrews (LOST), Patricia Arquette (Medium), Benjamin Bratt (E-Ring), Marg Helgenberger (CSI: Crime Scene Investigation), Felicity Huffman (Desperate Housewives), Eva Longoria (Desperate Housewives), Ellen Pompeo (Grey's Anatomy), SAG President Alan Rosenberg, William Shatner (Boston Legal), David Strathairn (Good Night, and Good Luck.) and Hilary Swank (Million Dollar Baby).

The Guild previously announced that Jamie Lee Curtis will present SAG's 42nd Life Achievement Award to Shirley Temple Black. Ms. Black was a legendary child actress in the 1930s, starring in movies including Bright Eyes (1934), Curly Top (1935), Poor Little Rich Girl (1936), Heidi (1937), Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm (1938), The Little Princess (1939).

Screen Actors Guild (SAG) is the nation's largest labor union representing working actors.

### **Euromillions lottery jackpot set to rise to £100m**

Despite lots of publicity and media attention causing a last minute

rush to buy tickets, there was no winner of the £85m jackpot in this week's 'Euromillions' lottery. This is the tenth week that no-one has won the top prize, which has 'rolled-over' to create bigger and bigger jackpots each week. Next week's jackpot now looks set to be worth around £100m, the biggest in European lottery history.

To win the jackpot, Players must match five main numbers from 1 to 50, plus two 'Lucky Star' numbers from one to nine. This week's winning numbers were 12, 15, 33, 44 and 50, with the Lucky Stars being 2 and 6.

The pan-Europe lotter is open to players in Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The odds of winning the jackpot are 1 in 76,275,360.

If the estimated £100 million jackpot were to be shared equally amongst the populations of the countries participating, each person would receive 50p.

### **Maryland Judge throws out law banning gay marriages**

Judge M. Brooke Murdock of the Baltimore Circuit Court in Maryland struck down a 1973 law banning gay marriage yesterday, ruling the measure violated a state constitutional amendment prohibiting sex discrimination.

The decision will not allow gay couples to be immediately eligible for marriage licenses because Murdock stayed the order pending an appeal. The state's attorney general's office filed the appeal right after the ruling was made.

"Although tradition and societal values are important, they cannot

be given so much weight that they alone will justify a discriminatory statutory classification," the judge stated in the ruling. "When tradition is the guise under which prejudice or animosity hides, it is not a legitimate state interest."

In making the decision, Judge Murdock wrote, "the court is not unaware of the dramatic impact of its ruling."

Ken Choe, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU) Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, said "men and women were indeed treated differently under the law Judge Murdock struck down. A man can marry a woman, but a woman can't marry a woman. Same-sex couples need the same protections for their families that opposite-sex couples do."

The ACLU hailed the ruling, calling it "a historical step toward allowing same-sex couples to legally marry in Maryland." She considered but dismissed all the state's arguments for the restriction, noting "Prevention of same-sex marriage is not rationally related to the state's interests in promoting stable families and protecting the best interests of children. ... These arguments are illogical and inaccurate."

Governor Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. released a statement saying that that the state will "begin a vigorous appeals process. I firmly believe the institution of marriage is for one man and one woman only."

Governor Ehrlich had sent to Attorney General J. Joseph Curran Jr. (D), a letter in response to the ruling advising him to appeal the decision and offered additional

resources to support the appeal.

"We have noted an appeal and think it appropriate that the court stayed the operation of its order," said Kevin J. Enright, a spokesman for Curran, in a statement. "We await having the decision of Maryland's appellate courts."

The Maryland House of Delegates scheduled hearings for January 31, 2006 on proposals dealing with same-sex marriages, including a proposed constitutional amendment.

John Lestitian, a plaintiff in the case, said Murdock's decision was "a step in a very long process. As a 40-year-old man, I should be able to decide who my family is."

"This is such an exciting moment," said Lisa Polyak. Her partner of 24 years, Gita Deane, was a plaintiff in the case. "Our participation in this lawsuit has always been about family protections for our children. Tonight, we will rest a little easier knowing that those protections are within reach."

The equal rights amendment Maryland's State Constitution was ratified by voters in 1972. The marriage law which defined marriage as only between one man and one woman was approved the following year.

The lawsuit leading to the decision started when nine gay and/or lesbian couples and one individual sued court clerks in five Maryland counties for denying marriage licenses to them, citing legal, financial, and emotional harm. In July of 2004, the ACLU filed the suit challenging the state ban on same-sex marriage.

Same-sex marriages are only legal in the state of Massachusetts in

the United States, with the states of Vermont and Connecticut recognizing other civil unions. Hawaii and New Jersey offer some legal protections to same-sex couples, while 13 states have approved constitutional amendments rejecting recognition of same-sex marriage. Courts in California, New Jersey, New York and Washington State are facing cases on the issue.

### **Experts fear for the health of London whale**

Experts are now fearing the worst for the northern bottle-nosed whale that is still swimming in the Thames river London. The Thames Whale was first spotted on Thursday, with widespread media coverage yesterday and huge crowds of spectators attracted to the river.

There were hopes that the whale was heading back out to sea, but these were dashed by a fresh sighting of the whale from Albert bridge in Chelsea.

Experts say that the whale is now looking increasingly distressed, with numerous cuts to its body. The whale has already been partly beached on a few occasions, but each time has managed to free itself.

According to blogger Andrew (eyedropper.co.uk), a BBC picture editor, if the whale should die it would be up to Admiral the Lord Boyce GCB OBE 'to arrange for a tooth to be extracted and sent to the Natural History Museum, and a proper burial to be made'.

### **Alan Carpenter "effectively" new Western Australian Premier**

Western Australian Energy Minister Alan Carpenter has confirmed he will become Western Australia's

next state Premier.

The top job became vacant following Premier Geoff Gallop's shock resignation on Monday 16th January. Contender Police Minister Michelle Roberts has withdrawn from the leadership race, saying Mr Carpenter has her support.

Speaking in Perth today, Labor powerbroker Jim McGinty said Mr Carpenter was now "effectively" the WA premier, putting an end to a week of speculation about jockeying for the role.

"We were all shocked and saddened by Dr Gallop's announcement on Monday but to have a new premier by the end of the week is as smooth (a transition) as you could hope for," Mr McGinty said today.

Mr Carpenter will now be elected unopposed when caucus meets on Tuesday. WA Attorney-General and former Labor leader Mr McGinty says Mr Carpenter will make a great premier but it is important he does not change too much.

"In my experience when people start to try to change their appearance or their personality is when they fail," he said. "I'm sure Alan Carpenter will remain Alan Carpenter."

Alan Carpenter was born in Albany, Western Australia, on January 4 1957. After graduating from the University of Western Australia with an Arts degree (politics) in 1979, he began a career as a journalist with the Albany Advertiser newspaper. He has worked for TVW Channel 7, Perth and also ABC TV as a State political reporter.

In 1992, he became the 7.30 Report's Presenter in WA and later

presented the ABC's Stateline program. In April 1996, he resigned from the ABC and gained ALP endorsement for new state seat of Willagee. He won the seat in December 1996.

Mr Carpenter has held the Shadow portfolios of Disability Services, Sport & Recreation, Family & Children's Services, Education and Drugs. He became Minister for Education, Sport & Recreation and Indigenous Affairs in February 2001. He became the Minister for Education and Training in June 2003. Following the Gallop Government's re-election in February 2005, he became the Minister for State Development and Energy.

Mr Carpenter said he had been well schooled for the leadership position by Dr Gallop, who shocked parliament on Monday with the announcement he was quitting to battle depression.

"I was a huge supporter of Geoff, he was an outstanding premier and to match that would be no easy feat," Mr Carpenter said.

### **Australian Defence Minister resigns**

Australian Defence Minister, Liberal Senator Robert Hill, 59, has resigned after almost a quarter of a century in Parliament and confirmed he will retire from the Senate. The Senator has been the longest serving leader of his party in the Upper House since Federation.

Robert Murray Hill was elected to the Senate for South Australia in 1980. Having spent 13 years in Opposition, he was appointed Environment Minister when the Howard Government was elected in 1996. He will serve out his final few days in the Senate in the next

session of parliament.

Prime Minister Howard said Senator Hill's exit after almost 25 years in Parliament and 13 years as Liberal Senate leader would be a "huge loss" for the Government.

Mr Hill said it was good to make a decision to leave parliament before he was forced out for other reasons.

At his farewell media conference on Friday, he said he has "no regrets." Questioned over the wisdom of Australia's involvement in the Iraq war he said, "...there was a time where we saw defence simply in terms of almost hiding behind the moat. We no longer do that."

"We go out and we look after Australia's interests and we become part of an international community that's interested in security and stability, and we're prepared to take risks to achieve those goals," he said.

The Australia Defence Association praised his efforts as defence minister, a position he has held since November, 2001. "He's easily the best defence minister of the Howard government and the best, along with (Labor's) Robert Ray since the 1970s," Defence Association spokesman Neil James said.

It's widely expected that Robert Hill will become the next Australian representative to the United Nations in New York. Senator Hill yesterday articulated a case for reform of the global body. "This Government believes in collective security, it believes in the commitments of the charter, but it would like to see the UN work efficiently and effectively," he said.

The most likely candidates for the defence portfolio are Finance Minister Nick Minchin and Health Minister Tony Abbott.

### **Ayman al-Zawahiri releases new tape**

The CIA has confirmed that a tape that surfaced today is that of Ayman al-Zawahiri.

A spokesman for the CIA said, "Following technical analysis of the tape, the CIA has assessed that it is the voice of Ayman al-Zawahiri."

The tape was posted on an internet forum that has carried Al Qaeda communiqués before.

On the tape, Zawahiri read a poem called the "martyrs of jihad". He said that he dedicates it to "Muslim brothers everywhere, to the mujahedeen brothers in Islam's fortified borderlines against the Zionist-Crusader campaign in Palestine and Iraq, Afghanistan and Chechnya and to the lions chasing the crusaders' gangs and hired hands in Afghanistan's mountains and valleys and its wounded capital, Kabul."

He then went on to say, "I am honored to present this mujahedeen poem, written by Maulai Muhibbulla al-Qandahari, who carried the pen and the sword and was known in the circles of scholars and the training camps and the battlefields of jihad."

It is still unclear as to when the tape was made exactly and it is still unclear if it has anything to do with the release of Bin Laden's tape yesterday.

On the tape, Zawahiri makes no mention of the U.S. missile attacks that killed 18 people, including

women and children, and is suspected of killing 4 terrorists last week.

A U.S. counterterrorism expert said there was "no reason to believe it was done recently. It could be something that someone pulled off the shelf and decided to post."

U.S. officials reasoned that the tapes release "might have been timed to assure his followers that Bin Laden was alive and well" just days after the U.S. air strikes.

### **U.S. rejects Bin Laden's Truce**

On Thursday, Vice President, Dick Cheney dismissed Bin Laden's truce saying that "We don't negotiate with terrorists. I think you have to destroy them."

Cheney also said that he thinks the Al Qaeda truce appeared to be a "ploy," but also added that "it is too early to draw conclusions." He also said, "I'm not sure what he's offering by way of a truce. I don't think anybody would believe him...it sounds to me like it's some kind of a ploy. This is not an organization that's ever going to sit down and sign a truce."

### **Message in bottle travels from UK to Australia**

A message in a bottle thrown into the sea by a four-year-old girl in w:England has been found 9,000 miles away in Western Australia.

Alesha Johnson threw the bottle into the water at Morecambe Bay, Lancashire last July, enclosing her Heysham address, and a picture of herself.

The note read: "If you get this message, please write back."

This week, she received a letter from a 10-year-old from Perth,

who said he had found the bottle in a local Boatyard.

Doreen Johnson, the manager of the nursery Alesha attends in Heysham, said: "We were all very excited when the letter from Australia arrived addressed to Alesha.

"We never dreamed the bottle would go that far, it's amazing."

The Australian boy, who said only that his name was Bob, wrote in his letter that he had asked his father to look up Heysham on the Internet.

The child did not enclose an address as he said he was moving house, but would write back when he had his new address: "We are in the middle of moving house and it's Christmas here but when we are settled I'll write to you again".

Nobody will know exactly how it got there but the most likely route would have been into the Atlantic, sweeping down the west coast of Africa and into the Southern Hemisphere. After rounding the Cape of Good Hope the bottle must have then crossed the Indian Ocean. Oceanographers suspect the bottle could not have travelled the whole way on its own in only six months, and it must have been caught up by a ship and transported part of the way.

"It was summertime when we threw it in the sea. All the children in class were given bottles to take home in July but Alesha's is the only one that got a reply", she said.

"I don't know what the other parents did with theirs. We went straight down to Morecambe Bay. Alesha was only 3 at the time. She could barely throw the cola bottle

beyond her feet. I just assumed it would be washed straight back and forgot all about it."

"Then recently when I went to pick her up from nursery I was told that she had had a reply from this little boy and it had made it all the way to Australia. I couldn't believe it. I was walking on air for about four days and was really proud. It's made me very happy." Ms. Matthews said that Bob had made a copy of Alesha's original note and returned it to the Time For Nursery in Heysham. He also wrote to Alesha and the family is now looking forward to learning more about him.

"I have never heard of a message in a bottle travelling so far so quickly."

Last December a message in a bottle sent from New York was washed up at Newquay, Cornwall. It had been sent 18 months earlier.

### **Whale spotted in Thames river, Central London**

15ft (4.5 meter) northern bottle-nosed whale has been spotted swimming in the river Thames in Central London, UK. The "Thames whale" managed to swim up past the Thames barrier and under many bridges, reaching as far as Chelsea before it turned around just before Albert Bridge.

TV news helicopters scrambled to provide live TV footage of the whale, and many spectators lined the banks of the river.

The whale is said to be looking healthy, although some fear that the whale may beach itself as it tried to do before rescuers forced it back into the middle of the river. Normally found in the North Atlantic, there have been sightings

of a second whale near Southend.

A vet, having examined the whale, reported that the animal was not swimming purposefully, has some damage around the head area and is losing blood from numerous cuts on its underside. It was last seen floating downstream with the current; its present whereabouts are unknown.

### **Today in History**

1879 - Zulu forces of King Cetshwayo routed British forces at the Battle of Isandlwana.

1901 - After holding the title Prince of Wales for six decades, King Edward VII became the second oldest man to ascend to the throne in British history.

1905 - Russian Revolution: Peaceful demonstrators led by Father Gapon were massacred outside the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg on Bloody Sunday.  
1973 - Roe v. Wade: The U.S. Supreme Court delivered a landmark legal decision on abortion.

1980 - Andrei Sakharov, a key architect of the Soviet hydrogen bomb and winner of the 1975 Nobel Peace Prize, was arrested in Moscow and exiled to Gorki.

### **Quote of the Day**

"Civilized men are more discourteous than savages because they know they can be impolite without having their skulls split, as a general thing." ~ Robert E. Howard

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