



Top Stories

Swan in German zoo tests positive for H5N1 virus

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FDA to move on approval of over-the-counter sale of "Plan B" birth control

The US drugs regulator has announced that it will work to approve over-the-counter sale of the emergency contraceptive pill Plan B after the confirmation of the FDA Commissioner nominee stalled at the Senate over the matter.

Featured story

Citywide strike being discussed in Buffalo, N.Y.

The Buffalo News reports that union leaders representing city employees in Buffalo, New York, met Wednesday to discuss a possible city-wide strike. Firefighters, police officers, teachers and other city employees would not show up for work if the unions support a work stoppage.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The Domesday Book, the 920-year-old census record of England under William the Conqueror, goes online. Domesday Book.
- Lord's Resistance Army second-in-command Vincent Otti declares an immediate, unilateral ceasefire in the rebel group's 20-year insurgency against the government of Uganda.
- Three Hezbollah rockets hit near the Israeli town of Hadera, 50 miles south of the Lebanese border and the deepest penetration within Israel to date.
- A senior Iranian official admits for the first time that Tehran did indeed supply long-range Zelzal-2 missiles to Hezbollah, capable of carrying a 600-kg warhead an estimated 210 km. (Haaretz)
- 3 Israeli civilians are killed and at least 50 wounded as some 140 rockets hit Israeli towns, raising to 10 the number of Israeli Arab citizens killed in the ongoing conflict.
- An Israeli air strike near Lebanon's north-eastern border with Syria has killed at least 23 people and injured 30, Lebanese officials have said.
- Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, who heads the Iranian Council of Guardians, said, "[S]upport for Hizbollah [is] a duty." Islamic Republic News Agency
- Somalia's transitional government is on the verge of collapse after 38 ministers and

Swan in German zoo tests positive for H5N1 virus

A "highly pathogenic strain" of the H5N1 Avian Flu virus has been detected in a dead Australian black swan, floating in a pond located at the Dresden Zoo in Dresden, Germany. Conflicting reports say that the swan was found on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday. The Friedrich Loeffler Institute which specializes in animal diseases confirmed the test results.

"We can confirm that this is the highly pathogenic strain," said a spokesperson for the institute.

Officials have blocked off an area of Dresden approximately 1.9 miles (3km) from the site where the swan was found and have posted observation areas at approximately 6.2 miles (10km) outside the area as a precaution.

For the moment, all birds in the zoo have been confined to their cages and viewing of birds by the public is no longer permitted. The zoo still remains open for business and cleaning efforts have been intensified. Officials have also restricted cats and dogs from roaming areas nearby. There are at least 112 different species of birds, totaling 720, located at the zoo.

In April, H5N1 was first discovered in Germany in a domestic fowl and in wild birds. The last case of H5N1 to turn up in Germany was on May 12, 2006.

East Timor, Kuwait start negotiations for investment in public works

Kuwait might finance a great number of public works in East Timor, in an investment worth 500 million to 600 million dollars, the East Timorese Prime Minister said today. José Ramos Horta leaves today for an official visit to Kuwait.

"I want to start right now the negotiations process with the Development Fund of Kuwait for the construction of great projects for East Timor's roads, bridges, harbors and airports", Ramos Horta, East Timor's Prime Minister, said.

"For a project of this magnitude, to carry throughout several years, the amount of money to be spent is about 500 million to 600 million dollars or more. We are now waiting a preliminary study made by an Indian company, paid by Kuwait", Ramos Horta added.

The East Timorese delegation is composed by the Minister of public works, Odete Victor, and the Minister of energy & mineral resources, José Teixeira.

The visit is part of an invitation by Kuwait's Prime Minister Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, and includes meetings with the Emir Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the crown prince Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed Sabah Al Salem Al Sabah and representatives of the Development Fund of Kuwait.

This is the second visit to Kuwait in two years by Ramos Horta, an country with who the East Timorese Prime Minister maintains relations with several members of the royal family and of the government.

7/11 blasts suspect held in Kashmir

An alleged member of the Kashmiri militant group Lashkar-e-Toiba has been arrested by Indian police in connection with the July 11 train bombings in Mumbai which killed 200 commuters on the city's commuter rail network.

The arrest followed a raid on a hideout in the Sanai Potha area of Surankote in the Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir(J&K) state. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Mumbai police aided by the Counter-Intelligence Wing of the J&K State Police apprehended the militant, identified as Abdul Hameed. Hamed has been taken to the Joint Interrogation Centre (JIC) in Poonch for interrogation by the Mumbai and Kashmir police forces.

Hameed was traced through an identity card provided to him by a private security agency in Mumbai he worked for, which was recovered from one of the blast sites at Matunga.

Officials say Hameed had been been deployed in Mumbai by the Lashkar-e-Toiba to establish a network in the city. Hameed had been close to Abu Usama, the "Divisional Commander" of the LeT in Poonch and is believed to have received direct instructions from the organisation's top leaders across the border in Pakistan to carry out the bombings.

After seeking a remand from the local court in Poonch, authorities will fly Hameed to Mumbai for further interrogation. Hameed has already revealed some vital information about the bombings and more arrests are likely to take place in the Baramulla and Poonch districts of the state, police say.

Pakistan and the LeT have have denied any role in the attacks, but Indian officials have said that LeT remains a prime suspect and that links between the blasts and the Kashmiri insurgency were emerging.

From the eleventh century to the Digital Age, the Domesday Book is now online

The Domesday Book, penned in the eleventh century, can now be explored online after more than twenty years of work.

The book was commissioned by William the Conqueror in 1086 to tally the amount of land and resources owned throughout England. The findings were used to calculate taxes, and the wealth of the king.

From today, anyone with an Internet connection is now able to explore the book for free. A web browser can be used to find out what life was like in the past in any English village, town or city. In addition, a person can download a copy of any page from the book for the fee of £3.50.

Commenting on the online edition, Adrian Ailes, a Domesday expert from The National Archives, said it was "a fantastic achievement". "It is important that people of all ages should be able to read and use this national treasure," he added.

The book was voted the "nation's finest treasure" in 2005, however studies have found that thirteen percent of people believe the Domesday Book to be a chapter in the Bible. Nearly two percent think the iconic document is a novel penned by Dan Brown.

The original text is currently on display at The National Archives in west London.

Katcher died of drowning, coroner says

A coroner revealed last week that Ryan Katcher, a missing Illinois student who was found dead a few days ago, had died of drowning. Peggy Johnson, Vermilion County Coroner, added that there was no evidence of criminal action surrounding his death. "There are no injuries whatsoever anywhere on Ryan's head," she said.

The body of the 19 year-old, who vanished more than five years ago, was discovered in his pickup truck at the bottom of a lake in Illinois. According to Vermilion County Sheriff Pat Hartshorn, the University of Illinois student's truck was lifted out of fifty feet of water by emergency workers who were testing new rescue equipment in the lake. Bob Huff, from the Danville/Vermilion County Emergency Management Agency, added: "For the past five and a half years we've repeatedly continued to search ponds ... It's the technology that found it this time." Mr Huff didn't say how the truck got into the water, but he did say the vehicle could have veered off the road.

Ryan's mother, who has had to deal with five agonising years of not knowing the whereabouts of her son, said after his discovery: "The sad thing is now the search is over. The good thing is Ryan's home. We've strived to search for Ryan for five and a half years. There was always hope that Ryan could walk through the door at some time."

Sheriff Pat Hartshorn says he now considers the Katcher case closed. "The five and a half years it's taken to discover Ryan has led to so many conspiracy theories and mystery novel writers and people who have bothered the family and

sometime tormented them," he said. "But the truth of the matter is it's a tragic accident that took Ryan's life."

Clear Lake in Kickapoo State Park in Oakwood had been the student's watery grave for over five years. He vanished on 5 November 2000 after one of his friends drove him home from a party at around two o'clock in the morning.

Newcastle, Australia man arrested for selling stolen jewelery online

New South Wales Police have arrested and charged a 39 year-old man from Warner's Bay in Newcastle, on the NSW Central Coast after he allegedly stole jewelery from his employer and sold it on an Internet auction site.

According to police, the man stole over \$100,000 worth of gold and diamond jewelery from a store where he worked and then sold them online. This is alleged to have occurred over a period of several months.

Police arrested the man at his workplace and found stolen items of jewelery at his home. Police charged the man with 34 counts of larceny as a servant or clerk.

James Cameron to use Weta Digital for next film

James Cameron, director of the \$2.8 billion grossing film, Titanic, has signed up special effects studio, Weta Digital of Wellington, New Zealand for his next sci-fi film, Avatar.

Weta Digital, owned by Peter Jackson, Richard Taylor and Jamie Selkirk, will provide the visual effects, of which the movie will be mostly of, excluding some action shots in the USA, for the NZ\$322

million film. The visual effects will also include performance capture animation where the actors movements are translated onto an animated character. Weta Digital is famous for this with characters Gollum in The Lord of the Rings and King Kong in King Kong modelled after actor Andy Serkis.

The reason that Cameron chose Weta Digital over other special effects studios is "Weta have proven themselves a leader in visionary effects. Along with their world-class capability comes a genuine passion to blaze new trails." Cameron said.

Cameron also added that "We may end up with stars in Avatar but it's not a requirement."

The Avatar film is a movie about a war veteran that is fighting aliens on other planets. The movie will be launched in 2008.

Today in History

642 - Penda of Mercia defeated and killed Oswald of Northumbria in the Battle of Maserfield, becoming the most powerful of the Anglo-Saxon rulers of the time.

1100 - Henry I was crowned King of England in Westminster Abbey.

1858 - Cyrus West Field and colleagues completed the first transatlantic telegraph cable.

1861 - The U.S. government issued its first income tax: 3% of all incomes over 800 dollars (later rescinded in 1872).

1995 - Operation Storm: Croatian forces recovered the town of Knin from the Republic of Serbian Krajina.

August 05 is Independence Day in Burkina Faso (1960), Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving Day in Croatia.

Quote of the Day

"Music I heard with you was more than music, and bread I broke with you was more than bread..."
~ Conrad Aiken

Word of the Day

whippersnapper; n

1. A young and cheeky or annoyingly presumptuous person.

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+1-866-653-4265
(toll-free in the U.S.)
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(outside the U.S.)
+44-871-218-6397
(U.K. / Europe)

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