



Top Stories

Somalia in danger of famine



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Heavy violence, drought, and soaring food prices mean that half of the population of the African

country of Somalia is in immediate need of food aid in order to prevent a famine, according to a new study. The crisis has been compared to the 1992 Somalia famine, in which between 202,000 and 238,000 people died of starvation.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Attacks at the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel and several other locations in Mumbai, India, kill 183 people and injure hundreds.
- The people of Greenland pass a referendum regarding greater autonomy from Denmark.

Somalia in danger of famine

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devastating impact on the broader population," said FSAU's chief technical advisor, Cindy Holleman.

Alexandre Liebeskind, The International Red Cross's East African division head, said that this crisis is comparable to the 1992 Somalia famine, in which between 202,000 and 238,000 people died of starvation. The Red Cross has called for the country's borders to be opened, and for its residents to be allowed to cross and flee from the impending disaster.

Congressional panel concludes Gulf War Syndrome a legitimate condition

A study by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs presented to a Congressional panel on November 17, has confirmed that Gulf War Syndrome is a legitimate illness contracted by soldiers who took pyridostigmine bromide pills in order to counter the effects of nerve gas during the First Gulf War in Iraq. Several other factors likely contributed to Gulf War Syndrome, including excessive exposure to pesticides, mainly Permethrin and DEET, and chemical weapons residue caused by the American demolition of the Iraqi munitions depot in Khamisiyah.

The report estimates that about 1 out of every 4 veterans of the Gulf War are affected by this illness; this could mean anywhere between 175,000 and 210,000 soldiers are affected by the syndrome. The report also concluded that veterans exposed

Wikipedia Current Events

In the 2008 Canadian parliamentary dispute, Governor-General Michaëlle Jean prorogues the Canadian Parliament until January 26, 2009, at the request of Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The move was to avoid a confidence vote, versus a coalition government.

- In the Thai political crisis, the Constitutional Court dissolves three parties in the ruling coalition, and Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat resigns.
- A cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe spreads, with hundreds dead and over 10,000 people infected since August 2008.
- Rioting over disputed election results kills more than 381 people and injures hundreds in Jos, Nigeria.

Every sixth child under the age of five is acutely malnourished, and three and a quarter million people are in need of immediate aid, a number 77% higher than last year, according to the Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU), which is based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Few aid agencies are able to operate in Somalia, due mainly to the high levels of violence there: almost one hundred ships being seized by pirates in Somali waters this year, and 23 aid workers have been killed in the country, with a further 18 abducted, in 2008 alone. Most international humanitarian staff have been forced to leave the country, and even Somali staff are finding it hard to function.

"The escalating conflict, civil insecurity, and instability in Somalia is now fueling an economic crisis that is beginning to have a wider and more

to the toxins spread by the destruction of the munitions depot have died of brain cancer at double the rate of other Gulf War veterans. Other problems associated with the condition are: fatigue, headaches, joint pain, rashes, breathing difficulty, forgetfulness, circulation problems, and cardiac troubles.

Gulf War Syndrome has been the focal point of veterans rights groups since the illness first became noticed in the early 1990s. The United States government claimed that the illness was merely psychological trauma from war misinterpreted as an illness, and veterans could not receive medical coverage for the illness.

"I feel vindicated, but I'm angry. This is so long overdue," said Denise Nichols, an advocate for veterans' rights and a nurse who served during Operation Desert Storm. The National Gulf Veterans and Families Association (NGVFA) said that many veterans committed suicide after learning that the government did not recognize their illness as real.

Lashkar-e-Toiba implicated in Mumbai attacks

Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), a militant Islamic fundamentalist group based in Pakistan, has been implicated in last week's Mumbai attacks in India.

Rakesh Maria, a commissioner with the Mumbai Police, said that the sole surviving attacker, whom he identified as Mohammed Ajmal Kasab, has admitted spending three months in a Lashkar-e-Toiba camp preparing the attacks. Kasab, who is reported to be 21 years old, told police that he spent a total of eighteen months training at various LeT camps.

Meanwhile, John Michael McConnell, the United States Director of National Intelligence, indirectly implicated LeT. In a speech at Harvard University, he said that the same group responsible for the 2006 Mumbai train bombings was behind last week's attacks. LeT has also been blamed for the attack on the Parliament of India in late 2001

"The same group that we believe is responsible for Mumbai had a similar attack in 2006 on a train and killed a similar number of people," said McConnell without naming LeT. "If you examine the groups we think are responsible, the philosophical underpinnings are very similar to what Al-Qaeda puts out as their view of how the world should be. It is a continuation."

Commissioner Maria said that the training took place in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan, near the disputed Kashmir region. Kasab received very specific instructions, according to Maria.

Toronto, Canada bans bottled water in city facilities

On December 2, the Toronto city council voted in favor of banning the sales and distribution of bottled water on city property. The council also agreed to provide public drinking fountains on their properties, as well as on a measure that would make shoppers pay at least five Canadian cents for plastic grocery bags and force business owners to offer reusable bags and carry-out containers.

"Toronto's decision to ban the bottle and turn on the tap sends a clear message that bottled water's 15 minutes are up," said Polaris Institute's campaign coordinator, Joe Cressy.

All of the city's facilities should be following the water ban by 2011, while businesses will have to implement their bag fees by 2010. Toronto has become the largest city in the world to ban bottled water on government property.

Patrick Swayze denies reports that he is near death

On Tuesday, American actor, Patrick Swayze, who suffers from pancreatic cancer, denied reports that he was near death. American tabloid National Inquirer reported on November 28 that Swayze's cancer had spread to his liver and that he was preparing for his death.

"The only thorn in my side being that many tabloids have been consistently reporting lies and false information about me and those close to me," said Swayze in a statement to the press who also added that he knows he is in "the fight for his life," but that it is a fight that he "is winning."

"I'm one of the lucky few that responds well to treatment," added Swayze.

Swayze has starred in over a dozen films, including the 1987 hit film Dirty Dancing.

Today in History

- 1360 - The French Franc is created.
- 1746 - Revolt in Genoa against the Spanish rule.
- 1831 - Former US President John Quincy Adams takes his seat in the House of Representatives.
- 1892 - Sir John Thompson becomes the fourth Prime Minister of Canada.
- 1957 - Sukarno expels all Dutch people from Indonesia.

Quote of the Day

Is there any religion whose followers can be pointed to as distinctly more amiable and trustworthy than those of any other? If so, this should be enough. I find the nicest and best people generally profess no religion at all, but are ready to like the best men of all religions. ~

Samuel Butler

Word of the Day

vault v

1. To jump or leap over (something).

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