



Top Stories

US will remove 'terror' tag on North Korea

President George W. Bush announced that the US will remove North Korea from a list of countries seen as 'sponsoring terrorism'. The announcement was made as a 'reward' to North Korea for turning over all documents related to its controversial nuclear program.



US Supreme Court rules DC gun ban unconstitutional

The US Supreme Court ruled Thursday in a 5-4 decision that a Washington, D.C. ban of personal firearms possession is unconstitutional. The court found that the Constitution "protects an individual right to possess a firearm unconnected with service in a militia, and to use that arm for traditionally lawful purposes, such as self-defense within the home."

Mugabe says he's open to talks with Zimbabwe opposition

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe says he is open to discussion with the Movement for Democratic Change, the opposition party that has decided to boycott what they have called a "sham election".

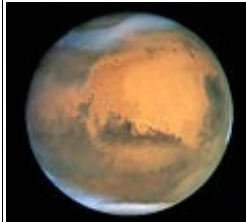


Top Stories

Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai says he will not participate in talks held after the election, as he doesn't want to negotiate with an "illegitimate leader".

Asteroid slammed into Mars' northern hemisphere

An asteroid the size of Pluto slammed into the Northern hemisphere of Mars creating the Borealis basin, based on the latest survey of NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter and Mars Global Surveyor.



Wikipedia Current Events

Vinicio Gomez, Guatemala's Interior Minister, dies in a plane crash in central Guatemala together with his deputy Edgar Hernadez another passenger and the pilot.

- Richard Scruggs, a high-profile United States lawyer known for his lawsuits against the tobacco, pharmaceutical and construction industries, is sentenced to five years jail for conspiracy to bribe a judge.
- The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are struck by an earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale.
- North Korea destroys the cooling tower of the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center as a

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sign of its commitment to ending its nuclear weapons program.

- Zimbabweans go to the polls for a runoff election with the President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe expected to be reelected following the withdrawal of Morgan Tsvangirai of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change.
- Bill Gates, the co-founder of Microsoft, finishes work at the company before starting fulltime philanthropic work for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- The discovery that the sunken Philippines ferry MV Princess of the Stars was carrying 10,000 kilos of the dangerous pesticide endosulfan leads to the temporary cessation of the recovery of the bodies on board.

Divers safe from pesticide from MV Princess of the Stars

Divers from the Philippine Coast Guard and Navy were given a clean bill of health from any effects from the toxic waters surrounding the sunken passenger ferry, MV Princess of the Stars off the coast of Romblon province.

Fifty six diving personnel tasked to retrieve bodies of passengers trapped inside the ferry will undergo more tests on Saturday for any ill effects from fertilizers that are suspected to have leaked in the cargo hold of the ferry.

Retrieval operations for the bodies of passengers were suspended on

Friday when the cargo manifest of the ship showed large quantities of a highly toxic fertilizer called endosulfan.

Authorities feared that the fertilizers could have contaminated the waters around the sunken ferry and could prove fatal to the diving crew.

Divers started to complain on Thursday of experiencing skin irritation after surfacing.

The Philippines government slammed the ferry's owners for not immediately divulging the contents of the ferry's cargo hold and threatened to add other possible criminal charges against the owners.

Environment officials are concerned that the fertilizer could cause a severe damage to the delicate aquatic environment around Romblon province.

Gordon Brown's troubled first year

A year since taking up residence at No. 10 Downing street, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and his Labour Party is already in trouble after losing a local election, finishing fifth after previously winless political parties and popularity rating at an all time low.

Health Minister Ben Bradshaw described the party's lost to the British National Party and to the Greens as a, "terrible lost," and blamed the economic conditions such as rising food and fuel costs as factors that dampens the Labour Party's appeal with the public.

Conservative Party leader David Cameron countered Bradshaw's opinion by saying, Mr. Brown was to blame for the economic

distress. Cameroon cited the Prime Minister's ten years of handling the economy as minister prior to assuming office when Tony Blair stepped down last year.

The by-elections in Henley was won by Tory John Howell with a majority of over 10,000 votes, defeating by a large margin the Liberal Democrats who were presumed to have a close edge of beating both Conservative and Labour. Labour threw in their support with Richard McKenzie who only garnered 3% of the votes behind the BNP and Greens.

Henley called for an election when its representative Boris Johnson was elected Lord Mayor of the City of London.

Prime Minister of Thailand survives no-confidence vote

Thailand's Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej and his cabinet survived a bitter no-confidence vote called by fellow members of parliament. The opposition called for a no confidence vote over allegations of economic mismanagement, and Samak's alleged disregard for Thai sovereignty. The final vote saw 280 votes against the motion, and 162 cast as no-confidence.

Sharply criticism was levelled at the Minister of Commerce due to the sharp increase in prices of rice in the country; this despite the fact Thailand is a leading exporter of rice. Prices of fuel have inflicted a crippling blow to the Thai economy, something which is also blamed on Samak's leadership.

The opposition, supported by thousands of street protesters, slammed the PM's decision to enter into an early agreement with neighbour Cambodia over an ancient temple. Protesters claimed

that Samak gave up a portion of Thai land with historical significance.

Another severely criticized cabinet minister was Finance Minister Surapong Subewonglee. He denied reports that there will be a cabinet reshuffle even after their administration survived the parliamentary challenge.

Protesters who started to camp outside Government House, the official residence of the Thai Prime Minister pledged to remain and will press on for Mr. Samak's resignation.

Samak was elected last December 2007 after months of a political transition from a coup that removed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Protesters accused Mr. Samak of interfering in the investigation involving Thaksin's corruption and abuse of power.

Indonesian military plane disappears

A Casa-212 aircraft owned by the Indonesian air force disappeared while on a flight from the capital Jakarta to Bogor in West Java Friday morning.

The plane was carrying 12 Indonesian military personnel and 6 civilians including a British, Singaporean and Indian national.

The plane was tasked to test a new digital camera designed to conduct aerial mapping and topography.

The aircraft was last sighted on radar in the Salak mountain region on the main island of Java, 90 kilometers (60 miles) southeast of the Indonesian capital.

The Indonesian military has deployed a search and rescue team in the area.

Authorities fear that the aircraft crashed in a densely forested area making any rescue difficult.

Air Force spokesman Chaeruddin Ray said the region was covered in thick fog and in a rough terrain.

Three planes and forty people were deployed into the region to look for the downed plane.

Indonesia has been plagued with several plane accidents resulting in a ban on the entry of Indonesian airlines into European airports. This is the second incident in Indonesian aviation involving a Casa-212. In January of 2008, a similar plane model owned by a private company also crashed.

The Casa-212 is a design by Spanish avionics company Construcciones Aeronáuticas, S.A., a turbo-prop plan designed for a short take-off and landing.

Microsoft without Bill Gates at the helm

After 33 years of managing software giant Microsoft, founder Bill Gates will retire from day-to-day management today.

Gates will retain the title of Chairman but without executive functions and will only report for work once a week.

The man who took a gut feel of seeing personal computers in every household three decades and each will require a stable operating system will now pursue philanthropic activities under the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Microsoft did not announce any major event to mark the day when

its founder steps down but internal private activities were scheduled to take place at the company's headquarters at Redmond, Washington.

In the year 2000, the functions of being Chief Executive of Microsoft was turned over to long-time partner Steve Ballmer.

As Gates leaves day-to-day operations, two people will assume the his two vital duties. Craig Mundie will handle the company's long-term planning while Ray Ozzie will handle the operations.

Gates will focus more on helping out in causes he chooses through his foundation that is endowed with \$38.7 billion and will soon gain more funds with his personal wealth and an endowment from billionaire William Buffet.

Bill Gates founded Microsoft in 1975 and from then has dominated the market for operating systems in every personal computer. Gates managed close to 78,000 employees in 103 countries all over the world.

In recent months, Microsoft's dominance has been threatened by Google which dominates the on-line industry and has business models that will soon eat up into Microsoft's core software businesses.

Clinton-Obama calls for Unity

Setting aside their bitter rivalry for the Democratic nomination for President, New York senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and Illinois senator and presumptive Democratic presidential candidate went up on stage together to with a theme of "unity" to party supporters in a small town called Unity in New Hampshire.

Thousands of supporters from both camps gathered together, cheering both candidates as the two complimented each other and acted like team mates.

Clinton described their rivalry as standing "toe-to-toe," and now they stand, "shoulder-to-shoulder." The former First Lady also appealed to her supporters who might switch to Republican candidate John McCain to stay on and support Obama and the party's bid to re-gain control of the White House.

Clinton rallied the Democrats to form, " an unstoppable force for change we can all believe in."

For the part of Mr. Obama, he described Mrs. Clinton and her husband, former president Bill Clinton as pillars of the party and both as a team are needed to bring back unity in the party and in America.

North Korea destroys nuclear cooling tower

A CNN producer reported that the North Korean authorities did indeed destroy the cooling tower of the Yongbyong nuclear facility and admitted on global television that they did extract plutonium in the said facility to build nuclear weapons.

Five television networks from countries party to the six-nation talks that constructively engaged North Korea to disengage in its nuclear weapons program were invited into the country to cover and televise the destruction of the cooling towers.

Specialists in nuclear science confirmed that the implosion of the cooling tower will prevent North Korean from processing plutonium

for a about year. It will take at least twelve months to rebuild the cooling tower if the North Koreans intend to pursue its nuclear weapons building program.

The destruction of the cooling tower is seen as a gesture of the Pyongyang leadership to finally comply to pressures coming from the West, particularly the United States for the communist run government to end pursuing its nuclear weapons program.

The facilities at Yongbyong was shuttered July of last year as part of talks with dialog partners; China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States.

The cooling tower is approximately 20 meters in height and has been in operation since March 2003 until July of last year. The destruction of the tower is viewed as a symbolic gesture since the entire facility has been scheduled for scrapping.

On Thursday, North Korea turned over to China a 60-page document confirming the country's capability to control the power of plutonium since the program was started in 1986.

In the said document, Pyongyang confirmed that their research resulted in the extraction of 40 kilograms of enriched plutonium, enough to produce at least seven nuclear warheads.

An actual accounting of North Korea's possession of live nuke weapons was not included in the report presented to China and remains as a speculation.

Also missing were reports and confirmation of North Korea's assistance to Syria in the later's own nuclear weapons program as

well as reports of Pyongyang's uranium enrichment program.

Asteroid slammed into Mars' northern hemisphere

An asteroid the size of Pluto slammed into the Northern hemisphere of Mars creating the Borealis basin, based on the latest survey of NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter and Mars Global Surveyor.

The report released by the magazine Nature, explains the 1984 observation of the unusual shape of Mars terrain in the northern hemisphere against the southern hemisphere.

An asteroid with a body of 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) smashed into the planet some 3.9 billion years ago, creating the vast Borealis basin measuring 8,500km (5,300 miles) by 10,600km (6,600 miles) across and occupies nearly 40 per cent of the Martian surface.

The new data is said to have convinced a lot of scientists on the impact scenario but there will still be a need to prove the theory further.

US claims to have killed al-Qaida in Iraq leader

The United States claim to have killed the head of al-Qaida in Iraq along with two other insurgents in a Tuesday gun battle in Mosul. The man, who an official military statement identified only by his nickname of 'Abu Khalaf', was described by US forces as the "emir" of terror in Mosul, al-Qaida's last Iraqi stronghold.

The statement identified one of the others by the nickname of 'Abu Khalud' and said he was a Syrian, while the third was said to be an unnamed woman shot will attempting to detonate an

explosive belt attached to a killed colleague.

The States also claim that Khalaf had been one of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's deputies. Al-Zarqawi, the former leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, was killed by a US air strike in 2006 in Diyala.

Khalaf is said by the US military to have arranged many attacks in Iraq. All three militants were shot during a raid on a building by US forces. The move is part of an effort to drive al-Qaida from Mosul. The programme began last month.

BBC spends £3.4m on sell-off

Newspaper The Guardian reports today that the sale of the BBC subsidiary BBC Resources Ltd., has cost £3.4m in consultancy fees — over £1m more than the £2.3m trading profit the commercial division is estimated to have made for the last financial year. Details of the failed privatisation were released by the BBC following a freedom of information request, and prior to publication of its annual report on July 8.

Fourteen months after advisers were appointed to try to sell BBC Resources Ltd., only one of the three main business units has been sold — its Outside Broadcast division to Satellite Information Services Limited (SIS), for an estimated £20m. On March 7, 2008 it was also announced that the studios operation would remain in BBC ownership and in early June, the fate of the third business was put on hold with the BBC stating that "like Studios, Post Production will remain within BBC Resources, which will continue to operate as a wholly-owned commercial subsidiary of the BBC."

BBC Resources Ltd. made an

operating profit of £6.1m for 2005-06, down from £7.4m the year before, with the BBC accounting for 83.3% of its turnover, down from 87.4% for 2004-05. The published figure for 2006-07 was £5.2 million — with BBC business at 80% of turnover.

BECTU Assistant General Secretary Luke Crawley is quoted as saying: "It's fairly outrageous that around half the profit of the company (for 2006-07) has been spent trying to sell it. It's an inordinate amount of money. The BBC was promised big returns if it sold BBC Resources but it's only managed to sell outside broadcasts and we do not know how much it made out of that. We think the £3.4m is a poor investment."

Background to the Resources sale
The Resources business-to-business unit was formed in 1998 to operate television studios, post-production and outside broadcast facilities for its parent shareholding company, the BBC. It does not own any studios or premises, its assets being equipment and staff.

Advertised for sale on August 16, 2007 in the Financial Times, The Times and Broadcast, the disposal — led by Ernst & Young — invited expressions of interest for the whole division or for each of its three operations separately.

BBC Resources was the first of the BBC's commercial business-to-business divisions to be set up as a limited company and the last to be sold, the BBC having previously divested itself of BBC Technology and BBC Broadcast. BBC Enterprises, now known as BBC Worldwide, remained in-house.

It had been intended to float Resources back in 2005, but this

was postponed for two years following strike action and ACAS talks in June 2005 — the BBC giving an undertaking that there would be no preparations made to sell the company until January 2007, and no sale allowed before July 2007.

BBC Costume and Wigs (part of BBC Studios) ceased trading in February 2008 after failed attempts to sell this business unit as a going concern — with the costumes sold in March 2008 to Angels The Costumiers and the collection of wigs and hairpieces sold separately to The Wig Store (a management buy-out put together by Philippa Devon and Alan Godleman).

On April 1, 2008, BBC Outside Broadcasts became the property of SIS.

Proton rocket launches Prognoz satellite

At 23:59 GMT yesterday, a Russian Proton rocket, with a Block DM-2 upper stage, launched from Site 81/24 at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, placing a Prognoz satellite for the Russian Ministry of Defence into a geosynchronous orbit. Prognoz satellites are used for missile detection, as a defence against nuclear attacks.

The Proton-K configuration was used for this launch. The Proton-K, also known as the Proton 8K72K, is an old configuration, which is out of production. It is believed that three more Proton-K rockets are in storage. The modernised Proton-M, which will replace it, has been in use for commercial launches for several years, and made its first military launch last December.

This is the first launch of a Proton

since a failure in April, which left the AMC-14 satellite stranded in a useless orbit. The Briz-M upper stage, whose malfunction resulted in the launch failure, was not used in today's launch, with an older Block DM stage being flown instead. The Briz-M has been cleared for return to flight, and was not used on this mission due to payload requirements, rather than reliability concerns. AMC-14 has now been sold to a new company, and is now in the process of raising itself into a geosynchronous orbit, where it will operate in a limited capacity for a fraction of its planned lifetime.

The launch is the 33rd of 2008, and the 335th flight of a Proton rocket. The next Proton launch is currently planned for July, when a Proton-M with a Block DM-2 upper stage will launch three GLONASS navigation satellites.

Obama gives check to Clinton campaign

The process of reconciliation and unifying the Democratic party started at the ballroom of the Mayflower hotel in Washington, DC with presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama and his wife both individually issuing a check amounting to \$2,300 to the Hillary Clinton for President committee.

New York Senator and former First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton introduced to her fund contributors Illinois Senator Barack Obama as the first step of unifying the two sides who quite recently bitterly fought over winning the Democratic party's nomination.

Hillary Clinton appealed to her supporters to help Barack Obama and pledged that she will personally help in defeating the presidential plans of Republican

presumptive Presidential candidate, Arizona senator John McCain.

1. To parade (something); to display (something) with ostentation.

Mrs. Clinton asked for nothing in exchange for her support of Obama, but Obama instead countered with a gesture of contributing to Mrs. Clinton campaign that is now burdened by debt. Obama signaled his own contributors to help Clinton pay off the debt incurred by her campaign.

Today in History

1841 – Giselle, a ballet by French composer Adolphe Adam, was first performed at the Théâtre de l'Académie Royale de Musique in Paris.

1880 – Police captured Australian bank robber and bushranger Ned Kelly after a gun battle in Glenrowan, Victoria.

1914 – Yugoslav nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria during a motorcade in Sarajevo, sparking the outbreak of World War I.

1956 – Workers demanding better conditions held massive protests in Poznań, Poland, but were violently repressed by the following day by 400 tanks and 10,000 soldiers of Ludowe Wojsko Polskie and Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego.

1969 – In response to a police raid at the Stonewall Inn in New York City, groups of gay and transgender people began to riot against New York City Police officers, a watershed event for the worldwide gay rights movement. June 28 is Vidovdan in Serbia

Quote of the Day

Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains.
~ Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Word of the Day

flaunt v

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