



Top Stories

East Timor: President Gusmão takes emergency powers to quell unrest

President Xanana Gusmão has taken special security powers in a bid to quell the violence raging in East Timor.

Iraq to investigate Haditha "massacre"

The Iraqi government is to launch a formal investigation into claims American soldiers murdered civilians in the Iraqi town of Haditha in November 2005.

Featured story

Keep your eyes peeled for cosmic debris: Andrew Westphal about Stardust@home

Instead of distributed computing, Stardust@home will use "distributed eyeballs" to discover interstellar dust. Project leader Andrew Westphal answers our questions about this new online volunteer project.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Ohio Republican Thomas Noe pleads guilty to illegally directing \$50,000 into the 2004 re-election campaign of President George W. Bush.
- The US is expected to change its policies regarding Iran and its nuclear program. Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. Secretary of State said that the USA may join the European-led talks on the Iranian nuclear program.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Katie Couric, 15-year host of NBC's The Today Show leaves her position after she decided to go to CBS Evening News, replacing temporary anchor Bob Schieffer. The Today Show is the most profitable television show in TV history by advertising revenue. Katie Couric is the longest serving anchor on the Today Show.
- The Pirate Bay, is closed when servers located in Stockholm, Sweden, are confiscated in a police raid initiated by the Swedish anti-piracy bureau. Massive media-discussion and criticism against the bureau's methods and the acts of the Swedish police follows, since at least 20 non-piracy sites are taken down at the same time - including the website of Piratpartiet, a Swedish political party aimed to run in the 2006 elections.

Thousands protest tuition in Gießen, Germany

Up to 7,000 people took to the streets in Gießen today, protesting the planned introduction of tuition fees at Hessian universities.

Beginning at 1pm CEST (1100 UTC), students, pupils and ordinary citizens marched through much of downtown Gießen, accompanied by a massive police presence, in the largest demonstration the city has seen in years. They occupied the office of the Regierungsbezirk and the city

office.

From 4 to 7pm, at least 200 people also blocked the Berliner Platz, the most important inner city crossing, bringing most of the downtown bus and car traffic to a standstill. The crowd dispersed after the police threatend several times to clear the crossing by force.

Students unions from all parts of Hesse called for the joint demonstration in Gießen.

In July, the Hessian state legislature is due to pass a bill that would require all undergraduate students to pay a tuition fee of 500€ per semester; graduate students could be charged up to 1,500€.

OIE: China, Indonesia and Africa "under-reporting" human and animal Bird Flu cases

The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization, both part of the United Nations, have stated that some countries, particularly China, Indonesia and some countries in Africa are "under-reporting" the number of human cases of the deadly H5N1 Avian Flu (Bird Flu) virus, but also said that the countries are not hiding them "deliberately."

"We know that some countries might be under-reporting ... most do not do it deliberately. We are concerned about China and Indonesia and Africa because the

virus seems to be so widespread that we could not get all the information. It is difficult to know about each individual outbreak in a back yard," said Doctor Christianne Bruschke, in Rome, Italy on Wednesday and who is head of the OIE's Bird Flu taskforce.

Bruschke also said that farmers lack the education they need on the virus and need to be reimbursed financially for any education they need citing that the "richer nations" should help fund the education they need and that lack of veterinary clinics, distance to them, and time are also to blame for the under-reporting.

In Africa, "farmers will probably not report sick animals," said Bruschke.

"Their veterinary services are very weak and many countries do not have laboratory facilities - we have all the ingredients there that could lead to under-reporting," she added.

Bruschke also said that Indonesia may not be reporting all human and or animal cases also stating that the virus is "permenantly infecteing poultry" in the country which makes it increasingly difficult for anyone to report outbreaks.

"I think it could be the case because in certain regions the virus is getting more or less endemic, so in regions like Java, they might not report every single outbreak anymore," said Bruschke.

According to Bruschke, China is "cooperating" but she also said that "[China] is a very big country" and that there are cases of infections in wild birds.

"We sometimes see the outbreaks in wild animals - they will not always detect them. There is also not a very good compensation scheme in place so we feel there might be under-reporting," said Bruschke.

Rutte elected leader of the VVD

Mark Rutte has been elected leader of the Dutch People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). In a close internal election, the junior minister for Education beat the minister for Immigration and Integration Rita Verdonk and backbencher Jelleke Veenendaal.

On 31 May 2006, the party's president Jan van Zanen announced the result, which was broadcast live on Dutch television. He announced that 28,788 people voted in this election, that is 74% of the eligible VVD members. They voted mostly by telephone and via the Internet. Mark Rutte obtained 51.5%, leaving Rita Verdonk second, with 45.5% of the vote. Jelleke Veenendaal obtained 3.0% of the vote.

Mark Rutte is the current junior minister for Education, Culture and Science. He was the first to put forth his candidacy and he was backed by the VVD leadership and the party board. After studying history and leading the VVD youth (JOVD) Rutte became manager for Unilever. In 2002 he became junior minister for Social Affairs and Employment, after a cabinet reshuffle he became junior minister of the ministry for Education, Culture and Science. Rutte is generally perceived to stand on the progressive side within the VVD. He promised "to make the VVD a party for everyone and not just of the elite". His youthful and charismatic appearance have been likened to

the successful leader of the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA) Wouter Bos. It is generally expected that Rutte will stand down as junior minister and return to his seat in parliament.

The elections were called after the 2006 municipal elections. Jozias van Aartsen, who led the VVD until after the elections, stepped down as political leader of the VVD, after his party performed particularly bad in those elections.

The Pirate Bay and Piratbyrån raided

A raid involving 50 members of the Swedish National Criminal Police has taken the servers of The Pirate Bay and Piratbyrån (the Pirate Bureau) — a Swedish lobby organisation that originally developed The Pirate Bay — into custody. The search warrant was given on grounds of alleged copyright violation and assisting copyright violation. This move comes as a bit of a surprise, as the legality of the site has been under public debate for over three years, with the operators frequently issuing public press releases.

WiredFire, in an interview with Rickard Falkvinge, head of the Swedish Pirate Party, is reporting that police arrested three staff members, ultimately taking only two into custody. The Associated Press, however, is reporting that Ulf Goranzon, a police spokesman, is claiming that none were arrested, they were just under suspicion of violating copyright law.

The site operators speculate that the police wish to test the legality of the operation. Purportedly, this move comes due to political pressure exerted by American media corporations. Swedish

public broadcaster Sveriges Television has backed this claim. Rickard Falkvinge has stated that the Svenska antipiratbyrå (Swedish Anti-Piracy Bureau) has admitted to being behind the police action, and he suspects the IFPI is also involved. Tobias Andersson, of Piratbyrå agrees, claiming that The Antipiratbyrå "has clearly misled the police" and "has fooled the police into shutting down its antagonists, the Piratbyrå. The Antipiratbyrå previously gained notoriety by paying an infiltrator to plant copyrighted material on the Swedish ISP Bahnhof's servers.

Dan Glickman, CEO of the Motion Picture Association of America has applauded the move, citing it as a reminder that "there are no safe harbors for copyright thieves". Kori Bernards, an MPAA representative, claimed The Pirate Bay to be "one of our No. 1 targets." The MPAA allege that The Pirate Bay made available over 150 thousand files, including summer blockbusters such as "Mission: Impossible III" and "X-Men 3".

However, The Pirate Bay claimed that as they only host .torrent files and not copyrighted material, they are not in contravention of copyright laws. The Pirate Bay also served as a distribution point for freely-licensed material such as some Linux distributions and independent music and film.

The Pirate Bay claims to be the world's largest Bittorrent tracker.

In the raid, several private servers unconnected to The Pirate Bay were also taken by the police. Some have claimed that there is no legal basis for these seizures.

Tourist bus attacked by

militants in Kashmir

Terrorists in Kashmir threw a grenade at a tourist bus in the heart of Srinagar, killing one person and injuring 21 others. Eyewitnesses say that the vehicle, in which were travelling tourists from West Bengal was attacked near the Dal Gate. The injured are being treated at the Kashmir Institute for Medical Sciences.

No terrorist outfit has yet claimed responsibility for this attack, which is the fourth incident this week. This is also the second time tourists were the targets. The number of militant attacks this month has increased after Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh decided to hold a round table conference with the moderate parties in Kashmir.

State Tourism Director Farooq Ahmed Shah condemned the attack saying, "It is a very unfortunate incident and we are trying our level best to improve the situation. However, it is unfair to say that tourists are unsafe in the Valley. Such incidents take place all over the world.". Tour operators however are concerned that attacks such as this one will result in customers calling off trips to Kashmir.

Yangtze river in China polluted

The Yangtze River, the third longest river in the world, is polluted. It supplies water to 186 cities. The river takes 40% of China's waste, 80% of which is untreated. It is the only source of drinking water to Shanghai, a city with 20 million people.

"Many officials think the pollution is nothing for the Yangtze, but the pollution is actually very serious," said Yuan Aiguo, a professor with the China University of Geosciences.

In China 300 million people do not have access to drinkable water. Clean up campaigns have made limited progress because of inconsistent law enforcement.

The Yangtze is part of a plan to move 45 billion litres of water by 2050 to the north via canals. Environmentalists fear the water may not be safe to drink.

The pollution has caused a fall in the biodiversity of the Yangtze. Animal species have fallen from 126 in the mid 80s to 52 in 2002.

Third GayFest begins in Bucharest

The third edition of Bucharest's gay pride festival, GayFest, opened yesterday, May 30. The festival, which will last until June 4, consists of a series of LGBT cultural events, including film screenings, theatre and photographic exhibitions, as well as public debates about LGBT issues, and a gay pride parade on June 3, expected to attract hundreds of people. GayFest is organised by ACCEPT, Romania's largest LGBT organisation, and supported by the Romanian Government and Ministry of Health, as well as various private organisations.

The main theme of the third GayFest is the legalisation of same-sex civil unions and marriages in Romania. Florin Buhuceanu, the executive manager of ACCEPT, said that, "The time has come for Romania to acknowledge the rights of all its citizens. Guaranteeing the equality of rights through the recognition of gay marriage... is just a step forward." He added that, "The [GayFest] activities mark the most focused drive yet to change opinions on gay marriage in Romania." Same-sex couples

currently have no legal recognition in Romania. Legalisation of either civil unions or marriage between people of the same sex would be possible through an amendment of the Family Code, if approved by a majority in parliament.

Last year's GayFest, which included the country's first gay pride parade, attracted a significant amount of controversy from right-wing groups, as well as the Romanian Orthodox Church. It was initially not given authorisation from the Bucharest City Hall, which claimed that it could not guarantee its security. Approval was, however, later given due to pressure from the Romanian President, Traian Băsescu and the Justice Minister, Monica Macovei, both of whom support LGBT rights.

Unlike recent gay pride parades in Poland and Moscow, which ended in violence and were actively opposed by government officials, this year's Bucharest GayFest parade was authorised by the City Hall without controversy, even though the Romanian Orthodox Church is once again expected to protest its organisation. In the past few years, Romania has made significant progress in its gay rights record, introducing an anti-discrimination law in 2000 that includes sexual orientation, and repealing its last anti-gay law, Article 200 of the Penal Code, in 2001.

French 'iPod bill' seeks digital music player interoperability

Legislation pending in the French Parliament would require that music purchased online for use on digital music players be compatible across all players. It has become popularly known in France as the "iPod bill," after the popular music player made by

Apple Computer, and could pit France against Apple and other distributors of online music.

The National Assembly (lower house) and Senate (upper house) have passed two separate versions of the legislation. Both would reduce the penalties for piracy, require software companies to provide details on how their programs work, and create an agency that would have jurisdiction over digital copyright issues, including how often music can be legally copied by a customer for personal use and ensuring compatibility across devices.

Unlike the Assembly version, the Senate version does not contain provisions that would require manufacturers such as Apple and Sony to open all music sold on their platforms to work on players other than their own. Currently, the stores for Apple and Sony sell music only for use on their own players. Critics of the changes say that the Senate's changes would defeat the purpose of the bill.

The two versions must now be reconciled in conference committee, a process that could take months.

Speaking in support of the bill, Assembly member Christian Paul said, "We oppose the idea that the seller of a song or any kind of work can impose on the consumer the way to read it, forever, and especially in the consumer's home. Can we allow a couple of vendors to establish monopolies tightly controlling their clients and excluding competition?"

Christian Vanneste, the National Assembly sponsor of the iPod bill, said, "In France, there are two distinct mentalities. On one side is

the backwards left, which is anti-American, and on the other is the right, which thinks that the U.S.A. shouldn't be the only one with good ideas, and who want to compete with them."

After the National Assembly's vote in March, Apple denounced the measure as "state-sponsored piracy." They refused to comment on the legislation after the Senate's vote on May 10.

Francisco Mingorance, European policy director for the Business Software Alliance, said that the Assembly's proposal is "about ripping off technology from those who developed it and putting it in the public domain." The Business Software Alliance represents Apple, Dell, Microsoft Corp., Hewlett-Packard Co. and other major computer hardware and software companies.

Iraq to investigate Haditha "massacre"

The Iraqi government is to launch a formal investigation into claims that United States Marines murdered civilians in the Iraqi town of Haditha in November 2005.

Insignia of the US Marine Corps.

In an interview with the BBC, the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki said: "It is not justifiable that a family is killed because someone is fighting terrorists." and speaking to the Reuters news agency, said "We will hold those who did it responsible."

Following the announcement, on Tuesday, May 30, the White House spokesman Tony Snow said they would make the details of the US investigation into the incident public.

Initial reports from the Pentagon stated the gun battle that ended in 15 civilian casualties, as well as 8 terrorist deaths, was a fight with militants.

Eyewitness reports claim that US Marines went house to house gunning down innocent men, women and babies for no reason. The Wall Street Journal reports that there is evidence to support these claims.

Lance Corpl Roel Ryan Briones of Hanford, California, who was in Haditha on that day, told the Los Angeles Times, "They ranged from little babies to adult males and females. I'll never be able to get that out of my head. I can still smell the blood."

While some politicians sounded a note of caution that not all facts are yet known for conclusions to be drawn, John Murtha, a Democratic Congressman, said in an interview with CNN "It is as bad as Abu Ghraib, if not worse."

The United States President, George W. Bush, is said to have learned of the Haditha incident from a journalist earlier this year and has already had a briefing on it from his national security advisor, Stephen Hadley.

Man shot in Rotorua, New Zealand

A man in Rotorua today was shot after being involved in a crash outside the Rotorua International Stadium.

Witnesses said that the man pulled out a handgun and shot the other man in the head. Witness Alby King said "I just heard this big car crash, and we had a look and there was two guys fighting, and one just shot the other in the back of the head."

The man survived the shooting, and is in serious but stable condition at hospital.

The police say they have arrested a 38-year-old in relation to the shooting, he was found in a street nearby after fleeing the scene.

The police would not comment on whether or not it was a gang-related incident.

Former chaplain at Guantanamo tells about abuse and underage prisoners

James Yee, a Muslim chaplain formerly stationed at the Guantánamo detention camp, is now speaking out about his experience and the incidents he witnessed at Guantanamo. On May 22, Mr. Yee held a speech at Dartmouth College and told an audience of 100 he was accused of espionage and spying by the US in September 2003 and was kept in isolation for 76 days.

Mr Yee claimed in *The Dartmouth*, a Dartmouth College newspaper, the United States was "accepting torture" and that this "damages the reputation of the U.S." He continued: "We've lost that status of being the beacon of human rights because of Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo".

On May 5 Mr Yee had spoken at the University of California, Davis, to the UC Davis Center for the Study of Human Rights in the Americas (CSHRA). They had hosted a forum about the treatment of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay.

Mr Yee believes journalists and congressmen who visit Guantánamo prison do not get an unsanitized picture of conditions there, and spoke at length about his personal experience there,

what prisoners and interpreters told him during his time as Guantánamo chaplain, and what happened when he was imprisoned.

In one incident a cell door had mistakenly been left unlocked by guards, and a prisoner left his cell and attempted to lock the three guards in the cell while they were conducting a search. The guards easily overpowered the would-be escapee. "But the incident didn't stop there," said Mr Yee who said this incident led to a violent reaction from the guards.

"One of the guards continued to bludgeon that prisoner on the back of the head after already being shackled at the ankles and his wrists behind his back and, of course, it was a bloody affair. There was blood all over."

Yee also said that some prisoners were children "the ages of some of the prisoners down there, as young as 12 to 14 years old. Prisoners as young as 12 to 14 years old were being held down in Guantánamo when I was there."

James Yee was accused of espionage by the military on September 10, 2003, and arrested while heading home from Cuba on a leave of absence. After 76 days, James Yee was released and the criminal charges against him were eventually dropped. He said he was locked away in solitary confinement and abused in a manner similar to that of the other detainees at Guantanamo.

About the treatment he received when he was imprisoned, Mr Yee said he was first more worried about his family, "I was arrested in secret, held incommunicado. I never showed up at the airport in Seattle like I was supposed to

have, where my wife and daughter were waiting. They didn't know what happened to me. My parents in New Jersey had no idea what had happened. I essentially disappeared from society, from the face of the earth."

Mr Yee then said he was dressed up as a prisoner and subject to "sensory deprivation". "And down on the way, on this trip to Charleston, the guard pulls out of this bag these goggles ... so now I can't see a thing. He takes out these heavy industrial type ear muffs ... puts them on my ears, and now I can't hear a thing. We call this tactic 'sensory deprivation.' Sensory deprivation, it's something that I recently read that the American Psychiatric Association has included in a draft of their definition of torture."

Taking an ironic look at his own capture Mr Yee said: "On another aspect of the treatment he experienced, Yee said, "One of the most ironic parts of this situation is that down in Guantanamo, as the Muslim chaplain, I was able to protect certain religious rights for the alleged, suspected, Taliban and al-Qaeda prisoners down in Guantanamo. The point is, I was denied my religious rights as a U.S. citizen in military custody, the very same rights that I was able to uphold for prisoners down in Guantanamo."

Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, commander of the Guantánamo detention camp, is said to have made the decision to jail Mr Yee. Miller was then transferred to Iraq, where there was a prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib. The extent of Miller's involvement in Mr Yee's treatment at Guatamano and Abu Ghraib is not known. The US administration has not elaborated on Mr Yee's claims.

In May 2004, when Mr Yee's case attracted the attention of the media, Gen. James Hill, chief of the U.S. Southern Command, which oversaw military operations at Guantanamo, called Yee's incarceration necessary, "given the circumstances at the time." Col. William Costello, a Southern Command spokesman, also said in May 2004, "There's really nothing more that we're going to share on the case. We've dropped the charges. ... I'm not at liberty to talk about what the investigation entailed."

US have denied abuse on Guantánamo detention camp. On June 1st, 2005 Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, said, "But little has been said about the great lengths that the military go to at Guantánamo Bay to accommodate the religious practices of detainees in their care. There are specific instructions as to how those involved in the custody of detainees should handle themselves with respect to religious matters. Special meals are provided to meet cultural dietary requirements. Schedules are respectful of prayer. Indications of the direction to pray are provided."

Today in History

1495 - Friar John Cor recorded the first known batch of scotch whisky.
 1779 - Benedict Arnold was court-martialed for malfeasance.
 1922 - A police force in Northern Ireland called the Royal Ulster Constabulary was founded.
 1938 - The first Superman comic was published.
 1980 - The Cable News Network began broadcasting.
 June 01 is International Children's Day, Madaraka Day in Kenya.

Quote of the Day

Surprise becomes effective when we suddenly face the enemy at one point with far more troops than he expected. This type of numerical superiority is quite distinct from numerical superiority in general: it is the most powerful medium in the art of war."

~ Carl von Clausewitz

Word of the Day

limpid; *adj*

Definition

1. Clear, particularly transparent or bright.

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