



Top Stories

Jaafari nominated Iraqi PM

The United Iraqi Alliance nominated Ibrahim al-Jaafari for Iraqi Prime Minister after talks amongst party leaders concerning the nomination which had delayed the selection.

Protest against Muhammad caricatures in Paris

Several thousands of Muslims demonstrated today in Paris, France, over the initial Danish publication of the Muhammad caricatures and their republication in two French newspapers.

Featured story

Berlin court repeals preliminary injunction against Wikimedia Germany

The Amtsgericht Berlin-Charlottenburg has repealed an injunction that it had issued in January against Wikimedia Deutschland, the German chapter of the Wikimedia Foundation.

Wikipedia Current Events

- In Baghdad, a suicide bomber detonates an explosive belt in a line of people waiting to receive government payments, killing at least eight other people and wounding about 30, including children and police.
- Saddam Hussein is forced to attend the latest session of his trial, looking haggard and wearing a robe rather than his usual crisp suit as he shouted "Down with Bush."

Wikipedia Current Events

- Tongan Prime Minister Prince Lavaka Ata 'Ulukalala resigns suddenly on 11 February 2006, and also gives up his other cabinet portfolios. He was replaced in the interim by the elected Minister of Labour, Dr. Feleti Sevele. (Pacific Magazine)
- Australian Renae Lawrence, 28, the only female member of the Bali Nine group arrested in 2005, and fellow accused Scott Rush, 19, are convicted in Indonesia of attempting to import heroin to Australia and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Wikipedia suffers outage

Wikipedia, the well-known free-to-edit encyclopedia, suffered a period of extended downtime as of approximately 10:00 UTC, following a failure of the primary DNS/NFS server, which caused numerous cascading failures on other servers within the Wikimedia cluster.

This failure led to all Wikimedia projects and web sites being rendered inaccessible for several hours. Technical staff worked to restore services using backup equipment, and set up temporary hosts to fulfill some of the roles of Zwinger, the failed host.

Following restoration of the backbone of the cluster, several problems arose within the database, causing pages to appear missing. At this time, it was noticed that the normal editing pattern of users was inadvertently

causing damage to pages, although no histories were lost. The exact cause for the database issues is not known; while there was a heavy replication lag at the time, it has been asserted that this would not have caused such wide problems.

To prevent future problems and to protect the integrity of data, editing was shut off for 2:47 minutes. Meanwhile, technical staff worked to restore several squid cache servers and to reduce the dependencies on NFS mounts.

Editing returned to near-normal levels from about 21:45 UTC.

As of 22:00 UTC, no official statement has been released commenting on the downtime.

The Independent questions Wikipedia's accuracy

United Kingdom newspaper The Independent has run a story scrutinizing the accuracy of Wikipedia articles, using eight experts in various fields to comment on particular articles' validity. The experts' opinions ranged on topics from the Russian Revolution of 1917 to Kate Moss, Tony Blair and invitro fertilization.

Robert McHenry, a former editor-in-chief of Encyclopaedia Britannica posits his belief that contrary to the underlying notion that Wikipedia articles are constantly improving, the "mass [of articles] tend to the mediocre."

According to historian Antony

Beevor, "With Wikipedia's entries, there is a lack of satisfaction, not so much through inaccuracy but there are a lot of vague statements which you cannot really disprove but which you don't think are necessarily helpful.""

While noting that Wikipedia's most controversial topics are rife for distortion, The Independent article goes on to point out that a number of studies have shown articles to be accurate. In comparing the online site to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Nature found that on average, Wikipedia had only one more error per entry than the traditional "gold standard" for encyclopaedias. Likewise, the German computer magazine, c't, gave Wikipedia a 3.6 rating out of 5 for accuracy, which surpassed two other rivals, such as Microsoft Encarta which received a 3.1.

First of the Bali nine sentenced
Scott Rush and Renae Lawrence, the only female member of the Bali Nine, were today sentenced in the Denpasar District Court to life imprisonment.

The Bali Nine were arrested in April 2005 in Bali, where they were accused of trying to smuggle 8.3 kg of heroin in to Australia.

The sentence issued to Lawrence is a surprise to both herself and the prosecution, as a 20 year sentence was all but promised for co-operation. Although under Indonesian law, Lawrence could have received the death penalty, judges felt a custodial sentence was in order because of her youth, cooperation and general politeness.

Australian PM links cannabis use to mental illness

Australian Prime Minister John Howard has linked cannabis use to mental illness, and called for state governments to take a tougher line on the drug. Speaking at a meeting of Federal, state and territory leaders, Mr Howard said that fighting drug abuse would be a significant element of the new mental health strategy.

At a COAG press conference on Friday, Mr Howard explicitly stated that there was a relationship between cannabis use and mental illness. "We need, as part of the campaign on mental health, to address cannabis and amphetamine abuse which is a key, but not of course the only ingredient in the problem," he said.

Mr Howard has also said that in the past Australians have not taken the problem seriously. "At least a generation of Australians were too passive about the consequences of illicit drug use," he said.

South Australia's Director of Public Prosecutions, Stephen Pallaras QC, called today for courts to be tougher on cannabis related crime, because of the harm to the mental health of cannabis users. "I have heard the research on the link between mental illness and cannabis and it concerns me greatly," he said. "It may be time to reassess the way the court approaches sentencing in light of research on cannabis. We are waiting for the right case to bring before the court of appeal."

South Australia has separate penalties for cannabis possession in public and in private. In South Australia possession of up to 20 cannabis plants for personal use is

punishable by a \$500 fine.

Professor George Patton, of the Centre for Adolescent Health in Melbourne, also made the link between the drug and mental illness, suggesting that there was evidence of a "predictive" link between cannabis use and the development of illnesses such as schizophrenia.

"People presenting with schizophrenia for the first time, depression and anxiety, often have frequent cannabis use (and) there's increasing evidence cannabis use predicts the development of schizophrenia and other psychotic illness," he said.

"The big difference from 20 or 30 years ago is there were fewer people using cannabis then. What we're learning now is that cannabis these days is a potent drug with powerful side effects."

Dan Lubman, consultant psychiatrist at Orygen Youth Health, warned that the relationship was quite complicated, and argued that it was difficult to draw clear conclusions.

"A high percentage of the population we treat are cannabis users with mental health problems, but just because you use cannabis doesn't mean you'll develop psychosis," he said. "It's a complicated relationship and that's why we need to be very clever about how we approach this issue."

Melbourne police raid hydroponic cannabis growers

Police last week launched a number of raids across Melbourne and surrounding areas, targeting hydroponic cannabis-growing operations. There were seven

arrests on Thursday, in Melton and Werribee, across the western and northern suburbs, and a farm near Bacchus Marsh.

Three men appeared in court on Friday. One man, arrested at the farm, was charged with cultivating cannabis after police found 102 plants growing hydroponically.

According to Acting Detective Senior Sergeant Jason Kelly the raids come at the end of a six month operation. He said that more arrests would be following in the next few weeks.

These arrests coincide with the State and Federal governments tough new stance on cannabis, and hydroponically grown cannabis in particular. The Prime Minister John Howard, and NSW Premier Morris Iemma, have linked cannabis use to mental illness, citing a number of statements by researchers.

Today in History

1804 - Karađorđe became the leader of the First Serbian Uprising.

1876 - Elisha Gray and Alexander Graham Bell each filed a patent for the telephone.

1879 - Chilean forces occupied the Bolivian port of Antofagasta, instigating the War of the Pacific.
1989 - A fatwa was issued for the execution of Salman Rushdie, the author of *The Satanic Verses*, a novel considered "blasphemous against Islam".

1989 - The first satellite in the satellite constellation of the Global Positioning System was placed into orbit.

February 14 is Valentine's Day

Quote of the Day

"Some things you don't need until they leave you; they're the things that you miss." ~ Rob Thomas

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