



Top Stories

Bloggers cite rumors of US "secret war" with Iran and Syria

Rumors are circulating in the United States capital of Washington that President Bush has declared a "secret, informal war" on Iran and Syria, according to a pair of blogs written by apparent Washington insiders.

Explosion at the U.S. embassy in Athens

The U.S. ambassador in Greece, Mr. Charles Ries told the reporters that the attack was "a senseless act of violence". Both the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Public Order of Greece, Dora Bakoyannis and Byron Polidoras, strongly condemned the action.

Featured story

Bollywood stars Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan engaged

Indian actors Abhishek Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai confirmed that they were engaged in Mumbai last night, ending months of media speculation about the relationship between the two. The wedding is reportedly scheduled to be held at the Hyatt around March this year.

Wikipedia Current Events

• Saddam Hussein's half-brother and former intelligence chief Barzan Ibrahim as well as the former chief judge of Iraq Awad Hamed al-Bandar are hanged before dawn. According to the

Wikipedia Current Events

video released by the Iraqi government, the head of Barzan Ibrahim was separated from the rest of his body. Although government officials call the beheading an accident, many Iraqi Sunnis still express umbrage toward the decapitation, accusing the Iraqi government for bowdlerizing the body.

- An Iranian official says that Iran is continuing its nuclear program despite being sanctioned by the United Nations.
- A new cluster of bird flu infections involving at least two members of a family in Indonesia may indicate a change in the virus's ability to sicken people, researchers studying the disease said.

•Japanese authority incinerates more than 10,000 chickens that have either died or culled at a southern Japanese poultry farm.

•The virus is confirmed after 100 ducks died in the northern Phitsanulok province of Thailand.

•The trial of six men accused of the 21 July 2005 London bombings begins.

•Rafael Correa becomes President of Ecuador, replacing Alfredo Palacio.

Two Hussein co-defendants hanged in Baghdad

Saddam Hussein's half brother and former chief of his secret police, Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, along with the former chief judge of his

revolutionary court, Awad Hamad al-Bandar were hanged today in Baghdad at approximately 3:00 a.m. local time for their role in the 1982 killing of 148 Shiite Muslims in the village of Dujail.

Although efforts were taken to prevent a repeat of the controversy surrounding the perceived impropriety that followed the cellphone video of last week's execution of Saddam Hussein, including confiscation of reporters' cellphones and requiring all individuals present to sign a statement that they would not engage in Shiite chants and taunting, outrage is already being heard from many quarters over an apparent miscalculation by the executioner resulting in al-Tikriti's decapitation by the noose.

Shaken by the mishap, officials waited seven hours before announcing the execution and waited another six before showing to reporters a three minute official video of the hangings, who were told that it would not be shown again.

Arnold Schwarzenegger to visit Canada

Arnold Schwarzenegger, best known for his role in The Terminator and being the Governor of California, has been invited by the Prime Minister's Office to visit Canada.

Schwarzenegger is reported to have higher expectations for reducing greenhouse gas emissions than Prime Minister

Stephen Harper.

"I hope it means they are serious about taking the kind of actions that Arnold Schwarzenegger is taking in California on climate change," said Green Party of Canada leader Elizabeth May.

Environment minister John Baird said he and the Canadian government are concerned about the climate.

"We're concerned about the huge climate change challenges," said Baird. "The erratic weather we've had this winter is a huge wake-up call."

The Canadian PM and "The Governator" first met when they went to Mexico for the inauguration Felipe Calderón, the president of Mexico.

No date has been set as to when the meeting will happen.

Bollywood stars Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan engaged

Legendary Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan has confirmed that his son Abhishek and former Miss World Aishwarya Rai were engaged last evening at a private ceremony at the Bachchans' residence in Mumbai.

It is believed that the younger Bachchan proposed to his bride-to-be in New York, soon after the Toronto premiere of his new movie Guru. The media had been following the romance between the two closely for some time past, but this is the first time they have come out in the open about their relationship. Rumours that the couple were planning to spread the know began to spread in November last year, when they visited the Sankat Mochan Temple

together, with some even saying that they had already been married even earlier at the Meenakshi temple in Madurai

According to one daily, the wedding will take place either on February 19 or March 7 at the Hyatt Mumbai. "The children have decided. We are very happy and thought we should go ahead with the 'roka' ceremony. It was held in the evening.", Amitabh Bachchan said of the ceremony, which was attended by the family's close friends, including Samajwadi Party leader Amar Singh, Aishwarya's parents, and industrialist Anil Ambani and the latter's wife Tina Ambani. The couple have now flown to Ujjain to take a holy dip in the Ganga.

New Zealand Commerce Commission investigating Australian company

The New Zealand Commerce Commission is investigating Australian-based lottery competition company, TMG Asia Pacific Pty Limited, under alleged breaches of the Fair Trading Act after quite a few text-based lottery competitions have been running on New Zealand television.

To enter the competitions, the entrants must answer a simple question and then text the answer to a special text number, 8555.

The competitions are shown during advertisements on New Zealand television stations, and include possible prizes of televisions, game consoles, exercise equipment, and more.

The Commerce Commission said that they have received around 180 complaints regarding the text competitions and the charges they incur on their mobile phones. The charges are when a person texts the correct answer to 8555 they

are agreeing to sign up to their subscription based services which charges them NZ\$3 for each text message received. A maximum of \$15 is charged a month unless the special keyword to stop receiving text messages: STOP is texted. The Commerce Commission said that the complaints reflect that the entrants do not know about the subscription, even though it does state that the competition is a subscription competition, how much a received text costs, etc at the bottom of the ad.

The director of Fair Trading for the Commerce Commission, Deborah Battell, said: "[180 complaints] is an exceptionally high number of complaints for a single issue."

"The Commerce Commission is investigating whether the disclosure of the terms and conditions of these promotions was adequate," Ms Battell said.

In November of 2006 the Commerce Commission had contacted TMG Asia Pacific to discuss their concerns over their promotions. Ms Battell said: "The company has been made well aware of our concerns. The Commission has now asked the company to respond by 4pm, Thursday, 18 January 2007."

Today in History

27 BC - Gaius Octavius was given the title Augustus by the Roman Senate.

929 - Emir Abd-ar-Rahman III of Cordoba declared himself caliph, thereby establishing the Caliph of Córdoba.

1547 - Ivan the Terrible was crowned Tsar of Russia.

1909 - The expedition led by Ernest Shackleton located the Magnetic South Pole.

2006 - Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was sworn in as President of Liberia,

becoming Africa's first female elected head of state.
January 16 is Teachers' Day in Thailand.

Quote of the Day

I still feel that sincerity and realism are avant-garde, or can be, just as I did when I started out.

~ Edmund White

Word of the Day

placate; v

To calm down a person or situation; to bring peace.

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Today in History