



Top Stories

Strong earthquake hits Pakistan, north India, Afghanistan

The strongest earthquake that this region experienced in the last century has caused widespread damage across Pakistan, North India and Afghanistan Saturday morning. Strongest hit was apparently Kashmir. Between 20,000 and 30,000 people are thought to have perished.

Schröder gives up German chancellorship ambitions, makes way for Merkel

Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder has given up his ambition to be chancellor in a future government and cleared the way for the current opposition leader, Christian Democrat Angela Merkel, to become the first female chancellor in the history of Germany, officials for both parties confirmed.

Featured story

Weekend violence in Darfur complicates peace talks

On Sunday, armed men kidnapped eighteen African Union personnel (including military observers and civilian police) in the war-torn Darfur region of Sudan. According to AU commission spokesperson Adam Thiam, "They were taken by a dissident group of Jem." The Justice and Equality Movement, or Jem, is an Islamic rebel force deeply involved in the ongoing conflict in the region.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Three New Orleans officers accused of nearly beating to death Robert Davis and assaulting a cameraman who taped the ordeal, plead not guilty.
- Allegations that New Orleans police looted 200 cars are under investigation by Louisiana police.
- Widespread desertion, suicide, and crime among New Orleans police officers has been reported in the wake of Hurricane Katrina
- The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency successfully tests a \$10 million jet that travels at twice the speed of sound.
- 2005 Kashmir earthquake SOS Children have reported that despite the destruction of much of their Children's Village in Muzaffarabad all of the children in their care are believed safe.
- Insurgent attacks throughout Iraq leave seven Iraqis and one US soldier dead.
- The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences awards Thomas Schelling and Robert Aumann the 2005 Nobel Prize in Economics, "for having enhanced our understanding of conflict and cooperation through game-theory analysis".
- Aardman Animations, the company behind films such as Chicken Run, Creature Comforts, and the just-released Wallace and Gromit film Curse of the Were-Rabbit lose their entire history, but not their film library, in a fire.

CBC service returns to normal tomorrow

Members of the Canadian Media Guild voted overwhelmingly to accept a tentative deal with Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC) management after a seven-week lockout. The Guild reported 3,514 ballots were cast and 88.4 per cent voted in favour of ratification during their 9 October ballot. Most of the 5,500 unionized workers are expected to be returning to work on Tuesday.

The deal caps contract workers at 9.5 per cent of the full-time work force. The issue of the employer insisting on a larger number of non-guild members lead the union to vote in favour of a strike in early August.

On 15 August the CBC effectively shut down its English-language programming outside of Fredericton, New Brunswick, and its French-language service outside of Quebec.

The negotiated agreement includes an individual signing bonus of \$1,000, as well as allowing for wage hikes of 12.6% over the life of the contract (over the complete period of the contract, to 31 March 2009.)

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Saudi Arabia blocks access to

Blogger, Flickr, LiveJournal*Screenshot of a blocked website*

The government of Saudi Arabia has blocked access to Google's Web blogging service Blogger, Yahoo!'s photo sharing website Flickr, and the diary service LiveJournal as well as some other websites through their nationally run Internet Services Unit (ISU) last Tuesday. As a result, English-speaking Saudis were prevented from publishing blogs, reading journals, or viewing pictures on Flickr.

The Saudi Arabian government uses a filtering service provided by the United States-owned company Secure Computing. In September, the popular comedy website The Best Page in the Universe was added to the filter. Similar blocking services have been implemented in other countries, such as The People's Republic of China.

In the past, the ISU had, on and off, blocked access to BlogSpot.com's free hosting service. However, according to activist organization Reporters Without Borders, "blog services [applications] had not until now been affected by the ISU's filters. The complete blocking of blogger.com, which is one of the biggest blog tools on the market, is extremely worrying. Only China had so far used such an extreme measure to censor the Internet."

On Thursday, access to Blogger.com was restored, but Flickr and LiveJournal remained inaccessible. The ISU did not release any public statement about the blocking or restoration of service to any specific website.

Wallace and Gromit sets destroyed by fire

The sets and props of popular claymation characters, Wallace and Gromit have been destroyed in a warehouse blaze in Bristol, UK.

The disaster comes only days after the US release of Nick Park's latest film featuring the characters, The Curse Of The Were-Rabbit. The film is scheduled for UK release this Friday.

Sets and models from the new film escaped as they had not yet been added to the Aardman Animation collection hosted in Bristol. Among the damage caused by the blaze, the character Morph was lost; for many UK children the appearance of this character in Tony Hart's BBC art programmes was their first introduction to stop-motion animation.

Schröder gives up German chancellorship ambitions, makes way for Merkel

Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder has given up his ambition to be chancellor in a future government and cleared the way for the current opposition leader, Christian Democrat Angela Merkel, to become the first female chancellor in the history of Germany, officials for both parties confirmed.

Both Schröder and Merkel previously insisted that they

become head of government, making chancellorship the all deciding issue whether to form a coalition. Now Schröder is reportedly resigning from politics, but while he may not be in the next government, his withdrawal comes at a high price for the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU).

*Gerhard Schröder*

The Social Democrats (SPD) will take eight minister posts, against six for the CDU/CSU. But who will occupy these posts has yet to be determined. Beside various rumors in Berlin, it has only been confirmed so far that the current Bavarian governor Edmund Stoiber will take over as minister for economy and technology. The agreement, negotiated between Schröder, Merkel, Stoiber and SPD chair Franz Müntefering, has already been approved by both parties' leadership committees.

*Angela Merkel*

Official negotiations for all the details of the future coalition are scheduled to begin next Monday and are expected to last until at least November 12.

The early federal election on September 18 produced an effective stalemate as both CDU/CSU and the SPD got approximately the same votes,

with CDU/CSU having a narrow lead of 4 seats in the Bundestag. Neither party was able to form a coalition with their preferred partner, FDP and the Greens, respectively, forcing them to enter talks to form a grand coalition.

VeriSign acquires Weblogs.com

VeriSign Inc. announced Friday it has acquired Weblogs.com. Mountain View, California based VeriSign bought Berkeley based Weblogs.com from Scripting News Inc. for \$2.3 million in cash.

Weblogs.com offers a ping service that uses RSS to alert people to new content posted on a blog or website.

Weblogs.com founder Dave Winer told the Associated Press that Weblogs.com had grown to be too big for him to handle. "Actually, I would have liked to sell sooner. Keeping the site running was a perpetual challenge. We would scale and it would just grow exponentially." said Winer. Weblogs.com sends out nearly 2 million pings per day.

"VeriSign has the size and expertise to handle the growth" said Mark McLaughlin, senior VP of naming and directory services at VeriSign. "The Internet has experienced an explosion in both the number of bloggers and the number of daily RSS feeds from bloggers over the past 12 to 24 months, but the infrastructure to support that level of Internet communications has not kept pace," said McLaughlin.

VeriSign has said they will continue to operate Weblogs.com as a free service. However they may in the future charge for additional services.

America Online also recently acquired a similarly named but unrelated blog publisher, Weblogs Inc.

Today in History

1865: The Morant Bay rebellion, led by Paul Bogle and George William Gordon, began in Jamaica.

It was brutally suppressed by Governor Edward John Eyre.

1954: Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh took control of North Vietnam.

1962: Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, the first Roman Catholic ecumenical council in 92 years.

1968: NASA launched Apollo 7, the first manned mission of the Apollo program.

1975: Saturday Night Live, an American weekly comedy-variety show, was broadcast for the first time.

October 11 is Double Ninth Festival in the Chinese calendar (2005); National Coming Out Day in the United States.

Quote of the Day

"The truth is that there is only one terminal dignity — love. And the story of a love is not important — what is important is that one is capable of love. It is perhaps the only glimpse we are permitted of eternity." ~ Helen Hayes

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