



### Top Stories

#### **Bomb blast near Mosul, Iraq kills at least 40**

A bomb blast near the northern city of Mosul has killed at least 40 Iraqis. The bomber struck shortly after noon in front of a U.S. military base. The Defence Ministry says 30 people were injured in the blast, which was carried out by a suicide bomber. The U.S. military says a car bomb had exploded at an Iraqi police recruiting centre.

#### **Airbus A380 safety test injures 33**

Thirty-three people were injured during a test of the Airbus A380, a double decker superjumbo jet, in Hamburg, Germany. Injuries include friction burns from sliding down the escape ramps and one broken leg. 853 volunteer "passengers" and 20 crew members took about 80 seconds to evacuate the aircraft, beating the test's requirements by 10 seconds and over 200 people "rescued".

### Featured story

#### **Buffalo, N.Y. hotel proposal gets final approval by city Planning Board**

In an unanimous vote, the City of Buffalo's Planning Board approved the Elmwood Village Hotel proposal. Although the meeting was not a "public hearing", citizens lashed out at the board members for not letting them speak.

### Wikipedia Current Events

- Exit polls in the 17th Israeli legislative election show Kadima with 29 seats, Labour with 22, Yisrael Beytenu with 14, Likud with 11, and Shas with 11.
- Over a million protestors join large protests in France amid strikes against the new contrat première embauche, which protestors say will harm job stability for the under 26. Violent clashes with the police in Paris are reported.
- White House Chief of Staff Andy Card announces he will resign from his job on April 14, 2006. Card is one of a few people who has been on duty in the Bush Administration since day 1. He will be replaced by Joshua Bolten, Director of Office of Management and Budget.
- Former Liberian President Charles Taylor disappears after Nigeria agrees to extradite him to face war crime charges in Sierra Leone.
- Abdul Rahman is deemed mentally unfit to stand trial, and released. He is seeking asylum in a Western country. His whereabouts are unknown

#### **Thai police forward anti-Thaksin PAD accusations to Corruption Commission**

An attempt to have the Thai police bring charges against current caretaker Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has resulted in the police forwarding the allegations brought by the People's Alliance

for Democracy (PAD) to the National Counter-Corruption Commission (NCCC).

The accusations centre around the attempted privatisation of EGAT, the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand. The privatisation process was derailed last week with the ruling issued by the country's Supreme Administrative court. They struck down two royal decrees that had been written to allow listing the utility company on the Stock Exchange of Thailand.

Sondhi Limthongkul, one of the main representatives of the PAD, delivered the complaint to police secretary Maj-Gen Prawut Thavornsiri on Monday. According to the Thai News Agency, the accusation that the legislation attempting to privatise EGAT was an act of malfeasance has been forwarded to the NCCC by the police.

With PAD protesters using every tactic they can think of to remove the caretaker PM ahead of this Sunday's election, the street demonstrations that have characterised the protests since before the announcement of the snap election have moved. Now focussing on the business areas of Bangkok, today's protest centred on Siam Paragon, an up-market retail complex where protesters sought to bring their anti-Thaksin message to shoppers.

**Exit polls suggest Kadima victory in Israeli elections**  
Early exit polls for the Israeli

parliamentary elections suggest that the newly formed Kadima party of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Acting PM Ehud Olmert managed to capture between 28 and 32 seats in the 17th Knesset with Labor coming in second with 20 to 22 seats ahead of Yisrael Beiteinu with 12 to 14 seats. Likud got 11 or 12 seats, the National Religious Party took 8 or 9 seats and Shas 10 or 11 seats. The Pensioners party performed better than expected, capturing 6 to 8 seats, United Torah Judaism got 5 to 6 seats and Meretz around 5 seats. Arab parties are expected to get 7 or 8 seats.

The results mean that Olmert could probably form a center-left coalition to implement his unilateral disengagement plan for the West Bank.

"Kadima has won today. The next prime minister is Ehud Olmert," said Roni Bar-On, a Member of the Knesset for Kadima. His party did worse than expected from opinion polls, which saw them at gaining about 40 seats.

"This a crisis unlike any that has ever hit Likud," said Dan Naveh, a senior MK of the party referring to Likud's fall from being one of the dominating Israeli parties in the last decades to finishing only 4th.

Correspondents for the BBC stress that Israeli exit polls are considered to be relatively unreliable, and that it may take some time to get definitive results.

### **UK petrol prices rise to five-month high**

Petrol prices across the UK rose to an average of 91.1p per litre (U.S. \$6.02 per U.S. gallon) of premium unleaded on Tuesday, which is the highest they have been for five

months. Prices have been rising ever since December 2005, when they reached a trough in the current cycle of 87.6p a litre (\$5.79/gal.), and have gained about 1.5p a litre (2.6 cents) in the last 10 days.

Across the UK, petrol prices ranged from 86.9p to 100.9p (\$5.74 to \$6.67) for unleaded and 89.9p to 105.9p (\$5.94 to \$7.00) for diesel.

These figures coincide with the results of a motorists survey from AA Personal Loans, which showed that most drivers are ignorant of petrol prices. Just 14% of those surveyed were able to correctly give the current price of petrol. Out of 1700 people surveyed, the lowest estimate was 69p a litre (\$4.56/gal.) and the highest was £3 a litre (\$19.83/gal.).

### **White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card resigns**

President Bush has announced that Andrew Card, White House Chief of Staff, has resigned, and will be replaced by current budget director Joshua Bolten.

In recent weeks Republican insiders have been urging the President to reshape his advisors to deal with his declining popularity ratings. Bolten has had wide experience both on Wall Street and in Washington. In Washington he has been the Deputy Chief of Staff and also the director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Card will remain as chief of staff until April 14. It is unknown at this time what he will do after leaving the post. He had previously served as State Representative in Holbrook, Mass., his hometown, so it has been speculated that he may return to Mass. to run for

office.

### **Former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger dies at 88**

Former United States Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger has died in the state of Maine today at the age of 88. Weinberger was hospitalized for pneumonia and having a high fever shortly before his death.

Weinberger served under Ronald Reagan's administration during the 1980's, in which he pushed for more defense programs in the United States military, including the Strategic Defense Initiative space defense program. He was also allegedly involved in the Iran-Contra Affair, but was pardoned by then-President George H. W. Bush.

Weinberger also was the publisher and chairman of Forbes Magazine in the early 1990's. He authored a book, *Fighting for Peace*, and co-authored another with Peter Schweizer, entitled *The Next War*. Both books are based on the effects of the Cold War.

Weinberger's funeral will be conducted at the Arlington National Cemetery.

### **Buffalo, N.Y. hotel proposal gets final approval by city Planning Board**

Buffalo, New York – The proposed Elmwood Village Hotel got the final approval it needed from the city of Buffalo's Planning Board this morning.

In an unanimous vote, the Board approved most of the design and site plan of the hotel.

The Elmwood Village Hotel is a proposed hotel by Savarino Construction Services Corporation and is designed by architect Karl Frizlen of the Frizlen Group. It is to

be placed on the corner of Elmwood and Forest Avenues in Buffalo and will require the demolition of at least five properties (1109-1121 Elmwood).

Despite the fact that today's meeting was not a "public hearing", several citizens lashed out at the Board after the approval.

"Thanks for destroying Buffalo," said one man.

"[I am] disgusted. Because they did not allow the community to speak, it is the bastardization of the concepts of justice and democracy, and that's what happened [today]," said Clarence Carnahan, a local business owner and concerned citizen, to Wikinews. He also referred to some board members as "immoral pigs."

"[I feel] frustration because no one could speak. I was going to address the displacement of all the shops that are there and that they should be grand-fathered into the new space. We did not get to say that. [I am disappointed] that they are endorsing this enormous monstrosity." said Nancy Pollina, co-owner of Don Apparel with Patty Morris at 1109 Elmwood.

Although the Board approved the hotel proposal, Savarino Construction must still go before the board to approve things such as signage and lighting. The Planning Board meets again on April 11, 2006 at 8:00a.m., but it is unknown if the hotel proposal will be on the agenda.

Lawsuits likely to be filed

Pano Georgiadis, owner of Pano's Restaurant at 1081 Elmwood and owner of 605 Forest Avenue in

Buffalo, threatened to sue Savarino Construction at a public meeting on March 15, 2006 saying, "if you try to get a variance to change the code, I will sue you. This is my home, number one. If you go against city code, and you try to do the most rooms with a minimal amount of parking, again, I will sue you."

Today, Georgiadis confirmed to Wikinews that he is "definitely" suing, but that his "situation is different" as compared to others looking into legal action. "This is my property. They did it [changed the code] without my approval."

Last week, the Common Council voted and approved the rezoning of all five properties including 605 Forest.

Some are also considering taking the case to the New York State Supreme Court to "seek an injunction" and would go "pro se, meaning I am going to present the case myself," said Carnahan.

Organizers schedule another protest

Despite the approvals by the Common Council and Planning Board, organizers scheduled another protest for Saturday April 1, 2006 at 2:00p.m. on the proposed site at Forest and Elmwood.

"We are not going to go down without a fight. We are going to go kicking and screaming," said Pollina.

### **Australia grants asylum to 12 Commonwealth Games athletes**

Twelve athletes from Sierra Leone, who disappeared from the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne last week, have been

granted bridging visas by Australia's Department of Immigration. The group have been released into the Sydney community. Three of the Sierra Leoneans say they face forced female circumcision if they go back.

Department of Immigration spokesperson Sandi Logan said the bridging visas were only a stop-gap measure. "The bridging visa simply enables them to be here lawfully if in the period of time between now and then the type of visa they apply for requires further investigation on a country basis or a country profile, if in fact that's the type of visa and the type of investigation that's required," he said.

A group of six Sierra Leoneans contacted the Northern Beaches Refugee Sanctuary - who had previously given shelter and assistance to six other missing athletes. Members of the first group of athletes told media that they feared for their safety if they were forced to return to Sierra Leone.

Originally 14 of the nation's 22-strong Games delegation were reported missing. Two other Sierra Leone athletes remain at large after visas allowing them to compete in the Games were cancelled by the Department of Immigration.

In total, eleven athletes are still missing after the Games finished on Sunday, including seven from Cameroon, a Bangladeshi runner, and a Tanzanian boxer.

The ABC report that two missing Cameroon athletes have contacted Immigration officials in Perth. Refugee advocate group, The Coalition for Asylum Seekers,

Refugees and Detainees (CARAD) says the men are receiving legal advice. The Department of Immigration says they are in the country legally as their visas do not expire until April 26.

Twenty-one athletes disappeared from the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, Britain.

### **Long Beach, CA Redevelopment Agency ends talks for church**

The Long Beach Redevelopment Board voted last night to walk away from negotiations over the Filipino Baptist Fellowship church property. Eminent domain action, authorized at the March 13 meeting, was not addressed.

During the opening comment period, the attorney for the church, John Eastman, noted his difficulty in speaking on the question, since the agenda did not indicate what question was before the board. The board chair, Thomas Fields, replied that it was not appropriate for the board to answer questions during the public comment period.

After a five minute open session, the board recessed to discuss the church property in closed session. Fifteen minutes later, the board returned and announced that negotiations with the church were over.

Attorney Eastman and Rev Agustine, pastor of the church, conferred with long-time City Clerk Jan Pittman to clarify the meaning of the decision. She said that she understood the decision to mean that the board would not proceed with eminent domain. Responding to questions, she said that eminent domain proceedings are held in the city of Norton, and that no further notice would be due to

the church if eminent domain proceedings were initiated.

The church property is located in Long beach on Atlantic Avenue, a four lane road with two parking lanes. Most of the properties in the two block area have been acquired by the city and razed. The east side of the street was redeveloped five years ago with the construction of single family housing. The west side of the street is expected to be developed with higher density housing, but plans have not been announced. The city's redevelopment project was begun in 1996. The Filipino Baptist Fellowship purchased the church in 2002, in the open market.

### **Australian artist Pro Hart dies**

Pro Hart, the self-taught, internationally-acclaimed Australian artist, died at home in Broken Hill on March 28 after family members decided to cease his medication. The 77-year-old had been ill with motor neurone disease. Family members described his passing as peaceful. Hart is a household name in Australia.

Hart's son, John Hart, says a State funeral is being organised for his father. He says his father lost the ability to paint about six months ago. Pro Hart's son David today said the funeral for the "brushman of the bush" will be held in the far-western New South Wales mining city of Broken Hill next Tuesday. "It will be held next Tuesday", he said, "probably in the town's civic centre."

Born Kevin Charles Hart in Broken Hill on May 30, 1928, his mining mates nicknamed him 'Professor' due to his passion for invention. He started painting "cheeky" pictures on the wooden beams of

the mines he worked in. Hart went to few art classes and started painting full-time in 1958.

Since then, he has exhibited all over the world, including London, New York, Paris and Tokyo. He also illustrated several books. Hart's preoccupation with art began as a teenager on his family's sheep station near Menindee.

His work hangs in collections all over the world. Agent Amanda Phillips says Hart was one of Australia's most renowned artists yet his paintings are not in the National Gallery of Australia. "He's a great Australian, I mean he's been given an MBE for his services to art, he's been honoured all around the world, his work hangs in major collections around the world, why isn't he displayed here in Australia? A spokeswoman for the National Gallery confirmed they had a "very limited collection" of Pro Hart's works although no paintings.

### **Cannon Technique**

Hart is renowned for his unique 'cannon' technique, which he developed in 1970. 'Cannon' painting works by filling balls with paint and firing them at the canvas using a hand-held cannon.

"If you don't fit in their groove, they don't want to know you," Hart once said of the Australian art community. Hart gained his widest recognition in Australia when he featured in a television carpet advertisement, painting a carpet with spaghetti, milk, wine and other foods. "Oh Mr Hart, what a mess!" was the catchcry.

The Federal Member for Parkes, John Cobb, said Hart had been an inspirational figure in Broken Hill and helped to establish the town

as one of the Australia's greatest artistic centres.

Prime Minister John Howard described Hart as a great artist whose portraits of the outback were instantly recognisable. "Not only will he be remembered as one of our finest painters but also for the mark he made in sculpture and through his book illustrations," Howard said in a statement. "He made a wonderful contribution to art and culture in Australia, enhancing its profile on the world stage."

He said Hart's artistic legacy was assured. "I think they'll remember the colour, they'll remember the unconventional methods and they'll remember the identification with a city which is part of the history of this country; a very special part."

Fellow artist Ken Done said Hart's legacy was "in his paintings". He said the painter was best known for his portraits of the outback. "But I think his strongest pictures were the ones he did about his time underground – those tougher times, tougher men – and he brought a real sensitivity to that experience," Done said.

Hart received the Member of the Order of the British Empire award in 1976 for his services to art in Australia. He is survived by his wife Raylee, three sons and two daughters.

**Today in History**

1638 - Swedish settlers founded New Sweden near Delaware Bay, the first Swedish colony in America.

1809 - At the Diet of Porvoo, the Four Estates of Finland pledged allegiance to Tsar Alexander I of Russia, commencing the secession of the Grand Duchy of Finland from Sweden.

1831 - Bosniak general Husein Gradašević began an uprising against Sultan Mahmud II and the Ottoman Empire.

1871 - The Royal Albert Hall in Albertopolis was officially opened by Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom.

1974 - NASA spaceprobe Mariner 10 flew by the planet Mercury.

**Quote of the Day**

"Good books tell the truth, even when they're about things that never have been and never will be. They're truthful in a different way." ~ Stanisław Lem

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