



Top Stories

Mad Cow disease confirmed in U.S.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has confirmed the third case of mad cow disease, which was spotted when a routine test came back positive. Further tests conducted on an animal from an Alabama farm confirm the presence of the disease.

Former Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milosevic found dead in his cell

The Serbian Socialist party and UN officials confirm that Slobodan Milosevic, 64, has died in his cell at the U.N. war crimes tribunal's detention center in Den Hague.

Featured story

U.S. found in violation of Native Americans rights

The Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) accused the U.S. government of violating Native Americans land rights and the international anti-racism convention. Eighteen independent experts alleged that Western Shoshone peoples were being denied their traditional right to land.

Wikipedia Current Events

• In London, six men taking part in a clinical trial for a new anti-inflammatory drug are placed in intensive care, some in a life-threatening condition, after suffering adverse side-effects.

Wikipedia Current Events

•Euronext, a derivatives exchange based in Amsterdam and Paris, announced that it might join the ongoing auction for the London Stock Exchange -- which would put it in competition with bidders Nasdaq and the Deutsche Boerse.

•Palestinian gunmen kidnap and then release American professor Douglas Johnson.

•Isaac Hayes, voice-over talent of the TV show South Park (Chef), announced he wants to leave the show, because of criticism of Scientology in an episode of the show. Hayes is an outspoken Scientology member.

•Jordan to indict Abu Musab al-Zarqawi for bombings that killed over 60 people. ABC

•At least 80 deaths in Iraq following an attack on a Shiite holy site.

•Lennart Meri, former first president of independent Estonia after the Soviet rule, dies

•At least seven people have died in wildfires in the U.S. state of Texas which have burned 1,000 mi² (2,500 km²), forcing 1,900 people to evacuate.

•Israeli troops stormed and partially demolished a Palestinian prison in Jericho, apparently seeking Ahmad Sa'adat, wanted for allegedly assassinating an Israeli minister.

Monk's body pristine, fifteen years postmortem

LAMIA, GREECE: The Greek Orthodox monk Visarion(Visarion

Korkoliasos/ Greek: Βησσαρίων), of the Agathonos' Monastery close to the town of Lamia in Central Greece, died in 1991. A week ago, the head monk and Bishop of the religious House in which Visarion was buried decided that the tomb of the late monk should be opened due to works and constructions in the Monastery's area. As w:Alter:Alter Channel Television(<http://www.alter.gr>) reported in it's main News program, the monks and two doctors(medical examiners) faced an extraordinary occurrence during the opening of Visarion's tomb and coffin. As they told on television news, the body of Visarion was entire, without any single sign of body corruption. Moreover, the Bishop of Fthiotida, Nikolaos, called the retired Professor and ex-head of the Medical examiners in Greece, doctor Panos Yamarelos, to examine the body of the monk himself. Yamarelos told the reporters that he hasn't seen such a medical occurrence in his 50 years of experience. More specifically as Yamarelos and two other medical examiners told on television news programs, the body of Visarion had not any sign of skin corruption or colour change. "It was like he died a few minutes ago" doctors said on Alter Channel and Alpha TV reports. His face characteristics, as well as his canonicals were in pristine condition. As an another opinion about the issue, a professor of medical jurisprudence at the University of Athens said that it is possible that the body had been mummified and as a result of this,

it remained untouched by the time.

Since the news was published, thousands have gone to the monastery to worship the body, saying they have no doubt the event is a miracle.

Bishop of Fthiotida, Nikolaos has decided that the issue should be discussed at the Church of Greece Council in Athens. The Council will decide if the Greek Orthodox Church could acclaim monk Visarion as a "Saint" of the Christian Orthodox Faith. People who had personal contact with Visarion in the past, spoke about an extraordinary, exceptional and good-hearted man.

Siblings of Visarion told reporters that he wasn't taking any medicines, or had any chemotherapy before death.

PFLP leader Ahmed Saadat captured by Israeli forces

Ahmed Saadat, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and five other Palestinians surrendered after Israeli troops stormed the jail in the West Bank town of Jericho. Israeli general Yair Naveh announced that the operation was successful.

Israel accuses Saadat of involvement in the October 17, 2001, assassination of Rehavam Zeevi, then Minister of Tourism. Under the terms of an international agreement in 2002, the Palestinian Authority jailed Saadat under the supervision of monitors from the United Kingdom and United States.

Israel launched the raid soon after the monitors left the jail, complaining that the Palestinian Authority had given the monitors

insufficient security. Israel quickly arrested and searched many of the prisoners, but a few prisoners, among them Saadat, fortified themselves in the jail, even as Israel proceeded to bulldoze the jail.

Saadat is now in the possession of Israel for the first time. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas complained that the UK and US monitors were responsible for the prisoners' security and that their withdrawal violated the international agreement.

Isaac Hayes quits South Park over Scientology episode

Isaac Hayes has quit his role in Comedy Central's animated series South Park, where he been the voice of Chef since 1997.

Hayes, an outspoken Scientologist, said "There is a place in this world for satire, but there is a time when satire ends and intolerance and bigotry towards religious beliefs of others begins," in reference to the "Trapped in the Closet" episode which mocked the Church of Scientology and several celebrity followers.

Matt Stone, a co-creator of South Park, told the Associated Press that "This is 100 percent having to do with his faith of Scientology... He has no problem — and he's cashed plenty of checks — with our show making fun of Christians."

Stone claimed that "[Hayes] wants a different standard for religions other than his own, and to me, that is where intolerance and bigotry begin."

Trey Parker had earlier explained that Hayes was the only reason Scientology had not been the subject of a South Park episode

sooner. He said, "To be honest, what kept us from doing it before was Isaac Hayes. We knew he was a Scientologist and he's an awesome guy. We're like, 'Let's just avoid that for now.'"

Stone & Parker decided to create the episode after hearing that comedian Penn Jillette had been banned from poking fun at the controversial religion on his cable show Penn & Teller: Bullshit!.

In January of 2006, Comedy Central's United Kingdom affiliate removed the episode Trapped in the Closet from its broadcast schedule, reportedly to avoid legal action by actor Tom Cruise.

Israelis storm Palestinian jail

AFP and Reuters have reported that Israeli troops have stormed the Palestinian jail in Jericho in a bid to snatch a prisoner Israel claims is responsible for the assassination of an Israeli Minister five years ago. There are reports that one Palestinian has been killed and at least 18 prisoners and security officials have been wounded.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) demanded the handover of six prisoners, including Ahmed Saadat the alleged instigator of the 2001 assassination of Israeli Cabinet minister Rehavam Zeevi.

Israeli military officials issued a warning that unless the Jericho prisoners gave themselves up they will be killed.

The leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Ahmed Saadat told Al-Jazeera television in a telephone interview from the jail "We are not going to surrender, we are going to face our destiny with courage". Mr Saadat told BBC Arabic Service "The occupation are

planning a massacre in the Jericho complex. There is shelling from all angles and destroying the prison from all sides"

Saadat also said two of his colleagues had been killed. The troops opened fire with small arms and stun grenades. Israeli soldiers blew up the outer wall of the Jericho prison compound and IDF helicopters fired missiles into the prison. It has been reported that US and British monitors stationed there withdrew before Israeli troops arrived. The Israeli army moved in, bulldozing parts of the prison's outer compound and demanding Saadat's surrender, President Abbas blamed the British and the Americans for the developing crisis. In recent weeks, Abbas signalled he was willing to release Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) leader, Ahmed Saadat.

Reuters report that protests have surged across Palestinian territories, with most anger directed at Britain and the United States. Militants set fire to the British cultural centre and stormed the EU-compound in Gaza. There have been threats to kidnap and kill foreigners.

"This operation was ordered by the Prime Minister in the fight against terrorism. We are committed to the murderers of minister Rehavam Zeevi remaining behind bars," Gideon Ezra, Israel's Public Security Minister, told public radio.

Geysers of water on one of Saturn's moons

NASA has announced that the Cassini spacecraft has found what seems to be geysers spewing water on the moon Enceladus. The find raises the possibility of life on other worlds, as liquid water is believed to be a requirement for

life on other planets. "This marks the first time that scientists have seen evidence of water in liquid form so close to the surface on another body beyond Earth," said Cassini scientist Torrence Johnson. Although life may be found on the moon, most scientists concede that if Enceladus does harbor life, it probably consists of microbes or other primitive organisms capable of living in extreme conditions. This latest discovery shows that life in other parts of the universe may be more probable than previously thought.

"We realize that this is a radical conclusion — that we may have evidence for liquid water within a body so small and so cold," said Dr. Carolyn Porco, Cassini imaging team leader at Space Science Institute, Boulder, Colorado. "However, if we are right, we have significantly broadened the diversity of solar system environments where we might possibly have conditions suitable for living organisms."

More arrests from Cronulla riots

New South Wales Police say a 21-year-old woman has been charged in relation to the riots at Sydney's Cronulla Beach last year. She is the first woman to be arrested over reprisals from the December 11 race-fuelled riot. The woman was charged with affray, assaulting police, resisting arrest and disobeying police direction. She was refused bail.

Police said the charges related to the violent and anti-social behaviour of a large number of people who gathered at Brighton-le-Sands on the night of the Cronulla riot.

Three men have also been arrested in relation to the Cronulla

riot. A 19-year-old man handed himself into police yesterday and is due to face Parramatta Local Court charged with riot and affray.

A 21-year-old man from Cronulla also yesterday handed himself into detectives from Strike Force Enoggera, which was set up to investigate the racial unrest. The man was among the 20 whose photos were released to the media last week.

Another man, whose photo was release to the media, handed himself in to police last night. He was charged with riot and affray and given conditional bail to appear at Sutherland Local Court on April 6.

Police say Strike Force Enoggera has arrested 78 people to date, with 189 charges laid.

Warmest Canadian winter on record

The winter of 2005/2006 has been the warmest winter in Canada since the beginning of the nationwide weather record in 1948, with average nationwide temperatures 3.9°C above the long-term average. Statistically, such a strong deviation from the average is expected to be observed only once in 100 years.

While most of the country was experiencing temperatures of at least 2°C above normal, in most of Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories the temperatures were 6°C above normal, with some regions averaging up to 8°C above normal.

For this statistic the months from December through February were counted as winter.

Lack of ice in eastern Canada will probably affect the annual harp

seal hunt, which typically starts around March 15. In February, so little ice had formed that Environment Canada reported that such poor ice conditions had never been seen before in recorded history. The last time conditions approached what we saw in February 2006 was in 1969. The year 1981 was the third lowest ice year in recorded history.

In 1981, a number of harp seal mothers, who normally whelp only on ice, went to the shores of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia and gave birth on land. That year, due to the lack of ice, hundreds of thousands of seal pups drowned. The seals who were born on land faced both natural dangers such as death by exposure, and the danger of death at the hands of thousands of sealers, both licensed and unlicensed. These sealers took this rare "opportunity" to walk right up to a baby seal and kill it. Some of these seals were also attacked by domestic dogs.

Wikipedia class action site vanishes, backers revealed

The Internet group that once solicited complaints for a class action suit against Wikipedia has shut up shop and revealed its roots. Claiming to have been prompted by the John Seigenthaler Wikipedia biography controversy, the site <http://www.wikipediaclassaction.org> once sought parties to build a defamation suit against the wiki-based encyclopedia. Today, that site points to the Officialwire news service, known to be associated with Greg Lloyd Smith. The long-standing Wikipedia-alleged association between Officialwire and the QuakeAID "charity" has also been confirmed due to that site being replaced with a similar redirection.

The class action website was initially registered to one Jennifer Monroe who is affiliated with QuakeAID, an organisation which Wikipedia editors have accused of being a scam following QuakeAID personnel having created their own article on Wikipedia last year. This came at the time of the Indian Ocean earthquake, when Wikipedia user Baoutrust added QuakeAID to Wikipedia's victim donations page and sparked a dispute about the legitimacy of the organisation. Wikipedia editors did not acknowledge the tax-exempt status of the organisation which QuakeAID displayed on its home page, however this can now only be seen via Google's cache. The 501(c) registration QuakeAID used to list is generally accepted as what defines an organisation as a charity with the United States. However, a number of groups removed QuakeAID from their public lists of charities following the Wikipedia dispute.

The dispute between QuakeAID and Wikipedia editors sparked a negative publicity campaign waged via Baou Trust's news service, OfficialWire. A number of articles which portray Wikipedia, or Wikipedians in a bad light have been published on the service. The site for the proposed class-action suit provides a link displaying results of a search of OfficialWire for stories on Wikipedia. This is not the first instance of the directors of Baou Trust using their newswire to run a smear campaign against former directors of the equity company IEQ was mounted following Greg Lloyd Smith's hostile takeover of the firm.

Smith is no stranger to controversy, having been the

target of legal action by Amazon.com when he registered the Amazon.gr and Amazon.com.gr sites and set up an Amazon.com look-alike selling Greek-language books. Amazon initially filed suit in Greece, and later in the US where their complaint described initial communication from Smith as a "thinly-veiled shakedown" when he offered to sell a controlling interest in CITI to the company for \$1.6 million. The Amazon suit sought triple damages under RICO statutes stating, "Fraudulent acts of mail and wire fraud, extortion and criminal copyright infringement constitute a pattern of racketeering, and pose a threat to society."

Mad Cow disease confirmed in U.S.

John Clifford, Chief Veterinarian of the United States Department of Agriculture confirms that tests done on a sample from a cow on a farm in Alabama, contain bovine spongiform encephalopathy or mad cow disease. The results were confirmed by a Western Blot Test.

"We received a positive result on a Western blot confirmatory test conducted at the USDA laboratories in Ames, Iowa, on samples from an animal that had tested 'inconclusive' on a rapid screening test performed on Friday, March 10, 2006. In this instance, the inconclusive result from the contract lab in Georgia was confirmed through a second rapid test at the National Veterinary Services Laboratory. Now, the Western blot test has returned a positive result, and that is sufficient for us to confirm this animal to be positive for BSE, which is why we are making this announcement today," said Clifford.

"The samples were taken from a non-ambulatory animal on a farm in Alabama. A local private veterinarian euthanized and sampled the animal and sent the samples for further testing, which was conducted at one of our contract diagnostic laboratories at the University of Georgia. The animal was buried on the farm and it did not enter the animal or human food chains," he also added.

Clifford also says the cow was at least ten years old saying, "while epidemiological work to determine the animal's precise age is just getting underway and is ongoing, the attending veterinarian has indicated that, based on dentition, it was an older animal, quite possibly upwards of 10 years of age. This would indicate that this animal would have been born prior to the implementation of the Food and Drug Administration's 1997 feed ban," and that they are still looking into where the cow could have been born and raised. The cow had only been on the Alabama farm for about a year. Clifford also confirmed the cow was meant for the use of beef.

"We will be working to locate animals from this cow's birth cohort and any offspring," said Clifford. A birth cohort identifies animals born in the same herd within one year of the affected animal.

Clifford also adds that no part of the cow made it into the human feed chain saying, "I want to emphasize that human and animal health in the United States are protected by a system of interlocking safeguards, and that we remain very confident in the safety of U.S. beef. Again, this animal did not enter the human food or animal feed chains."

This is the third case of Mad Cow disease in the U.S.. The first case turned up in December of 2003, when a cow from a Washington State farm, born in Canada, tested positive for the disease.

The second cow to test positive for the disease, found last June, was born on a farm in Texas.

On March 1, 2006, Sweden announced its first possible case of Mad Cow disease and on January 23, Canada announced its fourth case of the disease.

Worldwide, at least 150 people have died from variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease which is linked to Mad Cow disease.

800 British troops being pulled out of Iraq

Britain announced Monday it will reduce its troop level in Iraq by 10 percent (about 800 troops) within the next two months. Defense Secretary John Reid said that Iraqi security forces are more capable of handling security in the country.

Reid told the House of Commons; "Our commitment to the coalition remains certain. This is a significant reduction which is based largely on the ability of the Iraqis themselves to participate and defend themselves against terrorism, but there is a long, long way to go."

During combat operations in the spring of 2003, Britain had 46,000 military personnel in Iraq. By May of 2004 the level had dropped to 18,000, and then to 8,500 by the end of 2005.

Mr Reid said that the reduction had not been prompted by escalating violence against British troops in Iraq.

U.S. military spokesman, Lt. Col. Barry Johnson, said it was "each nation's prerogative and decision on how to best support the coalition effort."

Thousands of Thai protesters prepare to march on Government House

With Thailand's The Nation reporting over 100,000 in attendance at the latest rally against PM Thaksin Shinawatra, the People's Alliance for Democracy plans to spend the night at Sanam Luang before marching on Government House in the morning.

Reports indicate that over 6,000 officers are involved in policing the event but no trouble is anticipated. Police do not intend to prevent the protesters from marching to Government House.

This latest large-scale protest against the caretaker Prime Minister is likely the most significant since the February 26 protest, and with pro-Thaksin groups making their way to Bangkok the bloody confrontation of 1992 has been brought up as a reminder. Free to air TV stations have broadcast coverage of the King's intercession in the '92 dispute where a popular uprising had been met with a military crackdown. Panthep Puapongpant, a PAD representative, indicated that the protest for Tuesday morning would take heed of the advice and proceed peacefully. Concerns over a potential clash with pro-Thaksin groups have been averted as a result of the PM's supporters planning their rally for March 16.

With voters' choices in the upcoming April 2 election already severely restricted due to the

three main opposition parties' boycott, the disqualification of candidates from minor parties further reduces the options open to those who don't boycott the election. Up to 200 may be disqualified for reasons such as holding party membership for less than 90 days or having membership in more than one party.

Today in History

44 BCE - Julius Caesar of the Roman Republic was stabbed to death by Marcus Junius Brutus and several other Roman senators on the Ides of March.

1877 - History of cricket: Cricketers representing England and Australia played the first Test match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

1906 - Charles Rolls and Henry Royce founded the automobile manufacturing company Rolls-Royce.

1917 - Tsar Nicholas II of Russia was forced to abdicate in the February Revolution, ending three centuries of Romanov rule.

1939 - German troops began the occupation of Czechoslovakia; the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was proclaimed the following day.

March 15 is Dhulandi (Holi) in Hinduism (2006)

Quote of the Day

"Fortune, which has a great deal of power in other matters but especially in war, can bring about great changes in a situation through very slight forces." ~ Julius Caesa

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