



Top Stories

Summer solstice celebrations
Around 17,000 people converged on the ancient monument of Stonehenge this morning to celebrate the summer solstice. Despite a night of torrential rain, spirits were high as the sun rose over the horizon.

Italy seeks indictment of US marine

Italian prosecutors have asked a judge to indict a United States soldier for fatally shooting the Italian intelligence officer Nicola Calipari at a roadblock in Iraq a year ago.

Featured story

"Avast ye scurvy file sharers!": Interview with Swedish Pirate Party leader Rickard Falkvinge

The Pirate Party, a new Swedish political party first publicized in January, wants to legalize sharing music, movies, and other copyrighted content using the Internet. Party leader Rickard Falkvinge shares his thoughts about the prospects of the party and the future of copyright law.

Wikipedia Current Events

• War in Afghanistan: Six Canadian soldiers are wounded following two separate attacks in the southern provinces of Afghanistan. The six casualties are the first coalition casualties since Operation Mountain Thrust began on Monday 12, 2006. (CBC)

Wikipedia Current Events

- The Government of Chad demands that the Security Council act to stop Janjaweed and UFDC incursions into Chad. Comments made by Chadian ambassador to the United Nations Ali Adoum are supported by U.S. ambassador to the UN John Bolton.
- In a press conference in South Africa, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir says that United Nations peacekeeping forces shall never come to Sudan because the push to end the Darfur genocide is controlled by an international Jewish conspiracy involving "heavy propaganda and media campaigns."
- The United States Marine Corps announces that it will be charging 7 Marines and 1 sailor with charges including murder in relation to the death of a civilian in Iraq on April 26.
- Xanana Gusmao, President of East Timor, asks Prime Minister Alkatiri to resign.
- Saddam Hussein's leading defense lawyer, Mr Khamis al-Obeidi, is assassinated in Baghdad.
- Ukraine's formerly estranged Orange Revolution allies reach an agreement to restore Yulia Tymoshenko as Prime Minister of Ukraine after three months of uncertainty.
- Katharine Jefferts Schori, the Episcopal bishop of Nevada, and the new leader of the Episcopal

Wikipedia Current Events

Church in the United States of America has said that homosexuality is not a sin.

Ivory Coast beats Serbia and Montenegro 3-2 in Group C

Ivory Coast scored three goals to pull back a 2-0 deficit and beat Serbia and Montenegro in Munich, Wednesday.

This match had no effect on the Fifa World Cup round of sixteen as the two sides started the game without a point in Group C.

Serbia and Montenegro had been beaten 6-0 in their previous Group C tie with Argentina but to begin with seemed to have put that behind them.

Nikola Ā½zigiÄ with great skill took down a long ball from Dejan Stankovic and rounded Boubacarthe Barry on 11 minutes. Ten minutes later Sasa IliÄ made it two when Cyrille Domoraud under pressure miscontrolled the ball six yards from goal.

Moments of indiscipline - two Milan Dudic handballs and the sending off of Albert Nadj for a second yellow card just before half time - seemed to show it was the broken will of the Balkans team that eventually lost the game.

Ivory Coast would end the match with 68 per cent of ball possession and having had 14 extra shots, including a Blaise Kouassi effort that hit the white of Jevric's goal.

Serbia and Montenegro were 2-0 up when on 37 minutes Dudic stuck out his hand to touch a ball tossed in front of Dragoslav Jevric's goal. Aruna Dindane tucked the spot kick away. Moments later the side in blue were down to 10 men when Nadj walked for a rough challenge into the side of Abdulkader Keita.

In the second half Dindane bagged his second, a header from a Keita cross. Then Bonaventure Kalou stepped up and scored the winner from another penalty six minutes before time.

Milan Dudic had also a hand in the second Ivory Coast penalty as it was his hand that had got in the way of Kalou's shot.

Both sides lacked the necessary discipline to keep 10 men on the pitch for the whole game. Domoraud received a second yellow in injury time and the captain had started to walk even before the referee had flashed his red.

Argentina and Netherlands play 0-0 stalemate in Group C
Argentina and the Netherlands drew 0-0 in a cagey stalemate in Frankfurt, Wednesday.

Both sides had rested key players for the game and seemed to give the greatest respect for the other side's abilities and in the end both defenses won.

With Lionel Messi and Carlos Tevez, who started for rested players, Argentina had the talent to get a win. However; though Messi was lively the Argentines struggled for space to trouble the Orangemen and Argentina had to settle for a draw, which was enough to top Group C.

The Netherlands, who had rested Arjen Robben and Giovanni van Bronckhorst, had the best of the first twenty minutes play. In this time they had 65 per cent of the play, although this was to almost even out by the end of the match.

A goal nearly came when Dirk Kuyt robbed a defender to the left of the penalty box and ran toward goal. Had Kuyt passed to Ruud Van Nistelrooij instead of forcing a near post save out of Roberto Abbondanzieri there may subsequently have been a more open match.

Argentina then had more of play though they needed a set piece to trouble the opponent's defence. A Juan Riquelme freekick fizzed low into the box and Khalid Boolahrouz almost tipped into his own net but Edwin Van Der Sar's right post intervened.

The teams denied each other space which made it hard to pass around the penalty boxes and get clear sights of goal. This is implied in the game statistics. Both keepers made three saves during the game; while - indicating some attacking play - there were 17 corner kicks as defenders successfully blocked crosses and shots.

The best two moments in a second half that was more scratchy than the first came from the boot of Tevez. On 72 minutes a hard shot from outside the box produced a one-handed save from Van Der Sar and a last minute effort from a long ball whizzed wide.

In the round of sixteen Argentina would play the runners-up of Group D who were Mexico. The Netherlands would play Portugal for the right to get into the Fifa World Cup quarter-finals.

Angola draw 1-1 with Iran in Group D

Portugal struck two early and held on to beat Mexico in their final Group D match in Gelsenkirchen, Wednesday.

The three goals came in the first period of a match in which Mexico had a player sent off and missed a penalty in the second.

Portugal had rested Deco, Ronaldo and Pauletta but with Figo, Simao and Maniche still packed an offensive threat.

Five minutes into the game Simão ran down the left side of the penalty area and passed a ball square. It deceived the Mexican defence and Maniche, who ran on to it, placed the ball high beyond Oswaldo Sanchez.

The second goal came after 23 minutes when Rafael Marquez reached with his hand to meet a cross from a corner. The resultant penalty saw a theatrical display by Sanchez on the goal line but Simao scored hard to his right.

If Mexico's Omar Bravo had a better game the result might have been a Mexican victory. In the first half he volleyed wide and via a Ricardo leg-save hit the crossbar; on 63 minutes through on goal he blazed over.

Bravo's best chance came on a 56 minute penalty kick after a move of neat passes ended with Miguel's arm connecting with Luis Perez's ball control in the area. Bravo stepped up and hit well over.

Statistics say ball possession was equal and shots on goal were just shaded by Mexico despite the fact Ricardo La Volpe's side had to play the last half hour with 10 men.

Perez received his second yellow card four minutes after Bravo had missed his penalty - sent off for foul simulation in the Portugese penalty area, in an apparent attempt to get another.

The biggest threat to Portugal's goal was posed by Jose Fonseca. He got four of six shots on target and scored the only Mexican goal, a glancing header from Bravo's corner kick.

Defeat to Portugal did not alter the top two positions in Group D. Luiz Felipe Scolari's Portugal would next play the team placed second in Group C in the round of sixteen, while Mexico had to play the winner of that group.

Mexico lose 1-2 to Portugal but still qualify in Group D

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England fans watch match in cinema

A few hundred England fans weren't watching the match against Sweden last night in a pub or at home, but instead had ventured out to their local cinema to see the game on the big screen. A number of Odeon cinemas nationwide have been using digital

projection technology to screen the matches live with a high definition (HD) picture. HD broadcasts contain a greater level of detail than traditional TV broadcasts, meaning a sharper picture and better sound quality.

In the darkened auditorium of the cinema in Covent Garden, the audience (or should that be crowd?) were behaving almost as if they were at the stadium, singing along to the national anthem, cheering at the England goals and groaning at the Sweden chances. At times, chants being sung by the England crowd at the match were even picked up and sung along to by those watching the cinema screen like some kind of football karaoke contest.

Trailers before the match were replaced by a soundtrack of England anthems, both the successful and not-so-successful ones, and the traditional movie treat of popcorn was replaced by trays of beer (in plastic cups) being brought in by the punters. The cinema had cheekily listed the screening as being 'directed by Sven-Goran Eriksson' and as 'starring Wayne Rooney (hopefully)'.

Despite a disappointing 2-2 draw, the audience seemed impressed with the experience. "I'm a bit short and so wanted to make sure I had good view without having to jostle around for position," Amanda, from London, explained to me. "I also liked that it was non-smoking, and there was a fabulous atmosphere". Sian, Caio and Laura, who lived locally, said they wanted to see the match on the big screen and commented on the excellent picture quality.

Other events that have been broadcast by the cinema chain

include concerts by Robbie Williams and Elton John. Odeon Marketing Director Luke Vetere said "offering films is just one part of the cinema experience - our ambition is to offer guests the chance to watch other events they feel passionate about". Watching football in the cinema is not a brand new event though, during previous World Cups such as in 1966, film footage from the matches was broadcast in cinemas after the event, providing a way for people to see the games in colour when TV broadcasts were in black and white.

Cinema screenings aren't the only way that fans can watch the World Cup games in high-definition this year though, as both Sky TV and Telewest have been broadcasting the games in HD to viewers with a special set-top box. There have been trials with HD on the growing Freeview platform too, with a pilot group of a few hundred viewers in London. However, as any move to roll out HD on Freeview would use up extra space on the broadcast spectrum and would require viewers to buy a new set-top box, it seems unlikely that this will happen any time soon.

Australia's Old Parliament House becomes heritage listed

Australian Prime Minister John Howard announced on Tuesday that Old Parliament House in Canberra has been heritage listed. It is the 31st entry on the National Heritage List.

The listing acknowledges the role the building has in shaping Australia's culture and protects it from being modified in any way which could affect its historic value.

Old Parliament House served as the home of Australia's parliament

from 1927 until 1988, when it was relocated to the present parliament house. From 1901-1927, parliament met in Melbourne in the Victorian Parliament House (the state parliament was relocated for 26 years). Before being known as Old Parliament House, the building was known as Provisional Parliament House - as it was built to be used for 50 years before a permanent building could be built.

In the 61 years the building was used as the seat of parliament, the government changed only seven times. The birth of several political parties (the Liberals, Anti-Communist Labor Party and the Australian Democrats).

Mr Howard said the building played an important part in Australia's political history. "Old Parliament House will always be an important part of our political history with its rich collection of original furniture, art and memorabilia helping to illustrate the story of Australia's political customs and functions," he said.

According to Mr Howard, the National Heritage List lists sites which have helped shape the country. "The National Heritage List contains places that have played an important role in the development of our nation, such as Captain Cook's landing place in New South Wales, Port Arthur in Tasmania and the Australian War Memorial in Canberra," said the Prime Minister.

NZ law exempts working farm dogs from embedded ID tag rule

New Zealand farmers have won a key victory in Parliament, with MPs voting to exempt Working farm dogs from microchipping legislation, passing 61:60.

The law has been debated for a long time by the Federated Farmers who said that the cost of microchipping all their dogs will be a huge cost and an inconvenience. Under previous legislation, all newly registered dogs were to have identification micro-chips embedded by July 1. The microchips in dogs are for owner identification, in case of attacks on humans. This law was introduced when Carolina Anderson, 7-year-old, was attacked in 2003.

Parliament has been debating several proposed amendments to the Local Government Law Reform bill, which aimed to change the micro-chipping requirement.

Blogger David Farrar says "It is very messy for the Government to lose the vote after piling so much pressure on." In the end only Labour, Progressive plus New Zealand First voted for it.

The Green party split votes (rare for a party). Four Greens MPs voted for the farm dog exemption and two against.

The four Green MPs were - Sue Bradford, Keith Locke, Sue Kedgley and Nandor Tanczos The Greens had previously proposed that only dangerous dogs should be microchipped.

In favour of exempting farm dogs:
National: 48
Greens party: 4
Maori: 4
United Future: 3
ACT: 2
Total: 61

Against:
Labour: 50
Progressive: 1
NZ First: 7
Greens party: 2
Total: 60

Summer solstice celebrations

Around 17,000 people converged on the ancient monument of Stonehenge this morning to celebrate the summer solstice. Despite a night of torrential rain, spirits were high as the sun rose over the horizon - though the cloud did block out the dawn for much of the event.

The summer solstice is the longest day of the year in terms of time between dawn and dusk. Stonehenge is constructed in such a way that on the dawn of the solstice, the sun appears in the centre of one of the stone structures. Pagan rituals have taken place at this time every year for many centuries.

Australian House of Representatives moves to affirm support for heterosexuality of marriage

The Australian House of Representatives yesterday discussed as part of private Member's business a motion moved by Michael Johnson (Australian Liberal Party, Division of Ryan) that sought to affirm and "celebrate" support for marriage "between a man and a woman" and called on the Government to "enact policies that promote and strengthen marriage".

Johnson discussed the earlier amendment to the Australian Marriage Act passed in 2004 which effectively removed the possibility for same-sex marriage, and continued that the failed efforts of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) to provide for civil unions within that state was a matter for "grave alarm". Johnson then argued against same-sex marriage saying that "Children come from marriage and families stem from marriage". Johnson criticized the earlier ACT legislation which

provided for the dissolution of civil unions by letter to the ACT registrar, stating that "Marriage is a lifelong commitment". However, Johnson went on to discuss the breakdown of marriage and the status of single parents to argue that "surely we all agree that the best environment for the rearing of children is one that has both a mother and a father".

Chris Hayes (Australian Labor Party, Division of Werriwa), took a different stance in speaking to the motion, by discussing how the Government's new industrial relation legislation, WorkChoices, would affect the balancing of work and family life, and called for industrial legislation that would "support families into the future".

Margaret May (Liberal, Division of McPherson), the seconder of the motion, recommenced arguing against same-sex marriage, calling it a "social experiment", and went on to state that "Same sex relationships, or, indeed, unions should not have the same status as a marriage between a man and a woman". May concluded her speech by calling for support to "services to assist children, young people and adults and to continue sustaining safe, supportive and nurturing family relationships".

John Murphy (Labor, Division of Lowe) also affirmed support for heterosexual marriage, by stating that "Marriage is a natural bond between man and woman, recognized in the vast majority of cultures, whether Christian or otherwise", and that "nature ordains the natural procreative function of man and woman". Murphy also addressed the amendments to the Marriage Act, saying that "this definition is the only valid recognition of our civil laws which correctly reflects the

natural law and moral law", and that "You do not even have to believe in anything to draw that conclusion." Murphy however stated in conclusion of his speech that "we are all let down by those who...mask their support for marriage and who employ it as a weapon to attack the many other relationships in our society. Such attacks are unconscionable, unnecessary and unjustified."

Michael Ferguson (Liberal, Division of Bass) reiterated points raised by those before him, but also mentioned the issue of discrimination, saying that "there is different treatment under the law for different relationships. But this is not about discrimination against the individual and it is not designed to be." Ferguson continued to say that "As individual people, homosexual men and women have exactly the same legal rights as you or I".

Craig Emerson (Labor, Division of Rankin) quoted a House Committee report To have and to hold -- strategies to strengthen marriage and relationships, saying that the report was bipartisan and that "the issue of marriage does enjoy bipartisan support in this parliament", and reiterated Labor's support for the Marriage Amendment which excluded the possibility for same-sex marriage. Emerson concluded his remarks by again tying the impact of the WorkChoices to family life.

No other members of parliament spoke against or criticised the motion before debate was interrupted. The debate is set to continue today.

Interestingly, the Australian Senate is yet to debate a motion moved by the Australian Democrats in order to repeal the

Marriage Amendment discussed and institute same-sex marriage. The Australian Greens are also supportive of same-sex marriage, but neither of these parties hold seats in the House.

Today in History

168 BC - In the Battle of Pydna, Roman forces defeated and captured Macedonian King Perseus.

1854 - The British Parliament abolished feudalism and the seigneurial system in British North America.

1937 - Camille Chautemps became Prime Minister of France in the second Popular Front ministry.

1941 - Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union with Operation Barbarossa.

1986 - Argentine footballer Diego Maradona scored both the Hand of God goal and the Goal of the Century against England during the quarter-final match of the FIFA World Cup in Mexico City.

Quote of the Day

"The intellectual is constantly betrayed by his vanity. Godlike he blandly assumes that he can express everything in words; whereas the things one loves, lives, and dies for are not, in the last analysis completely expressible in words." ~ Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Word of the Day

posthaste; adv

1. Quickly; with great rapidity.

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