



Top Stories

Pluto loses planet status

Astronomers have voted to strip Pluto of its status as a planet.

Netherlands flight alert suspects to be freed

The twelve people arrested after a US flight had to make an emergency landing in Amsterdam yesterday will be released.

Featured story

Violence in Congo after first round election results are announced

Three days of violent clashes have followed Sunday's announcement of the results of the first round of polling in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. President Kabila failed to win an outright majority needed to avoid a runoff against the second placed Jean-Pierre Bemba.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The largest computer games expo in the transatlantic region, the Games Convention in Leipzig, Germany opens for the public.
- Unexploded Israeli cluster bombs, some dating back to the Vietnam war era, are exacting an increasing toll on Lebanese civilians returning home, the UN and human rights groups say.
- French President Jacques Chirac says 1,600 more French troops will serve in the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon.
- Syria threatens to shut border

Wikipedia Current Events

with Lebanon.

- Syria decides to cut power supplies to Lebanon after Israel bombed power stations during the war.
- Israeli forces have killed a Palestinian and detained a senior member of the governing Hamas movement in a southern Gaza raid, witnesses and the army said.
- An Israeli senior source says that Israel "may have to go it alone," saying that the Iranian response to a package of incentives to halt its uranium enrichment was just to "gain time," and said that Iran had "flipped the world the bird."
- Angela Merkel states that Iran's response to the incentives by world powers aiming to persuade it to give up nuclear power is unsatisfactory.
- Definition of planet: At a meeting of the International Astronomical Union in Prague, Czech Republic, delegates vote to strip Pluto of its status as a planet.
- Apple Computer announces a recall of 1.8 million batteries for its PowerBook G4 and iBook G4 models.
- The Kyodo News Agency reports that there is activity at a North Korean nuclear testing site.

In Ireland, Roscrea Town Centre Evacuated

Roscrea's town centre in Ireland was evacuated on August 23rd, 2006. The decision was made after

Gardai observed a man and a device believed to be dangerous in a house. Bomb disposal experts were on standby. The incident ended peacefully on August 24th, 2006 and the man is believed to be Jim Hourigan, a separated father of three from Limerick, who was taken into Gardai custody.

Mr Hourigan released a statement through his solicitor, before he was placed in Gardai custody. It states he is frustrated by the delays in achieving justice for being sexually abused while training as a Christian Brother.

Roscrea town centre remains sealed off, as garda technical experts examine the house in which Mr Hourigan's live.

Confrontation between Greenpeace and fishermen off Marseille

The ship of the organisation Greenpeace, the Rainbow Warrior II, was blockaded off Marseille by a fleet of 30 fisherman ships. The fishermen protested against the campaign by Greenpeace regarding an alleged over-fishing of blue-fin tuna.

The fishermen encircled the Rainbow Warrior II, leaving her only the room to receive supply from the land by means of small boats. The confrontation was settled when Greenpeace accepted that a ship of the French Navy, the oceanic tug Abeille Flandre, escort her to another harbour for supply, before leaving for Spain.

After blockading the ship, the fishermen blockaded the commercial harbour of Marseille, blocking traffic of passengers.

The préfecture maritime has required an investigation by the parquet regarding the multiple infractions which the Navy reported; these include the fishermen blocking and boarding the Rainbow Warrior II, the Rainbow Warrior II twice violating orders from the préfecture maritime not to stay off Marseille, and "problematic manoeuvres" on both sides.

Pluto loses planet status Violence follows Congo election result

Today, astronomers have endorsed a proposal about the definition of the word planet. As a consequence, our solar system now counts 8 classical planets. They are Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. 4 plutonian objects or Pluto-like entities have also been named: Pluto itself, Ceres, 2003 UB313 and Charon.

Some 2500 astronomers from over 75 countries gathered this week in Prague at the the Congress of the International Astronomical Union to decide on a formal definition of a planet. Previously, there was no definition and with the discovery of new objects beyond Pluto there was much need for a clear criterion.

The final draft states: "A planet is a celestial body that

1. is in orbit around the Sun
2. has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a hydrostatic equilibrium (nearly round) shape
3. has cleared the

neighbourhood around its orbit."

Pluto did not meet one of the criteria : its orbit overlaps with Neptune's.

Louis Friedman, the executive director of the Planetary Society in California said: "The classification doesn't matter. Pluto - and all Solar System objects - are mysterious and exciting new worlds that need to be explored and better understood."

Ever since its discovery by American Clyde Tombaugh in 1930, Pluto has been considered a planet. As a consequence of the vote, many textbooks, encyclopedias and other sources will need rewriting.

Netherlands flight alert suspects to be freed

The twelve people arrested after a US flight had to make an emergency landing in Amsterdam yesterday will be released, Dutch prosecutors say. "From the statement of suspects and witnesses, no evidence could be brought forward that these men were about to commit an act of violence," said a prosecution statement. It also added that no bombs were found by police on the aircraft.

The Northwest Airlines flight, which was destined for Mumbai in India, was escorted back to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport due to a security alert.

The plane, which had 149 passengers on board, was accompanied by two F-16 fighter jets after passengers allegedly informed US air marshals of their concerns about a group of Asian men who were fidgeting with plastic bags and mobile phones.

On landing, the twelve passengers were taken off the plane and interrogated by police.

Since August 10, when police in the UK claimed they had foiled a suspected plot to blow up several transatlantic planes, security has been stepped up worldwide.

Man arrested for broadcasting Hezbollah television in New York

Javed Iqbal, owner of Brooklyn-based television company HDTV Ltd., was arrested yesterday by United States government authorities for airing content from al-Manar (The Beacon). According to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Iqbal has been charged with conspiracy to violate the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. Government authorities also searched the HDTV Ltd. office and Iqbal's home in Staten Island on suspicion of maintaining satellite dishes.

According to documents filed in U.S. District Court in Manhattan, the arrest followed a tip from a confidential source in February. A lawyer representing Iqbal, Mustapha Ndanusa, described the accusations against his client — violating U.S. law by providing news outlets to people with a satellite dish — as "completely ridiculous". If convicted, Iqbal faces up to five years in prison.

Al-Manar was launched by Hezbollah in 1991. The U.S. Department of the Treasury has declared al-Manar a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity pursuant to Executive Order 13224, which criminalizes business conduct with al-Manar and prohibits their access to American news outlets. France and Spain have also prohibited al-Manar

broadcasts. Transmission of al-Manar broadcasts in North America via Intelsat have been blocked since December 17, 2004, when the U.S. Department of State placed al-Manar on the Terrorist Exclusion List.

8 Afghans killed in early morning raid

Eight people, including one child, were killed in an early morning raid by US and Afghan forces in the Asmar, a village in the Kunar province of Afghanistan bordering Pakistan. American forces claim that the seven adults were linked with al-Qaeda while Afghan police deny this saying that the victims were local families and elders who had gathered to resolve a dispute.

The US military says the raid was launched after American and Afghan forces came under attack.

"Afghan and coalition forces came under direct fire when approaching the compound and defended themselves with return fire," the U.S. statement said.

"All of the men killed were engaging Afghan and coalition forces with hostile fire."

Weapons, ammunition and grenades were seized according to the American statement.

The dead child was between the ages of 10 and 12 according to Colonel Thomas Collins who claimed "al-Qaeda fighters deliberately put women and children at risk in an effort to protect their illegal and immoral operations."

American forces have been involved in heavy fighting in Kunar in the past month as they search for Taleban and al-Qaeda fighters in the rugged mountains of the

region.

UK population exceeds 60 million for the first time

The Office of National Statistics have this morning revealed figures which show the United Kingdom's population has exceeded sixty million for the first time.

In June 2005, the number of people living in the country was 60.2 million, an increase of 0.6% since June 2004. The figures also show that there were 50.4 million people residing in the England area of the UK last year.

International migration played a large part in the increase, which was the largest yearly growth in population since 1962.

Ukraine celebrates Independence Day

Ukraine celebrates its independence day today, 15 years after it broke away from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Ukrainian president Victor Yushenko told a crowd at an event to mark the occasion: "By the will of the people, our country's course toward membership in the European Union and NATO will be carried through ... and most importantly, I reiterate and guarantee that Ukraine's democratic, liberal, and national choice is irreversible and unconditional."

Yushenko told the press yesterday that he would insist on the rehabilitation of those who raised the Ukrainian flag in Ternopil in 1973.

The Russian president Vladimir Putin sent a message of congratulations to his Ukrainian counterpart and offered reassurances about Russo-

Ukrainian relations. His note to Yushenko said: "I am convinced that on the basis of mutual understanding and compromise on unresolved issues we can reach the level of true strategic partnership, a fundamental principle recorded in the treaty of friendship, cooperation and partnership."

Local communities in the UK must "root out" extremism, says Ruth Kelly

In a speech in South London this morning, Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly has urged local communities to "root out" fanaticism.

She was speaking as head of the government's Commission on Integration and Cohesion. The commission was established to enhance community relations after the 7 July bomb attacks in London last year, and it will investigate how tensions between people of different ethnic groups and religions can be countered.

"Alongside the debate, we need action at all levels - national, but even more importantly from local communities themselves to help build united communities and root out all forms of extremism," Ms Kelly said.

She also warned that communities were becoming more and more secluded from each other. "In our attempt to avoid imposing a single British identity and culture, have we ended up with some communities living in isolation from each other with no common bonds between them?" she asked.

On the subject of immigration, Ms Kelly said it is not racist to discuss the issue. "We need a well-managed system of immigration that has clear rules and integrity

to counter exploitations from the far right."

She also acknowledged that international events are having an impact on community relations. "Global tensions are being reflected on the streets of local communities," she said.

Damian Green, the Conservative Party's spokesman on immigration, said: "There is a huge and vital challenge to be met in helping Britain's Muslim communities integrate fully with the rest of society. We hope that this latest government initiative has more substance than previous initiatives which have tended to grab a headline but then achieve very little in the long term."

India may pull peacekeeping troops out of Lebanon

Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee has said India may withdraw the 775 troops it has stationed in Lebanon as part of the 1,990-strong United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

A new U.N force, comprising of troops from Italy, France and other nations is being organised to act as a buffer between Israeli forces and Hezbollah, following the recent conflict between the two. Diplomatic sources say the withdrawal decision may have been taken because the new mandate involves peace-enforcement as opposed to peace-keeping. India, which is currently the second-largest troop-contributor to U.N peacekeeping operations, will wait till the expiry of the current mandate on 31st August before handing over its positions to the new force. The contingent from the 4th Sikh Battalion is currently engaged in rescue and rehabilitation work following the recent weeks of

conflict, in which one of its peacekeepers was critically injured by shrapnel from an Israeli shell.

Allegations that New Zealand school administers corporal punishment

South Auckland Tyndale Park Christian School have been asking parents of the pupils for permission to administer corporal punishment. The parents are informed that corporal punishment is illegal in New Zealand schools but it quotes the Bible "we ought to serve God rather than men". Strapping children has been illegal since 1989.

"When this law was changed. . . exceptions were not given based on whether a school believed it was serving 'God rather than men'. The Education Ministry should investigate allegations that trustees and staff at an Auckland school have sought permission from parents to strap children. It appears to me the school is deliberately breaking the law," Green Party Member (MP), Sue Bradford, said.

Today the New Zealand Herald reported that they had obtained documents that outline the school's "corporal correction" policy. The policy states that the strap must be given on the hand after consultation with another staff member and while that staff member is present. The child will then either be spoken to, prayed with or both.

Bradford said: "A full investigation was needed to ascertain whether any students at the school had been assaulted."

Tyndale Park Christian School is a private Christian school that caters for students ranging from Year 1 to Year 13. The costs range from

NZ\$708-\$1070 per term.

Jan Brinkham, school manager, said: "Our enrollment policy is between the parents who enrol children here and ourselves. We are not a state school; we are not bound by a particular enrollment policy," but declined to talk or comment to the New Zealand Herald about the schools corporal punishment. "This is between the parents that enroll their children at our school and that is where the buck stops. It's got nothing to do with anyone else except our parents," he added.

The Education Review Office (ERO) and the Ministry of Education said that they were unaware of the policy and that private schools are not legally obliged to produce documents to government bodies.

ERO last year said in a report: "The school manager should ensure that parents are clearly informed that the school administers no corporal punishment."

Charlene Scotti, ERO area manger of review services said: "Some schools had policies to call parents in for cases where corporal punishment was required, but were careful not to include staff in punishing students."

Bruce Adin, Ministry of Education northern regional manager, said: "The legality of the Tyndale Park document was unclear, but if school staff strapped a student it would be illegal."

"Corporal punishment in schools was made illegal years ago because it was considered to be brutal and unnecessary," Bradford said.

Today in History

1814 - Washington, D.C. was burnt down during the War of 1812.

1835 - The New York Sun perpetrated the Great Moon Hoax.

1912 - The Kuomintang was founded by Sung Chiao-jen and Dr. Sun Yat-sen in Guangdong, China.

1920 - In the Polish-Soviet War, the Battle of Warsaw ended with a Russian defeat.

1989 - The Voyager 2 spacecraft reached Neptune, the last planet it could visit before leaving the solar system.

August 25 is Independence Day in Uruguay (1825)

Quote of the Day

"If those in charge of our society — politicians, corporate executives, and owners of press and television — can dominate our ideas, they will be secure in their power. They will not need soldiers patrolling the streets. We will control ourselves." ~ Howard Zinn

Word of the Day

vortex; n

1. A whirlwind, whirlpool, or similarly moving matter in the form of a spiral or column.
2. Anything that involves constant violent or chaotic activity around some centre.
3. Anything which inevitably draws surrounding things into its current.

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http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Main_Page

Word of the Day

http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Main_Page

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