



Top Stories

Google and Yahoo remain on the top of the U.S. web search market

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Saddam's co-defendant decapitated while being hanged

Saddam Hussein's half brother and former chief of the Iraqi secret police, Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, along with the former chief judge of the revolutionary court, Awad Hamad al-Bandar were hanged today in Baghdad at approximately 3:00 a.m. local time for their role in the 1982 killing of 148 Shiite Muslims in the village of Dujail. Ibrahim al-Tikriti's head got separated from his body during the execution.

Featured story

Bollywood stars Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan engaged

Indian actors Abhishek Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai confirmed that they were engaged in Mumbai last night, ending months of media speculation about the relationship between the two. The wedding is reportedly scheduled to be held at the Hyatt around March this year.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Lieutenant-General Dan Halutz, the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Army, resigns while inquiries into the performance of the Israel Defence Forces in the action against Hezbollah continue.
- Bomb attacks at Mustansiriya University in Baghdad kill at least 70 people with over 100 people killed in Baghdad as a whole.
- The world's first genetically modified chickens have been bred by scientists in Edinburgh. The birds supposedly lay eggs that can help fight cancer.

String of church fires in Greenville, NC cause concern

Numerous city, state, and federal agencies are involved in the investigation of a recent string of church fires this past weekend in the city of Greenville, North Carolina, U.S.A.

A police spokesman said two Baptist churches were believed to be set on fire and a third was broken into this past weekend. Damages are estimated to be over US\$1,000,000.

City of Greenville Police, Greenville Fire Department, North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms are a part of a joint task force set up to investigate these incidents.

Evidence from the fire scenes have been sent to the state crime lab

for analysis.

A US\$10,000 reward is being offered for information leading to an arrest of the perpetrators of this crime.

Orange County Sheriff's Office still investigating into Tigger hit

Investigation is still underway by the Orange County Sheriff's Office into the hit Tigger unleashed on a tourist at Walt Disney World on January 6.

The status of Walt Disney World's seperate investigation is unknown.

Yesterday Captain Mark Strobridge confirmed with Wikinews that the investigation was on-going. "The Orange County Sheriff's Office is investigating the case and is not prepared to provide details at this time." They are not commenting to the press on any details.

The Walt Disney Company (Canada) Ltd. has not replied to Wikinews' multiple requests for comment. The Monaco family has not talked to the press since an exclusive CBS The Early Show appearance a week ago Monday. They had originally talked to a FOX News affiliated channel.

Two Sundays prior, video broke internationally of Disney employee Michael J. Fedelem as Tigger, hitting teen Jerry Monaco Jr. in the head. The New Hampshire tourist and his father both claim the hit was unprovoked. They claimed Jerry Jr. needed medical attention

and prescription medicine that night. In contrast, most Internet pundits critical of the video have suggested that the hit was relatively weak. Fedelem himself claims the swat was indeed provoked, after the Monaco Jr was pulling on his costume, trying to suffocate him.

The Teamsters Union Local 385 website appears to suggest that not all character cast members are unionized. Fedelem is known to be unionized, as he is mentioned on the website regarding a separate matter.

Wikinews will continue to follow this story as it develops.

Hit becomes punchline

Tim MacDonald of The News and Tribune joked that, "in addition to her Majority Whip", new US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi "might want to consider hiring the DisneyWorld employee in the Tigger costume to keep her Democrats in line."

Meanwhile, a British columnist riffed on how Tigger let the boy off lightly. Brian Reade commented "most Brits feel that, simply on the grounds he's called Junior, it's a shame the guy in the Tigger costume wasn't called Charles Manson."

A columnist suggested that "Tigger does more parenting before 9 a.m. than some parents do their entire lives", in an article advocating discipline. Doug Powers contined that, "If the boy was taken to the hospital for that, Lord help him if he's ever in a pillow fight. The poor lad would be in traction for a month."

Bravitude climbing fast on Google

You won't find the word

"Bravitude" in any French dictionary yet. Bravitude is a neologism used by Ségolène Royal, the French socialist presidential candidate. She said it during a visit to the Great Wall of China, and the term caused a media buzz in France. It also provoked ironic reactions from Nicolas Sarkozy, who has been nominated Sunday by President Chirac's party UMP as their candidate for the presidency. According to Royal's entourage, it was meant to express something more than just simple bravery (in French: bravoure), a kind of fullness of bravery.

Some neologisms need months, often years, to reach an acceptable level of recognition to get included in a conventional dictionary. This is often based on the usage in newspapers etc. Bravitude on Google had only, the day before its first occurrence on French TV, a mere 110 hits.

Bravitude was then already used since 2005 on some blogs and by fans of a quite unknown role-playing game. On Tuesday last week, bravitude could be found in 200,000 different pages and in less than one week, had reached the one million mark. This neologism is this Tuesday in a slow decline process around 900,000 hits on Google, probably due to those web sites who hide their oldest pages while Google robots scan them.

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Monday survey, it has also ranked higher.

According to comScore Networks Inc., a firm dealing with Web audience measurement, Microsoft Corp. is in third place. However, its share decreased 0.5 percent to 10.5 percent of Web searches performed by American users. The slight decline has also been suffered by Ask.com's share - it diminished by 0.1 percent to reach 5.4 percent.

The United States has been named by the comScore Networks Inc. the largest Internet market in the world. Google's share of the U.S. Web search market has continuously grown during the recent period of over a year. As for Yahoo, its share of the market became 0.3 percent higher, having reached 28.5 percent in December compared to November, as marked by the survey.

U.S. Web users carried 6.7 billion searches in December - that means from November the overall number of searches increased by 1 percent. Since December, 2005 the number of U.S. Web searches has become 30 percent higher - 3.2 billion searches were conducted by web users on Google sites and 1.9 billion searches on Yahoo.

New Zealand's threatened species list updated

The publication titled New Zealand Threat Classification System list was updated today and replaces the first edition done in October, 2002.

In the new publication the New Zealand Department of Conservation updates the classification of 5819 plants and animals native to New Zealand. Around half of those 5,819 plants and animals are listed as

threatened and the rest require more data to determine if they are threatened. 44 of those have had a significant change in their status, this is mainly thought to be because of more data available on their species.

The new list will be used to help the threatened plants and animals in the future and prioritise which are the most in danger.

Honourable Chris Carter, minister of conservation, said: "While New Zealand has shown the world that we are world leaders in habitat restoration and pest eradication, we must not become complacent. Human-induced threats and the introduction of predators and pests continue to plague our native species."

The list is used by many people who want to help conserve New Zealand's wildlife, and help reduce the risk of extinction to any of New Zealand's native species of animals and plants.

Hon Carter said: "This list is an important tool used to guide the Department of Conservation and other organisations which focus on species conservation."

Hydrofoil collides with cargo ship near Sicily

A hydrofoil and a cargo ship have entered into collision this evening, at around 18:15 Italian local time (17:15 UTC) near the harbor of Messina, Sicily, Italy.

The hydrofoil, named "Segesta jet", was doing a regular passenger service from Reggio Calabria to Messina, carrying 151 passengers and 6 crew members.

The cargo ship is reported to be the "Susan Borchard", registered in Antigua and Barbuda.

The number of people dead or injured is not currently established, but during the night the number of fatalities rose to 4.

Today in History

1893 - The Citizens' Committee of Public Safety led by Lorrin A.

Thurston overthrew the government of Queen Lili'uokalani of the Kingdom of Hawaii.

1929 - Popeye the Sailor, a cartoon character created by E. C. Segar, first appeared in newspaper comic strips.

1946 - The United Nations Security Council held its first meeting at Church House in London.

1977 - Convicted murderer Gary Gilmore was executed by a firing squad in Utah, ending a four-year moratorium on the death penalty in the United States.

1995 - The Great Hanshin Earthquake struck near Kobe, Japan, killing over 6,000 people and causing over ten trillion yen in damage.

Quote of the Day

To me, literature is a calling, even a kind of salvation. It connects me with an enterprise that is over 2,000 years old. What do we have from the past? Art and thought.

That's what lasts. That's what continues to feed people and give them an idea of something better. A better state of one's feelings or simply the idea of a silence in one's self that allows one to think or to feel. Which to me is the same.

~ Susan Sontag

Word of the Day

catharsis; n

1. A release of emotional tension after an overwhelming vicarious experience.

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