



Top Stories

Canadian Minister of National Defence withdraws from NATO candidacy

Peter MacKay, the Canadian Minister of National Defence, said on Sunday that he has decided not to pursue his undeclared candidacy to run for Secretary General of NATO. A new Secretary General will be established at the NATO leaders summit held in France and Germany April 3-4.

England wins women's cricket World Cup

England beat New Zealand in the final of the 2009 Women's World Cup tournament at North Sydney Oval, North Sydney in Australia to win the title for the third time. Nicky Shaw of England was declared the player of the match and Sarah Taylor was declared the player of the series.

FedEx jet crash lands in Tokyo, burns

On Monday, a FedEx McDonnell Douglas MD-11 cargo jet flying from Guangzhou, China to Tokyo, Japan crash-landed at Tokyo's Narita International Airport at about 7 a.m. local time. The plane landed during high winds, and bounced twice upon landing before flipping over and bursting into flames.

Alaskan volcano erupts

Mount Redoubt, an active volcano west of Anchorage, Alaska, has erupted, according to the USGS Volcano Center. Between

Top Stories

10:38pm on March 22 and 1:39am Alaska time on March 23, the USGS recorded four explosions at the volcano, which had been giving indications of an imminent eruption since March 15.

Wikipedia Current Events

- A car bomb is located and defused in Haifa, Israel.
- Two suicide attacks in Iraq kill at least 22 people and injure more than 50 others.
- Alaska's Mount Redoubt volcano erupts four more times.
- The United States Treasury Department announces that it will purchase US\$500 billion in high-yield debts from banks.
- Gjorge Ivanov of the VMRO-DPMNE leads the first round of Macedonia's presidential election.
- FedEx Express Flight 80 crashes at Narita International Airport in Tokyo, Japan, killing both pilots.
- A suicide attack kills one person and injures three others in Islamabad, Pakistan.
- A Japanese cargo ship escapes Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden.

US stock markets soar after bailout plan

United States stock markets surged on Tuesday, following an announcement by the government to give another bailout to the banks. All three major stock

indexes posted gains of about seven percent at the closing bell.

Part of the rally was attributed to the US Treasury's announcement that it will buy up to US\$1 trillion in toxic acids.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 497.48 points, or 6.84%, to a level of 7,775.86, while the Nasdaq Composite soared 98.50 points, or 6.76%, to 1,555.77 points. The Standard & Poor's 500 index jumped by 7.07% or 54.37 points, reaching a level of 822.91.

Among the winners in today's rally were bank stocks. Shares for the Frontier Financial Corporation, a regional bank serving the northwestern US, surged by 52%. Other banks also saw their shares increase: Bank of America stocks increased by 26%, JP Morgan Chase by 25%, and Citigroup by 19.5%.

Crude oil prices were up \$1.73 or three percent to \$53.8 a barrel.

Overseas stock exchanges also rallied: indexes in France, the United Kingdom, and Germany all rose by approximately 2.8%.

Suncor makes bid to take over Petro-Canada

Two of Canada's largest energy companies are merging, with Suncor Energy making a CA\$19.2-billion bid to take over Petro-Canada.

Suncor shareholders purchased \$19.2 billion in stock and now own

about 60% of Petro-Canada. Petro-Canada shareholders own the remaining 40%.

Suncor is reported to be the third largest Canadian energy producer, and Petro-Canada is Canada's sixth largest. The current market value of Petro-Canada is \$14.4 billion.

"This is a made-in-Canada response to the challenges presented by global market uncertainty. More importantly, it's a made-in-Canada strategy to unleash the potential of these two companies and their people in the future," said Ron Brenneman, chief executive officer of Petro-Canada.

"We need to face head-on the issue of global competition in a time of economic uncertainty. In these difficult times, we believe that joining forces provides the strength we need to be a leader in value creation in an extremely competitive industry, added Brenneman."

Petro-Canada shares on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSE) rose from \$29.65 to \$36.77, a 24% rise, while Suncor shares rose from \$30.90 to \$32.12, up 5%, at mid-morning.

"The merger will be good for shareholders of both companies with reduced capital requirements, operating efficiencies and complementary integration opportunities between upstream and downstream assets. The increased scale provides more stability in volatile markets, plus the financial and organizational capability to successfully take on large-scale projects in the future," said Mr. Rick George, current Suncor chief executive and the next CEO for the merged companies.

Son of poet Sylvia Plath commits suicide

The son of poets Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes has committed suicide.

Nicholas Hughes hanged himself at his home in Fairbanks, Alaska on March 16, after a long battle with depression. Hughes was 47 at the time of his death.

Media outlets described the death as another in a long line of tragedy for the family.

Hughes was only one year old when his mother famously gassed herself to death in 1963, soon after her relationship with Ted Hughes ended. In 1969, Ted Hughes' mistress killed herself and their daughter in a copycat suicide.

Nicholas Hughes, who was not married and had no children, was an evolutionary ecologist who studied stream fish. He had been a professor of fisheries and ocean sciences at the University of Alaska Fairbanks until recently, when he left the post to set up a pottery at home.

"His lifelong fascination with fish and fishing was a strong and shared bond with our father (many of whose poems were about the natural world)," his sister, Freida Hughes, said in a statement given to the press.

"He was a loving brother, a loyal friend to those who knew him and, despite the vagaries that life threw at him, he maintained an almost childlike innocence and enthusiasm for the next project or plan," she said.

Near the end of her life, Sylvia Plath wrote poems about Nicholas Hughes, including one entitled

"Nick and the Candlestick" from her collection, *Ariel*, which reads: "You are the one/ Solid the spaces lean on, envious./ You are the baby in the barn."

Clashes in France after anti-condom speech by Pope

Far-right and far-left activists clashed Sunday, when the far-left were protesting Pope Benedict XVI's opposition to condoms, a police source in Paris, France said.

A group of about 30 activists threw condoms on the ground outside Notre-Dame cathedral, when attendants of the Sunday mass left the cathedral.

The police arrested three people after the incident. About 20 youths, some of whom were carrying signs reading "Leave my Pope alone" approached the protesters. One person was injured.

On Tuesday, after arriving in Africa, the Pope stated that "you can't resolve it [AIDS] with the distribution of condoms. On the contrary, it increases the problem." He suggested that sexual behavior was the issue that should be focused on and that the solution must be found in "spiritual and human awakening" and "friendship for those who suffer".

The comments were criticized by French politicians from all parties. Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner called the Pope's comments "the opposite of tolerance and understanding" and Human Rights Minister Rama Yade said she was "dumbfounded" by them. According to UNAIDS about 22 million people in sub-Saharan Africa are infected with HIV, about two-thirds of all people living with HIV. AIDS-awareness activists Act Up-Paris said in a statement that

"by refusing to allow the promotion of condoms, the Catholic Church has millions of deaths on its conscience". Act Up-Paris also organized a "die-in" outside the Notre-Dame on Sunday and carried portraits of the Pope with the slogan "Benoit XVI Assassin."

France is traditionally a Catholic country, although many are non-practicing. On the Pope's last visit to France in 2008, around 200,000 people visited the open-air service in Paris. However, a recent CSA poll by *Le Parisien* showed that 57% of the 1,102 adult respondents have a negative opinion of the Pope, up from 25% in September 2008, just before his visit to France; 23% has a positive opinion, down from 53%; the remainder has no opinion. A separate IFOP poll by *Journal du Dimanche* showed that 43% of French Catholics want the pontiff to leave.

It was not the only incident during the Pope's journey through Africa that received a lot of criticism. Earlier this week, on the plane to Cameroon, the Pope judged sexual abuse of women, but at the same time stated that abortion in the case of incest or rape, which is legal in 45 African countries, should not be an option.

Today, the Pope returns to The Vatican.

Air France-KLM interested in acquiring Czech Airlines

On Monday, Europe's largest airline, Air France-KLM, stated that it is interested in buying a large part of Czech Airlines (CSA). Last month, the Czech government announced that it is planning to sell its 91.51% stake in Czech Airlines, expecting to generate about US\$270 million. The Czech

Ministry of Finance owns 56.92% and the Czech Consolidation Agency 34.59%. The remainder is owned by other Czech institutions.

Air France-KLM made a non-binding offer on this share: "Air France-KLM in a letter will today make a non-binding expression of interest in order to have access to detailed documentation on the company". According to the airline, the Czech government expects no binding offers before June: "Firm offers are not expected before June, after an in-depth analysis of Czech Airlines by the candidates". Air France-KLM stated that "its [Czech Airlines] network is highly complementary to that of Air France-KLM. Among other things, it would enable the Group to strengthen its position in Central and Eastern Europe". Czech Airlines has a fleet of 51 planes.

Both Air France-KLM and Czech Airlines are part of the SkyTeam alliance, which also includes Aeroflot. The latter also expressed interest in buying Czech Airlines.

Alaskan Mount Redoubt volcano erupts

Mount Redoubt, an active volcano west of Anchorage, Alaska, has erupted, according to the USGS Volcano Center.

Between 10:38pm on March 22 and 1:39am Alaska time on March 23, the USGS recorded four explosions at the volcano, which had been giving indications of an imminent eruption since 15 March. The USGS has issued a "code red" aviation warning and a volcano warning.

According to the Alaska Volcano Observatory, a fifth explosion began at about 4:38am Alaska time.

According to the National Weather Service, showers of volcanic ash have already been reported in Skwentna, Alaska and are possible in the Susitna Valley. Residents of those areas are advised to minimize driving, cover air intakes and open water supplies, and remain indoors.

However, Peter Cervelli of the Alaska Volcano Observatory said that "Anchorage might dodge the bullet" and come through the eruption unscathed. Dave Strickland of the National Weather Service predicted a "light dusting" of fine ash that would disrupt air travel but not seriously affect people on the ground. Mudflows may affect the Drift and Crescent Rivers.

Mount Redoubt last erupted in late 1989, causing mudflows which put an oil refinery at risk while ash from the eruption stalled the engine of a passing airliner. US\$160 million worth of damage was estimated to have been caused.

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Firecrews were dispatched to the scene, and the airport was closed. The fire subsequently destroyed most of the aircraft. Incoming flights were diverted to other airports. Wind gusts around the time of the accident were 30 to 50 mph.

The pilots, Kevin Mosley and

Anthony Stephen-Pino, were taken to a local hospital where they were pronounced dead. A hospital official confirmed them as being American men. There were no others aboard the plane. The National Transportation Safety Board said it is deploying a team to Japan to assist with the investigation.

The crash was the first fatal accident at Narita Airport, according to Japan's Ministry of Transport.

British celebrity Jade Goody dies of cervical cancer at age 27

British television celebrity Jade Goody of Big Brother fame has died today after a long battle with cervical cancer in Upshire, Essex, England at the age of 27, which was Mother's Day in the UK.

She was born Jade Cerisa Lorraine Goody on June 5, 1981 in Bermondsey, London, England. In January 2007, she was a housemate in Celebrity Big Brother. During the show she was accused of racist bullying against Indian actress Shilpa Shetty.

The funeral will take place next Sunday, which is described by Max Clifford, Goody's publicist as a "Jade Goody Production".

Plane crashes in Montana, 17 killed

According to the United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), a single-engine passenger aeroplane has crashed in Butte, Montana, killing seventeen people.

The plane, a turboprop Pilatus PC-12, had departed from Oroville, California. Authorities said that the pilot had filed a flight plan to Bozeman, Montana, but cancelled it and diverted to Butte instead.

The pilot attempted to land, but crashed into a cemetery about 150 metres (500 feet) from the aeroport, bursting into flames. Nobody on the ground died. The weather was reported to have been cloudy at the time.

Pat Ryan, a reporter for the Montana Standard newspaper, said that the authorities had sealed off the scene of the accident. "I did speak to one eyewitness who said he saw the plane approaching from the west and nosedive into the Holy Cross cemetery just short of the Burbon Lee airport here in Butte," he said. "I was on the scene speaking to eyewitnesses who basically described the plane coming in trying to make it to the runway and obviously not getting there."

A spokesman for the FAA said that the preliminary death toll was 17, and that several of the victims were children. "We think that it was probably a ski trip for the kids," he said.

Today in History

1603 – King James VI of Scotland acceded to the throne of England and Ireland, becoming James I of England and unifying the crowns of the three kingdoms for the first time.

1882 – German physician Robert Koch announced the discovery of Mycobacterium tuberculosis, a bacterium that causes tuberculosis.

1934 – The United States Government passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act, establishing the Commonwealth of the Philippines, a ten-year transitional government in preparation for full Philippine independence and sovereignty.

1976 – Dirty War: President Isabel Perón of Argentina was kidnapped and deposed in a bloodless coup d'état.

1989 – The tanker Exxon Valdez spilled more than 10 million U.S. gallons of oil into Prince William Sound, Alaska, causing one of the most devastating man-made environmental disasters at sea.

1999 – Kosovo War: NATO launched air strikes against Yugoslavia, marking the first time NATO has attacked a sovereign country.

March 24 is World Tuberculosis Day

Quote of the Day

Follow the voice of your heart, even if it leads you off the path of timid souls. Do not become hard and embittered, even if life tortures you at times. There is only one thing that counts: to live one's life well and happily...

~ Wilhelm Reich ~

Word of the Day

rogation n

1. A deeply serious and somber prayer or entreaty.

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