



Top Stories

High turnout observed in French presidential election

A third of voters turned out to vote by noon, a level not observed since 1981. Initial projections of results are expected by 8:00 p.m. local time, after polls close.

Egyptian-Canadian jailed for alleged espionage

An Egyptian-Canadian bank employee was convicted of spying for Mossad and sentenced to 15 years in prison. Mohammed el-Attar denied the charges in court and said his confession was forced.

Featured story

Space tourist returns to Earth after 14 day trip

Billionaire software professional Charles Simonyi spent \$25 million to become the fifth space tourist and the second Hungarian to travel to space.

Wikipedia Current Events

- According to exit polls, Nicolas Sarkozy and Ségolène Royal will meet in the second round of the French presidential election on May 6. François Bayrou and Jean-Marie Le Pen are believed to have received the third and fourth most votes respectively.
- War in Iraq: Gunmen kill 21 members of northern Iraq's Yezidi community after dragging them from a bus.
- More than 60 people are killed in the fourth day of heavy fighting

Wikipedia Current Events

between Ethiopian troops and Islamist militia in Mogadishu.

- Eritrea pulls out of the east African Inter-Governmental Authority on Development after a disagreement with Ethiopia over Somalia.
- Avraham Hirschson, the Finance Minister of Israel, stands down for three months while the Israeli police investigate a claim that he failed to report an embezzlement case when he was working for a trade union.
- South Korea agrees to resume food aid to North Korea, sending 400,000 tons of food North.
- In Zimbabwe investigating officer Wellington Ngena accuses the Government of South Africa's Scorpions intelligence department of training members of the Movement for Democratic Change in combat to overthrow the Government of Zimbabwe.

Sarkozy and Royal go ahead to second round

Sunday evening, at 9:15 p.m., the Interior Ministry of France, announced official results with 98% of ballots counted in the first round of the presidential elections. From these counts it seems that Nicolas Sarkozy (UMP) and Ségolène Royal (Socialist Party) are to be the two candidates to proceed to the second round, as their lead on the competition is nearly insurmountable.

Sarkozy received the most votes,

with 31.0% of the vote. Royal received 25.7% of the vote. The two other main candidates, François Bayrou (UDF) and Jean-Marie Le Pen (National Front) got 18.5% and 10.5%, respectively.

The election registered a turnout of 84.5%, the highest in nearly 50 years. The second round will be held on Sunday, May 6, 2007.

Egyptian-Canadian sentenced to 15 years for espionage

Mohammed Essam Ghoneim el-Attar, an Egyptian-Canadian, was sentenced in an Egyptian court to 15 years in prison after being convicted of spying for Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad. In its ruling, the court stated "He let himself be seduced by Satan, disregarding his country's values and selling himself and his country to the devil." Israel has dismissed the veracity of the case. Mark Regev, a spokesperson for Israel's foreign ministry called the case "a pity".

El-Attar was arrested in January of this year while traveling in Egypt. He has been on trial in Cairo since February 24. Egyptian prosecutors said he began spying for Israel in 2001 when he was living in Turkey. They allege that he used his position at a Canadian bank to spy on Egyptians and Arabs in Turkey and Canada and was paid \$56,000 to do so. No appeal will be allowed; the conviction can only be overturned by Egypt's President.

The main evidence used against him was a confession that el-Attar

signed after spending three weeks in detention, without access to legal counsel. El-Attar claims that the confession was extracted by torture. He said that authorities gave him electric shocks and forced him to drink his urine. Ibrahim Bassiouni, the defendant's Egyptian lawyer, told the newsmedia that there was "no concrete evidence against the defendant."

Officials from the Canadian Embassy were at the the trial and witnessed the sentencing and will be reviewing the verdict.

High turnout observed in French presidential election

As voting began in first round of the presidential elections, French voters showed up at polling stations at brisk pace on Sunday. The Interior Ministry reported that by noon local time, turnout had reached 31.2%, a level not seen since 1981 and ten percent higher than the last election for President of France.

Voting stations were to begin closing at 6:00 p.m., but those in large cities will be open until 8:00 p.m. Initial projections are expected to be published at that time, based on a partial count of votes from hundreds of stations around the country.

Romain Pinault, an election official at a school in Paris' eighth district, told Associated Press a second voting station was added to handle the extra voters, "The participation rate [at this location] is about 30 percent more than five years ago."

Nicolas Sarkozy of the UMP and Ségolène Royal of the Socialist Party are considered the frontrunners. But the latest opinion polls suggested a third of the 44.5 million registered voters were still not sure of their choice, lending

hope to third-placed candidate François Bayrou (UDF) and to Jean-Marie Le Pen (National Front), whom most polls had in fourth.

One of the reasons for the high turnout seems to be that there are 3.3 million newly registered voters, many from lower-income immigrant neighborhoods, many of which saw civil unrest in 2005. Nicolas Sarkozy was interior minister at the time and was criticized for his handling of the situation.

Local Socialist leader Ali Romdhane, who led a campaign drive in such a neighborhood, told the Los Angeles Times, "In a way, Sarkozy helped us. Our slogan was, 'Vote instead of vandalize.' We told the young people that their strength rested in their voter identification card. And they are the ones who are going to make the difference."

If a candidate receives a majority of the vote in this round, the election is over. However, polls suggest that is an unlike outcome. The second round will be between the two leading candidates from today's vote and will take place on Sunday, May 6, 2007. This is the ninth presidential election of the French Fifth Republic.

Motorsport: Rick Kelly wins V8 Supercars Round 3 at Pukekohe NZ

Rick Kelly has won round three of the 2007 V8 Supercar Championship, maintaining his points lead in the series. Kelly won race three after his Toll HSV Dealer Team team-mate, Garth Tander experienced a slow pitstop in lap 15.

Tander won races one and two, and fought back to finish the final race in eighth position. Both Kelly and Tander earned 58 points during the

round, with the win awarded to Kelly for finishing higher in the final race.

At the end of round three, Kelly leads the championship on 173 points, team-mate Tander is in second place on 160 points ahead of Rick Kelly's brother, Todd on 132 points.

This round marked the last V8 Supercar race at the Pukekohe Park Raceway in New Zealand. The 2008 New Zealand round of the series will compete on a temporary street circuit in Hamilton.

Irregularities, violence mar Nigeria polls

Violence, ballot stuffing and a shortage of voting slips marred Saturday's presidential polls in Nigeria. Sixteen people were reported killed and an attempt to blow up the election headquarters failed.

The chief of the largest local monitoring group, Transition Monitoring Group, said that a winner could not be announced on the basis of the poll conducted.

President Obasanjo said that despite flaws, the elections could achieve a peaceful and democratic transfer of power. Such a result would be the first time power changes from one civilian administration to another since Nigeria's independence in 1960.

Opposition leader Muhammadu Buhari said he would call his supporters on to the streets if the ruling People's Democratic Party's candidate, Umaru Yar'Adua is announced the winner.

The Nigerian supreme court ordered that Vice-President Atiku Abubakar name be included in the ballot five days before elections,

contributing to logistical difficulties.

Early results are showing a victory for Umaru Yar'Adua, the PDP's chosen successor to President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Twelve killed in attack on Iraqi police station

Two suicide car bombers attacked a police station in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq. The first sped through a checkpoint and blew up in front of the station, the second detonated at the checkpoint.

Sunday's bombings in the mostly Shi'ite al-Bayaa neighborhood in the southwest of the city killed twelve and wounded ninetyfive, police said. Reversing an earlier statement, police said most of the dead were civilians.

Police said the explosions had destroyed several police vehicles and damaged the station. Reuters published pictures showing the entire facade of the building collapsed and said that a garage next door was mostly destroyed.

Ex-PMs of Bangladesh: Hasina not returning, Khaleda going into exile

Former Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina has been prevented from boarding a flight to her home country by British Airways. The airline received a letter from Bangladeshi authorities warning it not to carry her or else the plane would not be allowed to land. Hasina faces charges of murder and extortion if she does manage to return.

Meanwhile, fellow former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia who had been fighting to stay in the country to face any charges that might result from a recent crackdown on corruption, has now given in to pressure from the government to

go into exile. She is said to be going to Saudi Arabia as soon as visas have been issued.

Hasina and Khadela are bitter rivals and had been considered the top candidates in January elections that were called off. International observers have blamed many of the problems facing Bangladesh on the two former Prime Ministers.

Today in History

1014 - Irish forces led by Brian Boru clashed with the Vikings in the Battle of Clontarf.

1827 - Irish mathematician and physicist Rowan Hamilton presented his Theory of Systems of Rays.

1920 - The Grand National Assembly of Turkey was founded in Ankara in the midst of the Turkish War of Independence.

1923 - Gdynia was inaugurated as a Polish seaport on the south coast of the Baltic Sea.

1954 - Batting against Vic Raschi of the St. Louis Cardinals, Hank Aaron of the Milwaukee Braves hit the first of his 755 home runs in Major League Baseball.

April 23 is World Book Day; Yom Hazikaron in Israel (2007); National Sovereignty and Children's Day in Turkey; St George's Day in various countries.

Quote of the Day

We defy augury; there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all. ~ "Hamlet" in Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Word of the Day

djinn; n

- (Islam) An invisible spirit that influences mankind by appearing in human or animal form.
- A supernatural being with extraordinary powers that

usually takes a human form and serves its summoner; a genie.

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