



Top Stories

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Canadian military hosts first gay wedding

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Wikipedia Current Events

- Jacob Zuma, Executive Deputy President of South Africa, is fired for being implicated in a high-profile corruption trial.
- Israeli police detain a man for waving a Palestinian Flag.
- Conflict in Iraq: 22 People have died following a Suicide Bombing in Kirkuk, Northern Iraq.
- George Best, the former Manchester United star from Northern Ireland, has been arrested and bailed on suspicion of indecently assaulting a young girl.
- Robin van Persie, the Dutch Arsenal footballer, has been arrested in Rotterdam on suspicion of rape.
- Sudan rejects the UN's decision to use the International Criminal Court to try criminals in relation to the atrocities of the Darfur conflict, and instead opens its own recently-created special court.
- A TNS/MRBI Irish Times opinion poll predicts that Ireland, previously seen as certain to vote yes, is likely to vote no in its planned referendum on the European Constitution. Only 30% of voters indicated that they would vote for the constitution, the lowest level in any country in the European Union to date.

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and a warrant officer, who didn't want to be identified, were married on May 3 by a United Church minister in front of about 45 guests at Greenwood airbase.

Lt. Cmdr David Greenwood, the base's Anglican chaplain, said he couldn't officiate but said he arranged the service and preached at the wedding. Greenwood said the wedding might encourage other gays and lesbians to come forward and make their vows official. Most Anglican dioceses in Canada don't perform same-sex marriages, but has postponed its official decision on the matter until 2007.

A National Defence spokeswoman confirmed this was the first gay wedding in the military's history. Currently, same-sex marriages are recognized and performed in seven provinces and one territory across Canada.

In 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the federal government has exclusive jurisdiction to decide who has the right to get married in Canada. Prime Minister Paul Martin said the government would pursue legalizing same-sex marriage across the country this year. The government's same-sex marriage bill passed its second reading in the House of Commons in May and is one step closer to becoming law.

South African president dismisses deputy on implications of Corruption



Today at about 1600 UTC/GMT, South African President Thabo MBEKI

announced in a special session of parliament that he has taken action he feels is necessary, that is to 'release [his deputy president], Jacob ZUMA, from his responsibilities as deputy president of the republic and member of the cabinet'.

This dismissal comes after implications of corruption on the part of Ex-Deputy President ZUMA. He was found guilty by Durban High Court of two counts of corruption and one of fraud. Then, last week, ZUMA was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment.

The President has called this one of his toughest decisions. Opposition leader of the Democratic alliance immediately praised the president for holding 'principle over politics', and, while deeply saddened, former president Nelson MANDELA supported MBEKI's decision. Jacob ZUMA was the favourite of the ruling African National Congress Party to succeed Thabo MBEKI as president.

Following this ordeal, the government of South Africa has reaffirmed its dedication to the reduction and eventual elimination of corruption in all areas of politics. Now, the question on many South African's minds concerning the politics of their country is, 'What's next?'

Chinese bloggers on Microsoft's MSN now face regulation of censors

As of Tuesday, Chinese bloggers on Microsoft's MSN service will face the scrutiny of censors. Company employees, under the direction of Chinese officials, will peruse blogs for 'banned' words, such as 'democracy', 'freedom', 'human rights', and 'Taiwan independence'. This is an extension of an earlier action taken by the government of the People's Republic of China that already requires all Chinese internet users to register their web journals.

Ever since the Communist Party of China (CPC) took control of the government in 1945, the press has been strictly regulated, but at the advent of the internet, there were worries on the part of

the CPC on whether their influence on the Chinese media would hold. So, Chinese officials called on their fellow nations for a more regulated internet, it was dismissed by many as impossible and contradictory of what the internet stands for. Then, when it was evident no action would be taken by the international community, a crackdown started in 2003, with the closure of many internet cafés, and the arrest of dozens of users.

With this recent action, Microsoft has come under scrutiny by Reporters Without Borders. Microsoft has issued a statement saying that it is out for business, not to make political statements. Also, Microsoft is not the only company obliging to the censorship policy of the People's Republic of China. Nortel, Yahoo! and Google have been criticised for similar measures.

New rocky planet discovered in orbit around nearby star



*Artistic rendering of newly discovered planet.
Source: Trent Schindler of NSF*

A new Earth-like planet, called Gliese 876 d, has been discovered orbiting a star called Gliese 876 about 15 light years from Earth. It is the first rocky planet to be discovered orbiting a star, although three other rocky planets have in the past been discovered in orbit around a pulsar. There are two other gaseous, Jupiter-like planets in orbit around the same star.

"This is the smallest extrasolar planet yet detected and the first of a new class of rocky terrestrial planets," said Paul Butler of the Carnegie Institution, one of the team that discovered the new planet. "It's like Earth's bigger cousin."

The newly discovered world has about 7

1/2 times the mass of Earth. Its orbital period, or "year", is a mere 2 days in length and its path takes it 10 times closer to its star than the closest planet is to our Sun. The temperature on the surface is estimated between 400 to 750 degrees Fahrenheit (200 to 400 degrees Celsius), and is too hot for life forms that are similar to those found on Earth.

"A planet seven and a half times the mass of the Earth could easily hold onto an atmosphere," explained Gregory Laughlin, an assistant professor of astronomy at the University of California in Santa Cruz. "It would still be considered a rocky planet, probably with an iron core and a silicate mantle. It could even have a dense steamy water layer. I think what we are seeing here is something that's intermediate between a true terrestrial planet like the Earth and a hot version of the ice giants Uranus and Neptune."

Astronomers are continuing to advance the science of detecting extrasolar worlds. "We are pushing a whole new regime at Keck [Observatory in Hawaii] to achieve one meter per second precision, triple our old precision, that should also allow us to see Earth-mass planets around sun-like stars within the next few years," Butler said.

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According to a press release, the UNHCR was denied access to the Songore transit centre in northern Burundi, making verification difficult. The camp was home to at least 6,000 asylum seekers until last week. The Rwandan and Burundian governments met over the weekend and declared in a joint press release that the

asylum seekers were not refugees but "illegal immigrants".

"Nothing justifies the presence of these people in Burundi. Rwanda is in peace and there is no persecution," said Burundian Interior Minister Jean Marie Ngendahayo.

This claim has been criticised by the UNHCR, which has stated that it would be illegal to return the people without first assessing their claim to asylum. Amnesty International has also claimed that Burundi's actions are contrary to international law.

"The use of verbal or physical threats to induce people to return to countries where they fear persecution is in complete contravention of international law -- in particular the binding principle of non-refoulement," said Kolawole Olaniyan, Director of Amnesty International's Africa Programme.

"We urge the government of Burundi to implement fair and transparent asylum procedures to establish the risks of return for every single person claiming asylum -- as is their duty under international law," he added.

This action appears to be part of a wider crackdown on asylum seekers from Rwanda and Burundi. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), an international aid group, reported yesterday that their medical staff had been denied access to the Songore camp.

The Rwandan asylum seekers began arriving in Burundi in March. Their main concern was the Gacaca courts, however the UNHCR is also reporting that some asylum seekers "... said they were fleeing threats, intimidation, persecution and rumours of revenge and bloodshed."

The President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, has previously called for the asylum seekers to return home, stating that they will not be in danger.

"Gacaca is not intended to have all the people who appear at gacaca arrested and

put in prison. We want these people to show remorse and through that they will provide information and will allow people to forgive them and allow them to settle," he said.

A Wikinews reporter was in Butare recently talking to the locals. She says that the mood is generally supportive of the courts.

"People here believe in the Gacaca process. They say that people have fled now because the investigations are reaching their end and people now know that they are going to be exposed in the process. They have heard 'rumours' that may have been circulated by former leaders of the genocide - or there may not have been rumours they may merely fear the trials - that there will be reprisals and violence," she said.

Some people fear reprisals after testifying before the courts.

"Fear is also experienced by those facing testimonies at the Gacaca trial: the widows etc who will testify against their neighbours. I have been told by several people that high levels of security have been put into place in villages to protect people from revenge attacks for testifying or for being involved," she added.

There are 8,000 Rwandan asylum seekers in Burundi, and nearly 7,000 Burundians in Rwanda, according to the UNHCR.

This article contains first-hand journalism by a Wikinews Reporter.

Aid group 'denied access' to Rwandan refugee camp in Burundi

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"It's unacceptable that our medical staff are denied access to our own health facility in Songore camp, denying medical care to the people in the camp. Also, by transporting these people back to Rwanda, MSF is not able to continue the medical care for those that were already under treatment. Some families have even been split apart because of family members being referred to a nearby hospital," says Michiel Hofman, operational director for MSF.

"MSF is very concerned about what can be seen as a forced repatriation where the basic rights of an asylum seeker are being denied", he added.

This action appears to be part of a wider crackdown on asylum seekers from Rwanda and Burundi. The UNHCR recently criticised the two governments after they issued a joint press release which declared that asylum seekers in each others countries did not have a legitimate claim and therefore were illegal immigrants rather than refugees.

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UNHCR criticises Rwanda's and Burundi's decision to re-label refugees as illegal immigrants

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has criticised the governments of Rwanda and Burundi for their decision to mutually re-label each others asylum seekers as illegal immigrants. The UNHCR is concerned that the rights of asylum seekers may be abused.

"If they are summarily sent back without a proper procedure to determine whether or not they are refugees, then that could well be in contravention of international refugee law, and in particular the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention," a UNHCR press release said.

In a joint press release, both countries declared that the asylum seekers had left their countries "without good reason," and were therefore illegal immigrants.

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Earlier this week the Rwandan government put the number of asylum seekers at 2,000, and accused the UNHCR of exaggerating the size of the refugee problem, and thus causing more people to flee.

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Today in History

- 1215 - King John of England put his seal to the Magna Carta.
- 1389 - In the Battle of Kosovo, Turks defeated Serbs and Bosnians.
- 1752 - Benjamin Franklin conducted an experiment to prove that lightning is electricity by flying a kite in a thunderstorm.
- 1904 - The General Slocum burned in New York's East River, over 1,000 died.
- 1954 - The Union of European Football Associations was founded in Basel, Switzerland.

Quote of the Day

"If fate means you to lose, give him a good fight anyhow." ~ William McFee

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