



Top Stories

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Tehran some time this week with a compromise plan to reduce the threat that Iran may make use of its uranium enrichment program to produce nuclear arms.

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Featured story

Chinese hunger strike continues at Australian detention centre



Three Chinese men being held at Sydney's Villawood Immigration

Detention centre have ended a four-week hunger strike. But another three detainees are continuing to refuse food for the 25th consecutive day. The men began their hunger strike on October 20 to protest Australia's Mandatory Detention policy.

Wikipedia Current Events

- British doctors are to continue checks on Andrew Stimpson, a Scotsman whose body has reportedly cured itself of the HIV virus.
- Conflict in Iraq - Iraqi president Jalal Talabani tells British television that Iraqi troops could replace UK forces by the close of 2006.
- Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi defends his handling of opposition demonstrations against claims of abuse.
- 7.5 millions voters in Burkina Faso participate in the presidential elections of 2005.
- Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh asks Nepalese King Gyanendra to take steps towards restoring democratic rule.
- Thailand confirms its 4th H5N1 bird flu case this year. The victim is an 18 month-old boy living in Bangkok. Health experts advise the public to be on high alert.
- Explosions in a Chinese chemical plant force the evacuation of over 10,000 people.
- Following the bomb attacks in Amman, Jordanian police arrest a woman said to be the wife of a suicide attacker.

French police increase security in Paris, temporarily block public meetings

The Prefect of Police of Paris has banned public meetings in Paris, fearing violence in the French capital this holiday weekend, which

marks the 87th anniversary of the end of World War I. Police remained on alert throughout the weekend, with some 12,000 security officers deployed around the country.

After more than a fortnight of civil unrest in France, police imposed the temporary public meeting ban in response to Internet and text messages calling for violent action in the French capital. The government has declared a state of emergency in Paris and 30 other areas to help quell the unrest.

Today, Sunday 13 November, French authorities have reported less urban violence - despite fears of a rampage that prompted thousands of police to fan out at high-profile targets such as the Eiffel Tower. Across the country, the situation appears calmer. Rioting, car-burnings and arson attacks appear to be waning.

Nationwide, 374 cars were torched on Saturday night, down from 502 on the evening of November 11, police said today. About 100 vehicles go up in flames in France on a typical Saturday night.

National Police Chief Michel said there had been a "major lull" in the rioting on the 17th night of urban violence. If the calm continues, "things could return to normal very quickly," he said at a news conference on Sunday. Night curfews are still in force in several areas. Mr Gaudin said there was a "downward trend" in the incidence of violence "with some resistance in the Paris region. This weekend we will exercise extra vigilance in

the Paris region."

On Thursday, President Jacques Chirac acknowledged that France had "undeniable problems" in poor city areas and must respond effectively. "Whatever our origins we are all the children of the Republic and we can all expect the same rights," he said.

Surveillance has been stepped up on suburban transport, petrol sales in small quantities have also been banned.

Mr Chirac defended his use of state-of-emergency legislation, and said the priority was still to restore order. The state of emergency, adopted on Wednesday and renewable after 12 days, allows French authorities to impose curfews in designated areas, ban public meetings, search for weapons without a warrant and issue house-arrest orders.

Some 7,500 cars and dozens of buildings including schools and businesses have been torched since the violence began. 2,350 people have been arrested and 358 have received prison sentences.

The recent unrest erupted on October 27 following the deaths of two teenagers electrocuted while hiding from police in an electrical sub-station.

New South Wales water supply problems continue

The inland city of Goulburn is still facing major water restrictions despite an easing in drought in the State over the past few months. The water levels in the city's dam, the Pejar Dam, are still very low at 11% full, with the total water supply at 32% capacity in comparison to 36% capacity over

the same period last year. Available capacity for the city at 31 October 2005 was still under 20% and the water consumption rate of the city is approximately half compared with the five-year average.

Above average rainfalls in September 2005 have delayed some of the harder decisions facing the town in the middle of the year, such as the closing down of industries dependant on water usage. In May 2005, Pejar Dam was at 10% of its capacity and the town was looking at running out of water within eight months. There had been no significant rainfall since December 2004 and the dam was last full in November 2000.

British man fully "recovers" from HIV

A 25 year old British man has been reported to have made a full recovery from the HIV virus . Andrew Stimpson did not take any drug treatments after being diagnosed with the virus in August 2002 and was found HIV negative in October 2003.

Stimpson's two HIV tests were performed by the Chelsea and Westminster Healthcare NHS Trust. It has been reported that the hospital is standing by the validity of the two tests that have so far been performed. The hospital would like to perform additional tests that might reveal an explanation for the two contradictory test results. Tests used for diagnosis of HIV infection can produce false positive results. When this happens, additional testing is required in order to determine if there ever was an actual infection. Some news reports suggest that Stimpson may have had contact with someone known to be HIV-positive

and that multiple HIV tests performed by a clinic all gave positive results for Stimpson before he was first tested by the Chelsea and Westminster hospital.

Many similar cases have been reported in Africa, where the virus is widespread. Due to poor medical facilities all of these reports have been largely anecdotal—Mr Stimpson represents the first well documented case. However, until additional tests are performed it is impossible to know if the second test was a false negative. Dr. Andrew Grulich, who has a PhD in epidemiology and works at the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research at the University of New South Wales has expressed doubt that Stimpson was cured of an HIV infection. In some infected patients, HIV levels can fall to undetectably low levels until their immune system is defeated and virus levels begin to rise.

This discovery may offer a promising new window into how the virus works and furthers hopes that one day a vaccine and/or cure will be found for the disease that is carried by around 35 million people worldwide.

World Trade, Bird Flu to be discussed at 2005 APEC

APEC, the Asian Pacific Economic Conference, whose membership includes about 47 percent of global trade and 57 percent of the world's GDP plans to meet in Busan, South Korea. The meeting will include US president George W. Bush, China's Hu Jintao and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi as well as 18 other heads of Asian governments.

WTO negotiations have met much

resistance on reducing farm subsidies of some of the wealthier nations. Two previous talks have failed to break the stalemate

"Support for the WTO negotiations is the No. 1 issue and the leaders will make a standalone statement on this," Choi Seok-Young, executive director of the APEC Secretariat said.

Officials have drafted a statement backing the WTO's agenda. Officials are expected to sign the statement during the conference.

Many leaders hope to end the stalemate over agricultural subsidies currently plaguing the WTO. "It's very important that they seek a breakthrough in this current deadlocked situation" South Korea's senior official and chairman of the meeting Kim Jong-hoon said.

"APEC would like to change this message of crisis into a message of hope."

"Bird flu will be one of the most important issues to be discussed because it could harm our people through illness, death and through loss of business and jobs." Choi-Young also said that leaders in Busan this week may suggest ways to end the deadlock in agriculture and to move forward on industrial goods and services.

Protesters have other plans for the conference.

Sunday, protesters peacefully demonstrated in Seoul in advance of the conference in a rally organized by Korean Confederation of Trade Unions. Organizers say thousands more will be in Busan during the meeting. Approximately 18,000 to more than 20,000 participated in Sunday's rally.

Protesters wearing red headbands caring signs saying "No Bush visit" and "No APEC." Demands also included better conditions for temporary workers and better social security for all workers.

UN pressures Iran with nuclear compromise plan

Mohamed el-Baradei, head of the U.N. watchdog group International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), may go directly to Tehran some time this week with a compromise plan to reduce the threat that Iran may make use of its uranium enrichment program to produce nuclear arms.

Under a compromise plan negotiated last week between the EU-3 (consisting of France, Germany and the United Kingdom) and the United States, a loose agreement was reached where the final stages of nuclear enrichment within Iran, uranium hexafluoride (UF6) gas, would be transferred to Russia.

Gholamreza Aghazadeh, who heads the nuclear program in Iran, rejected the proposal on Saturday without having yet seen its details. The rejection came after a meeting with Russian foreign minister of affairs Igor Ivanov. Iran's foreign ministry spokesman, Hamid Reza Assefi, denied the meetings were to develop a nuclear program partnership with Russia that specifically relates to the new IAEA proposal.

The IAEA board will meet on November 24, when they may decide to refer Iran for possible economic sanctions before the U.N. Security Council. The U.S. secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, has distanced the United States from the short deadline for Iran to conform to the new plan. A

state department spokesman, Adam Ereli said on Thursday that, "The secretary does not conduct diplomacy by deadline."

Enriched uranium can be used to generate energy or to make nuclear weapons, a capability Tehran claims is their right to pursue for the peaceful purposes of generating electricity.

20,000 South Koreans take to the streets to protest APEC

20,000 labour activists in South Korea joined a union-organised protest in the streets of downtown Seoul on Sunday to express opposition to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum currently underway in the southeastern port city of Busan.

The APEC summit of Pacific Rim leaders will include US President George W. Bush. The two-day APEC summit, expected to bring together 21 regional leaders, opens officially on November 18 in the South Korean port city of Busan. The APEC agenda includes discussions on how to enhance global free trade.

Protesters' placards declared "No Bush visit" and "No APEC", demanding a revision of domestic labour laws to improve conditions for temporary workers. Police lined the protest route, using buses to block streets as protesters marched close to the US embassy and the presidential Blue House. City police officials said there were no reports of violence.

The rally was organised by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), the second-largest labour organisation in South Korea.

"APEC is playing the vanguard role

of spreading new liberalism in trade which makes the rich richer and the poor poorer," said O Jong-Ryul, head of the People's Action against APEC - another of the protest organising groups. The activists said APEC had become a tool for US multinationals seeking to expand their dominance in the world market "under the pretext of trade liberalization."

The rally was held after the death of a South Korean farmer, who allegedly committed suicide on Friday morning to protest the free trade and opening of the South Korean agricultural market.

The rally cut off downtown traffic and caused severe congestion. No serious crashes were reported.

Some 80 protest leaders said they would organize regular street rallies throughout the week of APEC meetings. The KCTU intend to hold another rally in Busan on Thursday, in opposition to further trade liberalization and investment regulations.

Activists hope to bring 100,000 protestors into the streets to oppose the summit. They call on the government to provide all citizens with access to free medical care and education and to address the problem of increasing South Korean wealth disparity.

"We will fight aggressively at the national rally on November 18 against the Busan APEC Summit and open Busan International People Forum by gathering all Korean progressives including workers, farmers and students," said a KCTU spokesperson.

Busan police said the rally would not disturb the meeting. "The police will also increase the number of personnel from some

7,000 to 22,000 and station more armored cars to prevent any violent protests," an official said.

A spokesman for the port city of Busan, Steve Tang, said 37,000 officers from South Korea's national intelligence service, police, military, fire service, coast guard and customs were on high alert for APEC.

The National Police Agency has banned nearly 1000 foreign activists from entering the country before the APEC summit, and is closely monitoring 350 activists. Further measures include a no-fly and no-vessel zone within a 7km radius of the APEC venue retreat.

The city's police, have been on emergency duty since October 19.

Clinton speaks at Rabin memorial service

Former US president Bill Clinton was the guest of honor in a memorial ceremony attended by thousands of Israelis in Tel Aviv to mark the 10th anniversary of the assassination of Israeli Prime minister Yitzhak Rabin. The rally was delayed one week due to Clinton's schedule.

Clinton opened his speech with some words of respect to the deputy prime minister Shimon Peres, "My dear friend Shimon Peres, thank you for servicing the case of peace all of your life and being a partner and a leader to all of us".

Regarding Rabin, Clinton said, "I loved him very much, and I was in awe of his ability to move from being a soldier to being a peacemaker, a politician to a statesman".

Clinton said that it was a great

honor for him to be at the ceremony with his wife, daughter and friends from America to stand in solidarity for the memory of Yitzhak Rabin. He said: "If he were here he would say, "There is enough of all this missing. If you really think I lived a good life, if you think I made a noble sacrifice in death, then for goodness sakes, take up my work and see it through to the end" and concluded his speech with the words in Hebrew — "Shalom Haver" (Goodbye my friend).

Later Clinton joined Peres and the rest of the politicians, most of whom were from Rabin's Cabinet and were with him on the same stage in the original peace rally for singing "The Song For Peace", the same song that they sang with Rabin that night.

Ariane 5 rocket launch postponed

The launch of the Ariane 5 ECA rocket has been postponed due to a technical hitch. The rocket, which has a record payload of 10,000 kg, was due to launch in the 45 minute window opening at 4.35PM (23:45 GMT) on November 12th, 2005 from a base at Kourou, French Guiana. Officials have not yet given a new date for launch.

The rocket is the ECA version of the Ariane 5 rocket, which has been modified to enable it to carry a heavier payload. This rocket is carrying the Spaceway 2 for customer DIRECTV and Telkom 2 for customer PT Telkom Indonesia, both telecommunications satellites to be released into a geosynchronous orbit.

The maiden flight of the Ariane 5 ECA ended in disaster in 2002 when the rocket veered off course over the Atlantic Ocean and self-

destructured, dumping two satellites worth 600 million euros into the sea. A second flight successfully launched in February, 2005, releasing two satellites into orbit. This will be the rocket's third flight.

Sony to suspend use of controversial CD software

Sony BMG has announced it will suspend production of CDs with their controversial "anti-piracy" software. The move follows litigation being brought against the company for the software which allegedly opens up Microsoft Windows to malicious attacks.

In an ironic turn of events, it now appears that Sony's software violates the copyright of the popular LAME mp3 player, which is distributed under a public license. In the past, German courts have forced companies to release their source code to the public when it was based upon software distributed under such a license.

Chinese hunger strike continues at Australian detention centre

Three Chinese men being held at Sydney's Villawood Immigration Detention centre have ended a four-week hunger strike. But another three detainees are continuing to refuse food for the 25th consecutive day. The men began their hunger strike on October 20 to protest Australia's Mandatory Detention policy.

They said they had been persecuted by the communist regime in China and came to Australia seeking protection. Four of the detainees were taken to hospital last week but three were released on Friday. The remaining man in hospital has ended his

protest.

"Three detainees in Villawood remain on voluntary starvation," an immigration department spokesman said. "Two Villawood detainees have agreed to stop their hunger strike.

Australian refugee advocates say they are concerned about the welfare of the Chinese men, who have been on a hunger strike since October 20 at Sydney's Villawood Immigration Detention Centre. Three of the six men from mainland China are continuing to refuse food at the centre.

Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has refused to process the Chinese Asylum Seekers claims until they stop the hunger strike. Amanda Vanstone, urges the hunger strikers to end their protest. "Participation in a hunger strike will not help the cause of the individuals concerned," the Minister said. "I have personally written to all six to advise them that I will not be considering any cases while protest activity continues."

The six original hunger strikers said in an October 29 statement that they are protesting against Australia's Mandatory Detention policy and the mental and physical impairment caused by the long-term detention in Villawood - during which, they say, many people suffer long-term insomnia, dysphoria, and even mental breakdown.

"We were persecuted by the communist regime in our own country where people lost their fundamental freedom, human rights, democratic rights and rule of law. Due to the inadequacy of the detention policy in Australia,

we were forced to lose our freedom again and may, at any moment, be deported back to China and face severe persecution again," said the hunger strikers.

At a rally outside Villawood on October 29, the Refugee Action Coalition (RAC) said the asylum seekers want to be released from detention while their claims for refugee status are processed. RAC spokesman Mark Goudkamp says the men have been in detention for up to to nine months.

"We want to show people that they're not completely isolated, that they have support on the outside, and we want to get their message out as far as we can," he said. Mr Goudkamp says one of the asylum seekers is a Falun Gong practitioner and the others are pro-democracy, against the Chinese Government.

Ian Rintoul, also from the Refugee Action Coalition, says five of the men are asylum seekers and the sixth man's business visa has lapsed. "The treatment of the Chinese in detention shows that the department still has to face up to the underlying problems of mandatory detention," Mr Rintoul said.

"The Chinese are facing the same obstacles and the same departmental attitudes that kept asylum seekers behind the razor wire for years. The men make the point that they feel their lives are being destroyed by mandatory detention."

Mr Rintoul said most of the six Chinese asylum seekers had been living in Australia since the late 1990s and had children here. All had been taken to Villawood for immigration breaches and had lodged asylum claims, some of

which had been rejected and were in the process of appeal. They want to be free to be reunited with their families.

The Immigration Department says the hunger strike will not influence decisions on the men's applications for asylum.

But Mr Rintoul says that is not what the strike is about. "What they can't understand is why that claim can't be processed while they're living in the community," he said. "What the hunger strike highlights is why the misery of mandatory detention continues."

Peter Job from the Victorian Greens has expressed grave concern for the remaining three detainees continuing their hunger strike past its twenty-sixth day. "Asylum seekers who maintain they have strong claims should have their cases re-heard. Given the obviously harmful nature of long term detention they should be allowed to live in the community while this takes place," said Mr Job.

Today in History

1228 - Frederick of Isenberg was executed for the murder of his cousin Engelbert of Berg, the Archbishop of Cologne.

1889 - Nellie Bly (pictured), reporter for the New York World, departed on her successful attempt to travel Around the World in Eighty Days.

1940 - Coventry Cathedral and much of the city centre of Coventry, England was destroyed in heavy Luftwaffe bombing.

1971 - Mariner 9 reached Mars, becoming the first spacecraft to orbit another planet.

1990 - The Federal Republic of Germany amended its constitution to confirm the Polish border at the Oder-Neisse line.

November 14 is Children's Day (India)

Quote of the Day

"The ambition of the greatest men of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but so long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over."

~ Jawaharlal Nehru

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