



Top Stories

UN report says Sudan government guilty of orchestrating Darfur crimes

A UN Human Rights Council mission says large-scale violations of international law are underway in the region and urged the UN to take "urgent" action.

Russia: Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant to be delayed

Russia's atomic energy agency said work on building the plant was delayed as Iran had fallen behind in payments.

Featured story

Saturn's moon Enceladus may host "internal life"

Scientists at NASA say that new satellite images of Saturn's moon Enceladus taken in 2005, has shown that the moon has begun to spew geysers which contain "liquid water", and that the internal heat produced by the moon's core may be able to host life below the icy surface.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Relatives of the 17 victims of the USS Cole bombing take Sudan to court in a civil suit claiming that the terrorist attack could not have happened without Sudan's help.
- Twenty Ecuadoran lawmakers clash with police after trying to regain their seats in the National Congress of Ecuador. The legislators were part of a group of 57 dismissed by the President of

Wikipedia Current Events

- Ecuador Rafael Correa for trying to block a referendum.
- Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the Movement for Democratic Change in Zimbabwe, appears in court limping and with a head wound after having been arrested on Sunday. Tsvangirai is later taken from court to a hospital under police guard.
- Spanish police arrest Brian David Anderson, a Canadian citizen, in Madrid, Spain, on behalf of the U.S. government, for allegedly engaging in fraud and funding a terrorist camp in Afghanistan.
- Alexander Veshnyakov, the head of Russia's Election Commission is removed after criticising changes to electoral laws favouring United Russia associated with Vladimir Putin.
- Alberto Gonzales, the Attorney General of the United States, acknowledges that mistakes were made in the handling of the firing of eight Federal prosecutors. His top aide Kyle Sampson resigns for not advising other senior officials of the Department of Justice about discussions with former White House counsel Harriet Miers regarding the possible firings.
- At least 50 people die due to heavy snow in Kashmir and thunderstorms in the rest of northern India.
- Five British Embassy workers kidnapped in Ethiopia twelve days ago have been set free in neighbouring Eritrea.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The first match of the 2007 Cricket World Cup, between West Indies and Pakistan, begins at Sabina Park in Jamaica.
- A draft Climate Change Bill is published in the United Kingdom, outlining a framework for achieving a mandatory 60% cut in carbon emissions by 2050.
- Japan and Australia sign a security pact, the first defence treaty for Japan with a nation other than the United States since the end of World War II.
- The Mauritanian government announces that Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi and Ahmed Ould Daddah have won the most votes in the first round of the 2007 presidential election, and their runoff election will be held on March 25.

Sub-prime lenders send jitters through global markets

Just two weeks after China sent global markets into a tumble, growing worries about sub-prime mortgage lenders in the United States are sending jitters through stock exchanges around the globe. The three major US stock market indices each fell two percent from Monday's closing price, marking the second-biggest loss of 2007. London's FTSE 100, Paris' CAC 40 and Frankfurt's DAX 30 indices each closed down more than 1 percent.

As the Mortgage Bankers Association reported that late payments on mortgages and home

foreclosures in the US homes rose in the fourth quarter to their highest level in years, investors are concerned that not only US banks but also multi-national banks around globe could have exposure.

More than two dozen sub-prime lenders have closed or sold operations as defaults on those mortgages have risen. "The delinquencies and defaults have started to soar," said Nicolas Retsinas, director of Housing Studies at Harvard University. "A lot of these lenders started to make loans and lost track of some of the fundamentals."

New Century Financial Corporation, the second largest sub-prime lender in the US, has recently revealed that its creditors were now longer providing funds and, further, it has become subject of an SEC investigation. The New York Stock Exchange has said it will delist New Century. Accredited Home Loan Lending, another major sub-prime mortgage specialist, said it was seeking fresh capital and waivers on its lending covenants.

Sub-prime lenders provide mortgages to people with less-than-stellar credit histories. The lenders then bundle these mortgages as collateral for loans that they obtain from other financing firms, such as GMAC. Such firms can then repackage these loans and sell them as mortgage-backed securities. These securities may end up in the hands of major multi-national banks such as Citibank, HSBC, and Commerzbank. Each level of lending assumes a level of financial risk, but trouble can arise when the risk tolerances are exceeded. If too many homeowners default on their mortgages, the sub-prime lender can end up defaulting. If too many of these lenders default, as it is

feared may be happening now, the defaults can cascade upward. While no one is predicting major bank failures at this point, it is feared that their profits could be hurt.

Viacom sues YouTube, owner Google, for more than 1 billion dollars

Viacom has announced that they are suing YouTube, and its owner Google, for more than 1 billion dollars. The lawsuit was filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. Viacom claims that YouTube has near 160,000 of their videos on their website without their permission, which they say is a "massive intentional copyright infringement."

Viacom had negotiations with YouTube for several months, which ended unsuccessfully. The lawsuit was filed after Viacom had asked YouTube to remove 100,000 videos that belonged to them in February. They also claim that YouTube has made profits by "advertising off of unlicensed content." Neither YouTube's nor Google's representatives have yet commented on the situation and lawsuit. Wikinews is one of the media outlets which has placed a request for comment.

Saturn's moon Enceladus may host "internal life"

Scientists at NASA say that new satellite images of Saturn's moon Enceladus taken in 2005, has shown that the moon has begun to spew geysers which contain liquid water, and that the internal heat produced by the moon's core may be able to host life below the icy surface, but scientists also stress that life has not yet been found on the moon.

Scientists say that the heat source producing the geysers is "organic"

and that the material used to spew them is caused by the decaying of radioactive material from inside the moon.

"Deep inside Enceladus, our model indicates we've got an organic brew, a heat source and liquid water, all key ingredients for life. And while no one is claiming that we have found life by any means, we probably have evidence for a place that might be hospitable to life," said Dennis Matson, a scientist for the Cassini project.

In a new model created by NASA scientists, data shows that Enceladus might have been created by aluminum and iron isotopes which have begun to decay causing large amounts of heat to build up in the moon and over billions of years later, the icy mass has begun to melt near the moon's core, causing the water to spew into outer space.

"Enceladus is a very small body, and it's made almost entirely of ice and rock. The puzzle is how the moon developed a warm core. The only way to achieve such high temperatures at Enceladus is through the very rapid decay of some radioactive species," said Dr. Julie Castillo, the lead scientist developing the new model at the Jet Propulsion laboratory or JPL.

"The decomposition of those isotopes - over a period of about 7 million years - would produce enormous amounts of heat. This would result in the consolidation of rocky material at the core surrounded by a shell of ice. According to the theory, the remaining, more slowly decaying radioactivity in the core could continue to warm and melt the moon's interior for billions of years, along with tidal forces from Saturn's gravitational tug," said a statement on NASA's website.

Data from Cassini's ion and neutral mass spectrometer further shows that the natural building blocks of life are also present within Enceladus. The results show that carbon dioxide, acetylene, methane, propane and nitrogen, the basic building blocks for life, are all present within the moon.

"The team concludes that so far, all the findings and the hot start model indicate that a warm, organic-rich mixture was produced below the surface of Enceladus and might still be present today, making the moon a promising kitchen for the cooking of primordial soup," added the statement.

Cassini will make a flyby on Enceladus in march of 2008. The mission will "measure the gas emanating from the plume," ended the statement.

NHL: Penguins to remain in Pittsburgh

Pennsylvania governer Ed Rendell announced Tuesday morning that a deal had been struck between state and local officials and the Pittsburgh Penguins hockey franchise. The Penguins organization will formally announce the deal tonight, prior to the Penguins game against the Buffalo Sabres at the Mellon Arena. The deal will ensure that the Penguins will remain in the city with a 30 year lease on a new arena to be built in downtown Pittsburgh. The framework of the deal was constructed in an emergency meeting last Thursday in Philadelphia, when both government and franchise officials indicated that progress had been made, with the details laid out over the weekend. With the new deal, the Penguins organization would be expected to pay \$3.8 million per

year, as well as \$7.5 million per year from both Don Barden, owner of Majestic Star Casino, and the state economic development fund. The Penguins organization has also been given the option of building a parking garage on property of the Pittsburgh Sports Authority between Centre and Fifth avenues, by contributing \$500,000 per year.

The new arena is expected to cost approxamety \$290 million, and should be completed and ready to host hockey games by 2009. The Penguins will sign a temporary lease to keep the team at Mellon Arena until the new building is finished.

Five Europeans are released in Ethiopia

A group of British embassy workers kidnapped in northern Ethiopia 12 days ago have been released, Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett has said. The workers - four British citizens and one French citizen and Ethiopian staff working with them, had been held in Eritrea, she announced on Tuesday.

The party were apparently on a sightseeing tour when they were abducted on 1 March. Beckett also said that all kidnapped were safe and well and were: "broadly all in good health"

The group went missing on March 1 on a tourist trip to visit geological sites in the remote Afar region, in the country's north. Two vehicles belonging to the group were later found in a north-eastern village called Hamedali. The vehicles were found were riddled with bullets, but still contained luggage and mobile telephones.

The region in which the Hamedali is, Afar, straddles the border of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi had

said on Monday that Ethiopian officials had a "good idea" of where the hostages were being held.

Zenawi announced that embassy staff had not been specifically targeted and suggested that the kidnapping might have been a "mistake". Hamedali is a staging post for tourists venturing into the unique geological formations of the Danakil Depression, including the area's famous salt lakes. The area is one of the hottest and inhospitable lands on Earth. Visitors are warned by the government to travel in a convoy with armed guards because of rebels and bandits. Witnesses stated that around 50 men burst Hamedali and marched the foreigners towards the Eritrean border.

2007 Cricket World Cup: West Indies vs Pakistan

West Indies have played the first match of the 2007 Cricket World Cup against Pakistan today at 09:30 local time (1430 UTC) in Sabina Park, Kingston, Jamaica.

Pakistan chose to field first after winning the toss in the morning.

West Indies won five matches out of seven played against Pakistan in the previous world cups, whereas Pakistan won only two.

Pakistan won both of their warm up matches played against Canada and South Africa and West Indies won against Kenya with losing against India.

'Virtual Iraq' created to help traumatised veterans

The University of Southern California developed a simulation system that provides real effects of battlefield. The simulation is called Virtual Iraq and it is now being put in practice by the University of Reading. Virtual Iraq represents a

fully-immersive system created as part of a therapy that aims to help soldiers with post-traumatic stress disorder to handle their psychological issues.

The Director of the Visualization Center at University of Reading, Professor Paul Sharkey, has been developing the system together with two professors from the USC Institute for Creative Technologies, Albert Rizzo and Jarrell Pair. They created a virtual room at the Visualization Center where patients can experience the effects of the battlefield.

Scientists will provide in their Virtual Iraq sounds, sights and smells of the battlefield so soldiers or military staff would experience real combat scenarios but in a low threat context. Thus the therapists are able to add to the virtual world roadside bombs, the smell of burning rubber, as well as the sound of gunfire and buzzing of the helicopter. Till now four patients were treated and they all reported improvement in the symptoms.

Scientists state that the aim of the new system is to re-expose patients to relevant traumatic events and not to re-traumatize them. They look forward to manage people's emotional responses so to make them more flexible in everyday situations.

Protests in Pakistan as Chief Justice appears before judges' panel

Pakistan's Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry arrived to court to appear in front of a panel of his subordinate judges to answer charges filed against him by the President General Pervez Musharraf.

The Chief Justice's motorcade was surrounded by thousands of well

wishers and lawyers who have come out on the streets of Pakistan's capital to express their solidarity as Pakistan observes a nation wide partial strike and black day.

In a brief statement to the press, the Chief Justice said, "I am appearing in front of junior judges who are under investigation for corruption."

The Chief Justice has been held incommunicado without access to the outside world since Friday when he was suddenly removed from his office by General Pervez Musharraf's government. Telephone, Internet, and mobile phone service has been suspended to his house which is under "high security" according to government officials.

Chief Justice Iftikhar is well respected by his colleagues and international community for taking a firm stand against government's human rights abuses and abductions.

New York based Human Rights Watch has issued a statement demanding an immediate release and reinstatement of the Chief Justice Chaudhry Iftikhar. "By brazenly and unlawfully dismissing, detaining and humiliating the chief justice of the Supreme Court, President Musharraf has created a constitutional crisis at the judiciary's expense," said Ali Dayan Hasan of Human Rights watch.

Ikram Chaudhry, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, told a British news service: "General Musharraf is trying to bulldoze the judiciary. He wants to leave no stone unturned."

Reporting yesterday's wide spread strike by the bar associations

across Pakistan two major private news channels were forced to go off air for reporting and showing "anti-government" protests.

Tensions are high and the police and other security personnel have been placed on high alert. Military government's information minister has however categorically denied that the government is considering a declaration of emergency.

Controversial blog relaunched in New Zealand

A controversial blog that posts personal details about many workers at New Zealand's Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) has been relaunched after Google's Blogger removed the site due to a death threat.

The controversial blog, named CYFSWATCH NEW ZEALAND posts personal stories about how CYFS workers have treated them and their family, and then posts personal details about those workers. It also is targeting the chief executive of the Ministry of Social Development. The recent relaunch sees 127 more CYFS workers' personal details being posted on the online blog.

The site is now hosted by Masterton, New Zealand man known as, "Kiwi 1960", Wikinews suggests that the man's first name is Peter. Russell Brown, media commentator, found out that "Kiwi 1960" was hosting the new site.

"Kiwi 1960" could be charged with criminal offences, but says that he is not worried about it, stating that he is a "victim" of CYFS. However Ursula Cheer, associate professor at Canterbury University said that although the content could be described as defamatory, no criminal charges are likely as there is nothing stopping anyone from

setting up Internet sites.

The death threat posted online that led to Blogger removing the blog, was aimed at being the first political assassination in New Zealand. It was made against Sue Bradford because of her publicly unsupported bill that would make smacking, or correcting, a child illegal.

Ms Bradford says that she is disappointed that the blog is now running again.

French politicians distance themselves from Chirac

In the wake of Jacques Chirac's announcement that he will not seek re-election, French politicians have taken the opportunity to distance themselves from him.

Nicolas Sarkozy, the frontrunner to succeed Jacques Chirac, said that he "never felt like anybody's heir" and that "France is the republic, it is not something you inherit."

French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, who was also considered a potential candidate, has endorsed Sarkozy. Villepin and Sarkozy are members of the same party, but fell out years ago.

Meanwhile, right-wing leader Jean-Marie Le Pen said Mr. Chirac left France in a 'catastrophic state.' "I think Jacques Chirac was the worst president of the republic in the history of France. With him I lose my worst enemy and I'm delighted," he said.

Russia: Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant to be delayed

According to Russia's Federal Atomic Energy Agency (RosAtom) further progress on Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant, which Russia has been working to complete, will be delayed because Iran fell behind

in the payment schedule.

The decision threatens to put Iran's atomic project in jeopardy, just as it faces the threat of more UN sanctions over its controversial nuclear program.

"The fact is that there is no money, and it is impossible to construct without money," RosAtom spokesman Sergei Novikov told Interfax News Agency. Iran suspended payments on January 17 and "therefore, our Iranian partners should not be surprised by an extension of the deadline for the launch of the first unit at Bushehr," he said.

Under an agreement reached last September, Russia was to deliver nuclear fuel to Bushehr in March and the power station would open in September and begin generating power in November.

When the payment delay was first reported in February Mohammad Saeedi, the deputy head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, denied that Tehran had been late in making payments. "Iran has had no delay whatsoever in making payments for the Bushehr nuclear power plant," Mr. Saeedi was quoted as saying by Islamic Republic News Agency. Mr. Novikov said the Iranians blamed the delay on the need to switch payments from dollars to euros.

The announcement from RosAtom came after talks between Russian and Iranian officials last week in Moscow failed to reach agreement on the dispute over funding.

UN report says Sudan government guilty of orchestrating Darfur crimes

A report from a United Nations Human Rights Council mission "concludes that the government of

the Sudan has manifestly failed to protect the population of Darfur from large-scale international crimes, and has itself orchestrated and participated in these crimes." The mission urges the U.N. to take "urgent further action", for example by deploying the proposed U.N. and African Union peacekeeping forces, and co-operating with the International Criminal Court.

The report team, lead by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jody Williams, further urges Sudan to stop targeting civilians. The report also says the government is allowing militias such as the Janjaweed to act with impunity, and that government forces are even operating jointly with the militia. The militias themselves and the armed rebel groups aren't spared either; they are accused of serious violations of human rights and international law.

During their month of work, the researchers didn't actually get into Sudan because they were not given visas, but they interviewed hundreds of relevant people (such as refugees), and reviewed thousands of pages from documents on the humanitarian situation in Darfur.

To summarise the situation, the 35-page documents says: "Today, millions are displaced, at least 200,000 are dead, and conflict and abuse are spilling over the border into Chad." The report says that humanitarian and human rights workers are increasingly being targeted, especially during the past six months. "Killing of civilians remains widespread, ... Rape and sexual violence are widespread and systematic. Torture continues." The experts think the conflict could destabilise the region.

The mission advises the U.N.

General Assembly to "request the compilation of a list of foreign companies that have an adverse impact on the situation of human rights in Darfur." The U.N. agencies should then cease to do business with these companies.

Sudanese officials declined to respond to the report immediately, saying that the response will be made in Sudan's address to the United Nations Human Rights Council on Tuesday. Just days ago, Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir rejected an interim U.N. plan to bolster African Union peacekeeping forces in Darfur. Up to 24,000 troops were to replace the current 7,000 African Union peacekeepers in the western Sudan region.

The almost 4-year-old Darfur conflict is being fought between the Janjaweed militia (Arabic for "devils on horseback"; they are camel-herding Arabs) and a group of mostly land-tilling tribes. The Sudanese government in the past denied allegations against them, blaming the rebels who didn't sign the peace treaty of 2006. The International Criminal Court in The Hague has already summoned a junior minister of the Sudan, and a militia leader, to answer war crime charges. The government in Khartoum refused to extradite anyone, saying the people responsible would be tried in the Sudan itself.

CSX freight train derails in Oneida, New York, tank car explodes

A CSX freight train traveling from Buffalo to Selkirk derailed in Oneida, New York.

No injuries have yet been reported as a result of the accident. It is not yet known what caused the accident; CSX and NTSB officials

are investigating.

Twenty six of the train's 79 cars derailed around 7:00 a.m. local time; the derailment led to the explosion of at least one tank car carrying propane. Two other cars are known to contain hazardous materials. As many as seven cars have been reported as burning.

As a precaution, 23 mi (37 km) of the adjacent Thruway have been closed between Syracuse and Verona. Authorities have ordered a complete evacuation for a one-mile radius around the derailment site, including a jail and two elementary schools. Amtrak's Empire Service between Albany and Syracuse is suspended and Lake Shore Limited between Syracuse and Chicago is also affected; passengers on these routes are being bused around the affected area.

At the time of the accident the train had a two-man crew and was traversing a section of track that has a 60 mph speed limit. The train crew were not injured; it is not yet known what speed the train was traveling when the accident occurred.

Bomb kills nine Afghan police

A roadside bomb killed nine Afghan police officers earlier today, including one local commander, and another was left critically wounded. The remotely-controlled bomb attack was made on a police convoy travelling in the Bakwa district of Farah.

The district commander of Bakwa was also killed in the attack. The area lies on a major heroin smuggling route to Iran. Ministry spokesman Zemerai Bashary said that said that one of the vehicles in the convoy was destroyed in the explosion.

Taliban leaders have previously told reporters that they intend to step up attacks during the spring season and coalition commanders have asked for more troops to meet the expected escalation in fighting.

Elsewhere in the same province on Sunday, a police post was attacked by Taliban insurgents. The attack left two militants dead and one wounded.

In Helmand, coalition and Afghan troops led by the U.S. clashed with suspected Taliban Insurgents. The coalition was targeting an alleged anti-aircraft weapons trafficker. The battle happened earlier today in Gareshk district and left two militants dead. Two Afghan troops and one coalition soldier were lightly wounded.

Today in History

1590 - French Wars of Religion:

Henry of Navarre and the Huguenots decisively defeated the forces of the Catholic League under the Duc de Mayenne in the Battle of Ivry.

1757 - Admiral John Byng of the British Royal Navy was executed by firing squad for breaching the Articles of War at the start of the Seven Years' War.

1794 - Eli Whitney patented the cotton gin.

1984 - Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Féin, was seriously wounded in an assassination attempt in central Belfast, Northern Ireland.

1991 - The "Birmingham Six", wrongly convicted of murder and bombing pubs in Birmingham, England, were released after 16 years in prison.

March 14 is New Year's Day in the Sikh Nanakshahi calendar, White Day in Japan, Pi Day.

Quote of the Day

Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows

itself, as something wholly different from the profane... something sacred shows itself to us ... something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural "profane" world.
~ Mircea Eliade

Word of the Day

digress; v

1. To step or turn aside; to deviate; especially, to turn aside from the main subject in writing or speaking.

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