



### Top Stories

#### Swan found dead in Fife, Scotland confirmed to be H5, Avian Flu



Initial tests done on a dead swan found in Fife, Scotland have come back positive for H5, Avian Flu. However; this case has not yet been identified as the deadly H5N1 strain and officials say that there is no need to be concerned.

#### Queen approves New Zealand Governor-General's appointment

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II today announced she had approved the appointment of Judge Anand Satyanand as the next Governor-General of New Zealand.

### Featured story

#### Photo Essay: Cherry Blossoms Bloom in DC

The Japanese Cherry Blossoms have again bloomed around the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C., marking the beginning of spring for city residents and thousands of visitors. The accompanying annual National Cherry Blossom Festival commemorates the March 27, 1912 gift of 3,000 Japanese cherry trees to the city from Mayor Yukio Ozaki of Tokyo.



### Wikipedia Current Events

- Three million people march against the First Employment Contract (CPE) law, 700,000 in Paris. Student organizations call for a general strike.
- In the Republic of Ireland, Denis Donaldson a former senior Sinn Féin member, is found shot dead near the village of Glenties, County Donegal, close to where it is believed he had been living since he admitted to being a paid British agent for over twenty years in December 2005.
- Thailand legislative election, 2006: Thaksin Shinawatra resigns as Prime Minister of Thailand despite his ruling Thai Rak Thai party winning an overwhelming majority in the House of Representatives.
- A security expert testifies to an inquest that film director James Miller was shot by an Israeli soldier while making a film in a Palestinian refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.
- Former Majority Leader Tom DeLay announces his resignation from the United States House of Representatives.
- The 39th Canadian Parliament opens in Ottawa, with the Speech from the Throne delivered by the Governor General on behalf of the newly-elected government of Stephen Harper.

### Thaksin departure doesn't signal end to Thai political crisis

Despite promising to step down before the new parliament convenes, caretaker Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra is still embroiled in controversy. Opposition parties have stated they will not run in the by-elections on April 23.



*Flag of Thailand*

Democrat leader Jurin Laksanawisit was quoted in ThaiDay, an insert in the Thai edition of the International Herald Tribune as saying, "the three parties still do not trust him because he is still the caretaker Prime Minister and behind the person who will be the new prime minister."

Leading candidates for the PM's job are Thai Rak Thai (lit. Thais love Thais) party Deputy PM, Somkid Jatusripitak, and Pokin Polakul, a former parliamentary speaker. According to the Bangkok Post, Thaksin favours Pokin whilst others within the party favour Somkid.

The key to the potential crisis is 38 seats in Democrat territory. These were among over 200 seats where the populist Thai Rak Thai party ran unopposed due to major opposition parties boycotting the election. These constituencies are

special because the sole candidate in each of them failed to get the required 20% of eligible votes. By-elections will be held on April 23, but a repeat of the void election will leave the parliament short of the 400 constituency MPs and in a situation which is not anticipated in the Thai constitution.

The soon to be ex-PM has appointed Police General Chidchai Vanasatidya, the Justice Minister, to run the country and cabinet while he takes some time off. According to the Thai News Agency, the caretaker Prime Minister has begun packing to leave Government House.

Fighting on, Thaksin Shinawatra has instructed his lawyers to file yet another defamation suit against Sondhi Limthongkul, media firebrand and one of the leaders of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD); Chatree Tharipassaro filed the suit at the Criminal Court on behalf of the caretaker PM, allegations contained within centre around remarks Sondhi made at various anti-Thaksin rallies.

### **Australian PM announces \$1.8 billion mental health plan**

Australian Prime Minister John Howard has announced a five year plan costing AU\$1.8 billion to address issues with the country's mental health system. The plan follows a commitment made at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting in February.

The federal government will improve access to clinical and health services, increase the number of mental health professionals in Australia, create mental health work teams consisting of GPs, psychiatrists,

psychologists and mental health nurses, provide respite services for people suffering mental illness and their carers, and introduce new programs for community awareness.

Mr Howard said the plan addresses issues which fall into its area of responsibility. He hopes that the states and territories will complement the federal government's package by investing in supported accommodation, hospital and emergency services, crisis care services and the provision of mental health care in gaols.

Under the federal government's plan, psychologists will play a greater role in the mental health system. From November, Patients will be able to claim a rebate from Medicare (Australia's universal healthcare scheme) for the services of psychologists if they have been referred by a GP or psychiatrist. At present patients pay around \$100 for a standard 30 minute consultation.

Mr Howard claims that there is an issue for mental health professionals in treating patients with a substance abuse problem and mental illness. To address this the government will provide extra funding for drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

The government will increase the mental health workforce by funding an additional 400 mental health nursing and 200 clinical psychology places. 900 personal helpers and mentors will also be employed.

The government has promised increase funding for telephone counselling and suicide prevention services, living skills programs and additional support for those

with a mental illness who are having difficulty finding or keeping work.

The government will also provide 900 personal helpers and mentors, increase funding for living skills programs and provide additional employment assistance to those who have difficulty finding or retaining employment due to their illness.

### **Swan found dead in Fife, Scotland confirmed to be H5, Avian Flu**

BBC News is reporting that initial tests done on a dead swan found in Fife, Scotland, is diagnosed as having the H5 subtype strain of Avian Influenza. Fife is about 450 miles (725 kilometers) north of London.

In a statement by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, a Scottish Executive confirmed that a "highly pathogenic H5 avian flu" virus was found in a sample taken from the dead swan.



*Location of Fife, Scotland*

Officials are reporting that the area where the swan has been found, is being sealed off.

"In accordance with a recent EU decision the Scottish Executive is putting in place a protection zone of a minimum of three kilometres radius and a surveillance zone of

10 kilometers. Keepers of birds in the protection zone are being instructed to isolate their birds from wild birds, by taking them indoors where ever possible," said the Scottish Executive in a statement.

However; this case has not yet been identified as the deadly H5N1 strain and officials say that there is no fear for concern. "The exact strain of the virus is not yet known, tests are continuing and a further result is expected tomorrow," the statement continued.

"Whilst disease has yet to be confirmed, this is an important development. Bird keepers outside the protection zone should redouble their efforts to prepare for bringing their birds indoors if that becomes necessary. They must also review their biosecurity measures to ensure that all possible precautions have been taken," said Charles Milne, Chief Veterinary Officer for Scotland.

So far, there have been no reports of birds infected with the H5N1 strain of the virus and this is the first reported case of an H5 subtype of Bird Flu in the United Kingdom.

Since 2003, H5N1 has killed over 100 people worldwide.

### **Homeland Security spokesman arrested for trying to seduce a minor**

Brian Doyle, 55, the deputy press secretary for the United States Department of Homeland Security has been arrested for attempting to contact a 14-year-old girl and initiating a sexually explicit conversation. The "girl" was, in fact, an undercover detective mounting a sting operation.



*Brian Doyle in his booking photo*

He was charged with 23 felony counts. These included seven counts of using a computer to seduce a child and sixteen counts of transmitting harmful materials to a child. In chats with the "girl", Doyle stated that he worked for the DHS, gave her his work and government cell phone numbers, sent explicit hardcore porn videos and used AOL Instant Messenger to communicate with her sexually.

### **U.S. jury decision moves Moussaoui closer to execution**



*Zacarias Moussaoui*

A United States federal jury found that self-confessed al-Qaida conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui may, according to U.S. law, be put to death after deciding that his statements to FBI agents led directly to at least one death in the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

Moussaoui is alleged to have had

prior knowledge of the 9/11 attacks, but did not inform FBI agents of it. Evidence of Moussaoui's knowledge of 9/11 attacks are based on Moussaoui's own testimony, and some al-Qaida members have said that "he knew nothing" and is "boasting" of it and that Ramzi Binalshibh is the actual '20th hijacker'. Aaron Zebley, one of the FBI's two chief case agents on the Moussaoui investigation, also testified that "Moussaoui knew nothing about some key elements" of the 9/11 plot.

Moussaoui is the only person to face charges in connection with the 9/11 attacks. It was not expected that Moussaoui would testify on his own behalf during the trial, but he changed his mind and testified in the last week of March that he was supposed to fly a plane with the "shoe bomber" on 9/11. Moussaoui's lawyers said that his claim was absurd and that Moussaoui was intentionally trying to elicit an execution for martyrdom purposes.

Moussaoui refused to stand and prayed silently as the verdict was read. "You'll never get my blood, God curse you all," Moussaoui said after the jurors had left the courtroom.

The jury took four days to arrive at the verdict. "By this verdict, the jury has found that death is a possible sentence in this case," a court spokesman said. On the key question before the jurors, they answered yes on whether at least one victim died on 9/11 as a direct result of Moussaoui's actions.

If the jury had voted against his eligibility for the death penalty, Moussaoui would have been sentenced to life in prison.

The jury began weighing

Moussaoui's fate last Wednesday. During its deliberations, jurors asked only one question, seeking a definition of a "weapon of mass destruction." One of the three convictions for which Moussaoui could be put to death is conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction.

The jurors were told that a plane used as a missile (the tactic employed on 9/11) qualifies as a weapon of mass destruction.

Moussaoui pleaded guilty April 2005 to conspiring with al-Qaida to hijack aircraft and other crimes. At the time, he denied being part of the 9/11 plot, saying he was being trained for a separate attack, but he changed his testimony when he took the stand and claimed he was supposed to have flown a hijacked jetliner into the White House that day.

Moussaoui was in jail at the time of the attacks, but prosecutors argue federal agents would have been able to stop or at least minimize the attacks if he had revealed his al-Qaida membership and his terrorist plans when he was arrested and interrogated by federal agents.

The last people executed in the United States without being convicted of killing anyone were Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, fifty years ago on April 5.

### University of Florida wins NCAA basketball championship

The University of Florida Gators beat the University of California, Los Angeles Bruins 73-57 in the RCA Dome last night. The win gave the Gators their first NCAA basketball championship. The Gators, a number three seed in the

tournament, spent most of the night dominating the Bruins on both offense and defense.

Joakim Noah, center for the Gators, recorded 16 points, nine rebounds, and a NCAA tournament championship game record 6 blocks. Noah said, "It's like I'm in a cloud. Not only does this feel good, but it smells good and it tastes good. I can't even describe it."

In the previous two games the Bruins allowed only a combined 90 points, but they never seemed to get organized on defense. Florida's early lead stayed throughout the game, with the Bruins unable to re-take the lead.

Joakim Noah's father Yannick Noah was a French tennis player (now a singer) who won the Roland Garros tennis tournament. His grandfather was a soccer professional. It's the first time a french basketball player has been part of a winning NCAA basketball championship team. He'll join Tony Parker on the French national basketball team.

### Cats could play significant role in transmitting Bird Flu to humans: Dutch researchers

According to Dutch researchers, tests performed on cats at Rotterdam's Erasmus Medical Center by Dutch show that cats could play a key role in transmitting Bird Flu to humans.

Reports have noted that there are increased deaths in Europe and Asia involving cats that are carrying the deadly disease and also say that cats could play a key role in allowing mutation of Bird Flu so it can be transmitted

between humans.

"Apart from the role that cats may play in H5N1 virus transmission to other species, they may be involved in helping the virus to adapt to efficient human-to-human transmission," said researchers.

The experiments were performed on eight cats, all of which became infected with the H5N1 virus. Exposure to the virus was done in three different ways and in all three cases, the cats became infected. The researchers said that most domestic cats became infected with the H5N1 virus when they came in contact with wild and or domestic birds and in some cases, transmitted the virus to other cats.

However, researchers said that their research was performed experimentally with infected cats and that those experiments did not show a mutation in the virus but did say that, "such mutations cannot be ruled out."

Researchers have called to keep cats indoors, but also said that the measure would be "impossible" in some parts of the world.

Researchers also say that cats need to be included in any precautionary measures against the virus.

"We have to take a number of precautionary measures. We need to keep in mind that mammals can be infected and that they can spread the disease, in principle. The potential role of cats should be considered in official guidelines for

controlling the spread of H5N1 virus," said Dr. Albert Osterhaus, of Erasmus University in Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

### **Apple releases program to limit iPod volume**

Apple has released an application that limits the volume produced from its iPod portable music players. The software update, iPod Software 1.1.1, works with the iPod Nano and the Video version. Apple released the program in response to complaints that it had not taken necessary measures to prevent hearing loss in iPod users.

In California, a class-action lawsuit was filed against Apple in January over claims of hearing loss from iPod use.

Apple's worldwide vice-president of marketing for the iPod, Greg Joswiak, indicated that this patch is available for people who want "an easy-to-use option to set their own personal volume limit." It is available for download without charge.

The software also has the option of being used with parental controls to prevent children from modifying the volume.

iPods sold in France, already have the volume limited, as the law forbids more than 100 Db. The American Speech Language Hearing Association published a study where it appears that iPods (and mp3 players') power is 120 Db, comparable to a live concert. A gunshot is commonly considered to be near 140 Db.

### **Six Papuans reported camping on Australian island**

The Australian government has received reports that a family of six people from the Indonesian province of West Papua are camping on Bamboo Island in the Torres Strait. The Australian customs service is trying to verify the accuracy of the reports.

It is believed that the group consists of a union activist, his wife and four children. One of the children is believed to be two months old.

A spokesman for Australian immigration minister Amanda Vanstone said that the government were aware of the reports but that it is an operational matter and no further comment will be made.

The Australian Customs Service cannot confirm the reports and are seeking assistance from other authorities in the area. A customs spokesperson said that the area they are searching is massive with hundreds of islands, and that he was unaware of any island called Bamboo.

Father Yus Mawengkang, a Catholic priest in Papua, said the family had been transported to the island on fishing boats and hoped that they would be collected by Australian authorities. He was quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald as saying, "They cannot stay there for too long... they only have some packets of instant noodles and canned fish only to survive for a few days."

The latest group of Papuans are believed to be from the town of Merauke, the same town where 43 people left to seek political asylum in Australia two months ago. All but one of that group were granted refugee visas, sparking a diplomatic row between Australia and Indonesia.

**Today in History**

**1782:** Rama I succeeded King Taksin of Thailand, founding the Chakri Dynasty.

**1830:** Joseph Smith, Jr., Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and others formally organized the Church of Christ, starting the Latter Day Saint movement.

**1895:** Playwright Oscar Wilde was arrested in London for "acts of gross indecency".

**1896:** The first modern Olympic Games opened in Athens.

**1994:** The assassination of the presidents of both Rwanda and Burundi marked the beginning of the Rwandan Genocide.

April 05 is Tartan Day

**Quote of the Day**

"Do not that to another, which thou wouldst not have done to thy selfe." ~ Thomas Hobbes

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