



Top Stories

United Nations Report: Deserts threatened by global warming

The United Nations Environment Programme have released the "Global Deserts Outlook" report which suggests that the world's deserts face dramatic changes as a result of global climate change, high water demands, tourism and salt contamination of irrigated soils.

Alan Garcia wins Peruvian presidential election

Former president Alan Garcia regained his presidency with a stunning defeat over Ollanta Humala.

Featured story

Researchers discover giant asteroid impact crater in Antarctica

Researchers have found a giant asteroid impact crater under the Wilkes Land ice sheet of Antarctica and it may have been responsible for the creation of the dinosaurs, but may also have been the cause of a mass extinction.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Toronto police uncover an alleged subplot where Steven Vikash Chand, alias Abdul Shakur, intended to lead an invasion of the Parliament of Canada building and assassinate Prime Minister Stephen Harper.
- Iraqi Health Ministry figures show

Wikipedia Current Events

6,025 civilian bodies were delivered to Baghdad's central mortuary in the first five months of this year.

- The Sudanese Janjaweed steal 350 head of cattle from Goz Beida, Chad.
- Rebel leader Timane Erdimi's UFDC-SCUD forces kill 32 people, 17 soldiers and 10 citizens, and wound 50 others in attacks from Sudan into the Chadian city of Tine. Rebels briefly took control of the city before the Military of Chad chased them back over the border.
- Australia's Howard government commissions Ziggy Switkowski to lead a commission on the introduction of nuclear energy in Australia.
- BAA plc, the owners of London's Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted Airports, accept a £10 billion takeover bid from a consortium led by Spain's Grupo Ferrovial and including the Quebec public employees' pension fund.
- The trial of Tim Selwyn for sedition begins in Auckland, New Zealand. Selwyn is the first New Zealander in over 80 years to be charged with sedition.
- Iceland's Prime Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson resigns after poor showings in local elections. Foreign Minister Geir Haarde takes over.

Signs about colleague missed in missing persons case: Detective

Former New South Wales detective and deputy mayor of Bathurst in the state's central west told a Police Integrity Commission in the nearby city of Orange information he provided about his location on the morning a woman went missing was incorrect.

Janine Vaughan went missing at around 4 a.m. on December 7, 2001. She had left a local pub and was last seen getting into a red car. Mr Hosemans became a person of interest after Ms Vaughan's mother, Jennifer said that the only man she had heard her daughter speak about was "a guy who she had seen in Bathurst and who she described as drop-dead gorgeous".

Jennifer Vaughan later found out that the man was high-profile detective and deputy mayor Brad Hosemans. Ms Vaughan's best friend said that Mr Hosemans had walked past the clothing shop that Ms Vaughan had worked in and smiled and winked at her.

At the inquiry on Monday Mr Hosemans said he was in Bathurst on the morning of December 7, 2001. In 2002 he had told the police he was at his mother's house near Newcastle at the time Janine Vaughan disappeared.

Mr Hosemans told the commission he had found a EFTPOS fuel receipt which showed he may have returned from his mother's a day

earlier than he initially believed. His initial statement to police was based upon a bank statement which must have been subject to "processing delays," he said.

The officer who initially handled the case, despite being on charges of indecent assault following an incident at the Bathurst Golf Club was Mr Hosemans. He was later acquitted of the Golf Club incident but police told the inquiry it was unusual for an officer who was facing such charges to be heading a missing persons case.

Ms Vaughan's case was later handled by one of NSW's highest-ranking detectives, Detective Inspector Paul Jacob. Inspector Jacob, on Monday was asked by Mark Buscombe, counsel assisting the inquiry if he had considered Mr Hosemans a suspect at the time. "Had it hit my radar, I may have taken a different course," inspector Jacob replied.

Inspector Jacob only wrote to Mr Hosemans a year after Ms Vaughan disappeared after claims that Mr Hosemans had a relationship with her. Facing the inquiry for a second day today, Inspector Jacob said errors had been made in the handling of Ms Vaughan's case. He told the inquiry that, after a review of evidence before him, Mr Hosemans was struck off the suspect list.

The inspector was then asked about notes he made which said, "Flowers and chocolates in weeks leading up to disappearance. Brad seen. Statement-takers left out issue with Brad." Inspector Jacob said the note should have raised suspicion but he was overworked and subsequently overlooked it.

The inquiry heard Ms Vaughan had

rejected Mr Hosemans prior to her disappearance. "Ms Vaughan told (a friend) that he (Mr Hosemans) was ringing her up at night, walking past the store, asking her out, but she said no," Mr Buscombe said.

Embattled Thai Election Commission hands TRT case to Attorney General

Thailand's Election Commission passed their subcommittee report on to the office of the Attorney-General without making a recommendation. The report, which The Nation describes as all legal documents detailing the allegations that the caretaker Prime Minister's populist Thai Rak Thai party paid small parties to take part in the April 2 snap election.

The EC subcommittee led by Nam Yimyaem concluded in their report that Thai Rak Thai had engaged smaller parties illegally in an effort to avoid the minimum voter requirement of the constitution. The report's recommendation was that the party be dissolved.

The EC passing the buck on the election fraud allegations follows on from scathing criticism from the country's Supreme Court President, Charnchai Likit-jittha. In a letter to the acting Senate Speaker, Charnchai rejected Speaker Suchon Chaleekrua's proposal that he nominate two new members to the Election Commission to fill present vacancies. Citing the constitutional requirement that the EC be politically neutral, Charnchai said of the three remaining commissioners they, "are not in a position to have the trust to continue with their work".

The troubles of the Election Commission may see doubt cast

on the proposed date of October 15 for a rerun of the general election.

Google launches Google Spreadsheet

Google has launched an online spreadsheet site, in a private beta.

The site will allow spreadsheets to be shared between up to 10 users, which is aimed to be useful to teams and small businesses. The product manager, Jonathan Rochelle, said "Many people already organise information into spreadsheets, where they are struggling is to share it".

Google recently bought the online word-processor Writely, launched a calendar product, as well as a desktop search tool. Many see this as them straying into Microsoft's markets.

Federal Reserve chief's stagflation scare

U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben S. Bernanke has told an International Monetary Conference inflation is creeping higher and will receive "particular scrutiny."

Benanke's comments, to an audience of bankers at the Willard Hotel in Washington, has tripped up stocks and bonds which fell by 199 points on US markets Monday (1.8 per cent loss).

The comments seem to have been interpreted by traders to mean there will be an interest rate rise.

A strategist at Wells Capital Management said: "Here we have some suspicion the economy may be weakening ... and a struggling stock market," "And the Fed chairman chooses (Monday) to inform everyone he has decided to get tough on inflation," says Jim Paulsen.

The panicked markets had expected no rate rise at the next Federal Reserve meeting on June 29. The United States central bank began raising interest rates two years ago - 16 consecutive rises later it stands at 5%.

The news might also suggest the billowing crude and commodity markets have affected other parts of the economy. Excluding energy or food prices, core inflation was "at or above the upper end of the range that many economists, including myself, would consider consistent with price stability," Mr Bernanke said.

Bernanke said his core inflation canal was between 1% and 2% a year. Quarter inflation, however, was rising: 3% through six months; 2.3% over 12 months. "These are unwelcome developments," Bernanke said when he announced the figures.

Overall the economic data was "consistent with the softening in the pace of overall economic activity that seems to be under way," Bernanke said in his speech.

Stagflation is the economic problem of rising inflation and falling growth. The Federal Reserve often lower interest rates to finance the economy but in an inflationary economy interest rates might also need to rise. Such a situation might put the Fed in an uncomfortable pinch.

Monetary policy is an incomplete science. Even so, Bernanke is old enough to remember the 1970s when the Federal Reserve declined an interest rate rise. Recession and high prices appeared to be the result.

Pittsburgh Pirates defeat Colorado Rockies, 5-2

In Monday night Major League Baseball action, the Pittsburgh Pirates won a victory over the Colorado Rockies in Denver, 5-2. The Pirates were up 3-1 by the 6th inning, and strong pitching throughout helped them hold off the Rockies.

Ian Snell pitched 6 1/3 innings for the Pirates, and recorded a career and season high 10 strikeouts, giving up only 2 runs, 6 hits, and a single walk. In the first three innings, Snell threw 29 of 35 pitches for strikes. The win was his 6th of the season. Snell's previous career high in strikeouts was nine, set May 3 against the New York Mets.

Coming off a 7-3 homestand, the Pirates hoped to turn around their dismal 4-22 road record, and break a 4-game road losing streak. A strong appearance in their first game of the 3-game series will ease many doubts.

EU diplomat dangles carrot for Tehran

The European Union's head diplomat Javier Solana has offered Iran a number of benefits in exchange for the oil-rich state scrapping an uranium enrichment program.

During the two hour meeting in the Iranian capital Solana is thought to have offered help to build Iran's nuclear generators and supply fuel for the northern Gulf state's energy needs.

This main offer may have been accompanied by a number of sweeteners such as the offer of European Airbus airplanes and United States relaxation of the trade of Boeing aircraft parts with Iran.

The proposal the European emissary carried had previously been seen by Security Council powers United States, China, Britain, Russia, France and also Germany. Were Iran to reject the Solana offer the United Nations Security Council sanctions could be used to stop Iran's nuclear program.

"Larijani said Iran will study the package, clause by clause, and respond," said an unnamed official who knows Ali Larjani, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator.

However there were also some "ambiguities" to resolve, said Larjani himself.

Iran has said as party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty the country can enrich uranium for peaceful needs, such as for the production of electricity.

But a move to enrich uranium on a larger-scale, such as a plan for 3,000 centrifuges by the end of 2006, might lead American officials to say Iran could have the potential to get a nuclear weapon within ten years.

While Iran's religious head Ayatollah Ali Khamenei recently warned about the disruption of oil supplies if Iran was attacked, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is said to be considering the newest package on the table.

'We have two options - one is cooperation, the other is confrontation,' said the Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki.

Pitt and Jolie's multi-million dollar charity baby

Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie are to let Getty Images sell photos of

their new baby Shiloh Nouvel Jolie-Pitt - and have asked the proceeds go to charity.

"While we celebrate the joy of the birth of our daughter, we recognize that 2 million babies born every year in the developing world die on the first day of their lives. These children can be saved, but only if governments around the world make it a priority," the couple said, in a joint statement.

It is thought the rights to the photographs will be bought for upwards \$5 million and that the money will go to a charity for African children.

Getty images will arrange a private photo shoot for the baby. "We are honored that the Jolie-Pitt family has recognized our long-term commitment to these critical issues, as well as our ability to use the power of imagery to make a difference in the lives of many," said Jonathan Klein, Getty's CEO and cofounder.

Born in a hospital in Namibia on May 27 paparazzi were immediately interested in a snapshot of the Hollywood stars' child who weighed in at 7lbs.

The baby's mother Angelina Jolie, 30, an Oscar winning actress, is a goodwill ambassador for U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. She has two adopted children Maddox, 4, and Zahara, aged 15 months.

Sedition trial underway in Auckland, New Zealand

The trial of Timothy Selwyn, 31, for publishing seditious statements has begun in Auckland.

The charge of publishing seditious statements refers to leaflets found in Ponsonby Road, 2km from the Prime Minister's office in

Sandringham Road, Auckland, after an axe attack on the window of the Prime Minister's electorate office, during the foreshore and seabed legislation debate.

Sedition is defined within New Zealand as being "speech, writing or behaviour intended to encourage rebellion or resistance against the government". Selwyn has been charged under section 81(1)(c) of the New Zealand Crimes Act 1961, which forbids any such publication which means "[t]o incite, procure, or encourage violence, lawlessness, or disorder" The New Zealand Police cite the pamphlet as being seditious

This is the first prosecution for sedition in New Zealand for at least 75 years.

The decision to charge Sewlyn has drawn considerable controversy within New Zealand, with many bloggers protesting. Blogger Idiot/Savant, who has extensively researched the history of sedition in New Zealand, called the law an archaic holdover from feudalism which should have been relegated to the dustbin of history long ago. Blogger Lewis Holden, stated "Allowing the state to prosecute an individual for publishing an idea is morally abhorrent and wrong. The state should not have such a power at its disposal: to do so invites abuse of our right to freedom of speech."

At the time of the attack; Prime Minister Helen Clark said "This is violent criminal behaviour and there is no place for it in a democracy..."

The Crown says to find him guilty the jury must decide if the pamphlets encouraged other New Zealanders to break the law through similar crimes, and

whether Selwyn knew that is what the material set out to do.

India to get \$6 billion out of the Big Blue

IBM will expand its service, software, hardware and research divisions in India its chairman and chief executive officer has said. The plan would give the subcontinent \$6 billion worth of investment over three years.

Announcing the news in Bangalore to an audience of 10,000 employees, the package presented is three times as large as that invested by IBM over the previous three years, said Samuel J. Palmisano. "We see India's role as central to our global enterprise," he said.

The \$6 billion investment by IBM, also known by the nickname "Big Blue," is larger than the \$3.9 billion total foreign investment promised to India by Microsoft Corp., Intel Corp. and Cisco Systems Inc.

IBM is currently the largest multinational in India employing 43,000 people in 14 Indian cities. 15'000 new jobs were added last year as the company took 10'000 out of Europe. The new foreign investment is expected to create more jobs in India's thriving telecommunications industry.

Estimates put IBM's sales revenue in India at \$1 billion. While the home market valuation of \$15 billion is a figure expected to grow 25 per cent a year. In the first quarter of this year IBM's Indian wing grew 61 per cent compared to the year before.

"IBM is excited by the opportunities in India over the long term and we are also encouraged by the domestic

opportunity that India offers," said Palmisano.

Addressing specifically IBM's plans in India the head said he wanted to automate IT services, create a "one-stop shop" for hardware information and IT goods, build a new R&D centre in Delhi and forge links between IBM's consultants, developers, engineers and scientists.

"IBM is not going to miss this opportunity," said Palmisano.

Wellington, New Zealand inner city speed limit has decreased

Wellington City has dropped the speed limit of some of its streets to 30 km/h from June 6. The speed limit was changed after a student was killed in a bus lane, Willis Street.

Wellington Coroner Garry Evans suggested the changes.

Lambton Quay, central Wellington, is one of the routes affected.

"104 crashes have been reported in the past five years in the Lambton Quay area - a third of which involved pedestrians. The council hopes to reduce the number and severity of accidents. The lower speed is more appropriate for the area and better reflects the speed many drivers already travel at," says Deputy Mayor Alick Shaw.

The mother of the student killed, Brenda Bongiovanni, said that she is relieved to hear the changes.

The new speed limit will apply from Lower Willis St to the Lambton interchange & bus terminal adjacent to the Central Railway Station, and Mercer St and Bunny St, the distance is 1.3 km.

£5.8m Turner watercolour a British record

In Britain one of the most important watercolours to be put up for sale in half a century has been snapped up for £5.8 million at Christie's (actual selling price: £5,832,000 including excess).

In "The Blue Rigi: Lake of Lucerne, Sunrise," the telephone bidder bought a softly glowing yellow sunrise in which JMW Turner trapped a moment of cause and effect - gun, dog and the flight of ducks.

"In a technique of almost unimaginable subtlety Turner expresses his lifelong preoccupation with the effects of light, shade and atmosphere," said Noel Annesley, honorary chairman of Christie's, who personally took the gavel for the auction.

The painting has two sister paintings also from Switzerland: The Red Rigi and The Dark Rigi. "Turner had never made any drawings like this before and never made any like them again," said John Ruskin, the 19th century art critic, when he saw the works.

In 1842 the painting was bought by its first owner Elhanan Bicknell for 80 guineas and was in the property of its latest owners since 1942. The auction house has said they plan to keep the identity of the newest buyer, who paid slightly more than 80 guineas, secret.

In 2000 Rosetti's Pandora was the last most expensive watercolour ever sold in Britain - it went for £2.6m, less than half the price of The Blue Rigi.

Gunmen enter Palestine TV station in hail of bullets

Gunmen forced their way into a

building used by Palestinian Television in Khan Younis today. Approximately 15 gunmen fired toward the sky as they stormed the building shouting "You are collaborators. You are biased. You are dirty people" the staff reported.

The armed men then discharged their weapons wildly into cameras, computers and other equipment leaving one employee of the transmission centre to say: "The whole place is ruined." After wreaking havoc for several minutes and beating up two people, including a cameraman, the vandals left.

Palestine TV stopped broadcasting for 30 minutes in protest at the attack. It seems the violence was in response to a deadline Mahmood Abbas, from the Fatah political wing in Palestine, had given to Hamas. Hamas is Fatah's rival which currently leads the Palestine government.

According to the Palestinian President Hamas have until midday (0900 GMT) on Tuesday to agree with a manifesto that touches on an issue at the heart of Palestinian politics. The script indirectly recognises Israel as it calls for a Palestinian state to exist beside Israel.

Hamas, an Islamic party, came to power at the January 2006 elections. While they denied being involved in the attack on the television station they have repeatedly ignored and verbally opposed Abbas and western attempts to reconcile with Israel.

Abbas will order a July referendum on the manifesto if Hamas does not accept the treatise by the specified time. This is thought not to be the preferred option as a

referendum might trigger more unrest in Palestine.

Brazilian soccer team defeats New Zealand All-Whites

The New Zealand soccer team, the All Whites, were beaten 4-0 during a friendly match against Brazil in Geneva on Monday morning (NZST).

New Zealand goalkeeper Glen Moss put in a good effort to keep the scoreline down by producing a string of saves, but Ronaldo, Adriano, Kaka, and Juninho all managed to put the ball past him to score for Brazil.

New Zealand looked comfortable early on and Moss even managed to save a one-on-one with Brazilian skipper Cafu. However it was Brazil who went into the half-time break 1-0 up courtesy of Ronaldo's goal in the 43rd minute.

Brazil then stepped it up in the second half and New Zealand were forced to spend long spells defending.

Adriano put the ball through the legs of Moss in the 51st minute to put Brazil further ahead, and Kaka and Juninho then sealed Brazil's win with one goal each in the last minutes of the match.

Today in History

- 1099 - Crusaders of the First Crusade reached Jerusalem and began a five-week siege of the city.
- 1905 - The Norwegian parliament dissolved the Union between Sweden and Norway.
- 1940 - King Haakon VII of Norway (pictured), Crown Prince Olav and the Norwegian government left Troms, for exile in London, following the WWII German invasion.
- 1948 - Edvard Beneš resigned as

President of Czechoslovakia rather than sign a Constitution making his nation a Communist state
 1981 - The Israeli Air Force attacked and destroyed Iraq's Osiraq nuclear reactor.

Quote of the Day

"Nature has mysterious infinities and imaginative power. It is always varying the productions it offers to us. The artist himself is one of nature's means."

~ Paul Gauguin

Word of the Day

sesquicentennial; *adj*

Definition

1. Occurring every 150 years.
2. Of, or relating to a 150 year anniversary.

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