



Top Stories

Polish Archbishop resigns after spying revelations

Stanislaw Wielgus, the Archbishop of Warsaw, resigned yesterday after admitting to have spied for Poland's former Communist Government. At a mass in Warsaw Cathedral, the Archbishop was to have marked his formal installation. Instead, he tendered his resignation.

Number of breaches during New Zealand's end of year exams

Of the 262,094 students who participated in the National Certificate of Educational Achievement exams in New Zealand during the years 2004 and 2005, 394 rule breaches occurred.

Featured story

Prince Laurent of Belgium testifies in marine fraud case

Prince Laurent of Belgium, the youngest son of King Albert II of Belgium, has been questioned last night by the federal police and is attending today's court session in Hasselt in a marine fraud case that has gripped Belgian media since last December. The Prince is expected to testify this afternoon.

Wikipedia Current Events

• The ÖVP, the future minority partner in the grand coalition government that will be sworn in in Austria on 2007-01-11, announces its future ministers.

Wikipedia Current Events

•Alsatian farmer Joseph Daul, an MEP from France's UMP party, is elected chairman of the largest caucus in the European Parliament, EPP-ED. He succeeds Hans-Gert Pöttering, widely anticipated to be elected President of the European Parliament next week.

•Hindu holy men in India threaten to boycott the Ganges River Festival because of pollution.

•A top American general says that he believes North Korea may conduct another nuclear test in the future.

•Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe calls for closer international co-operation against a nuclear North Korea.

•Hearings begin in Italy on whether to charge 25 CIA agents with kidnapping for the "extraordinary rendition" of Osama Nasr in 2003. The named agents have left the country.

•Apple CEO Steve Jobs unveils the iPhone and changes the company name to Apple Inc. at the annual Macworld Expo in San Francisco.

Sudan may allow joint UN/AU forces in Darfur

Mustafa Osman Ismail, Sudan's Presidential Advisor, opened the possibility of allowing some United Nations peacekeepers into its troubled Darfur region. Ismail admitted that the African Union Commander in Darfur could request non-African troops if he decides that current troop

numbers are not sufficient. This would allow forces from organisations such as the UN to send troops there at the Commander's request. When asked whether this would lead to UN troops in Darfur, Ismail replied "You are right."

While the region is currently overseen by 7,000 AU troops, hopes indicate that a joint venture might see as many as 17,000 UN and AU troops deployed, in addition to 3,000 police officers.

Sudan had previously rejected UN Security Council Resolution 1706, which authorised 22,500 UN peacekeepers to handle the Darfur conflict. Since the start of the conflict, 200,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million driven from their homes.

Full video of Tigger incident reveals different story

News networks quickly picked up footage of Tigger punching a guest at Walt Disney World. The Monaco family claims that the costume character hit their son in the face unprovoked. He went to the hospital that night, to get medication for "neck pain".

The full home video of Tigger punching has now surfaced on YouTube, providing a unique context to the incident.

News outlets, on the other hand, were only provided with a four second clip of the footage, which seems to have been edited to back up the Monaco family's claims.

In the full footage, edited to include commentary, the blogger transcribes the voices of Jerry Monaco Junior and Senior, as Jerry Sr. videotapes the ground.

Sr: Go for it.

Jr: Ready?

Sr: Here we go. Sorry Tig. My bad man. Aw, too much? Heh. Sorry buddy. Oh yeah, I was on your head. Sorry about that.

Adult female voice: Jerry get over here.

Sr: (unintelligible) No crowding Tigger, man.

(Tigger punches, and Jerry Jr. reacts by returning the motion.)

Sr: Jerry! Jerry!

He comments that "it sounds like Jerry [Jr.] laughs, and then his arm goes down a bit", in order to undo a zipper, before Tigger's punch is thrown.

"Now the question to ask is are the father and son game players? I mean, the father says, 'oh yeah, I was on your head.'"

The blogger comments that he notices "Jerry's pretty quick to hit Tigger back on the head... I mean if Tigger's hitting him out of the blue, he's reacting pretty fast in hitting Tigger."

Representative Press is a blog that aims for media reform.

U.S. air strikes on Somalia confirmed

he Pentagon has confirmed that US Forces began an on-going operation of airstrikes in southern Somalia on Monday, and that the attacks are continuing.

An attack against Ras Kamboni — a remote island near the Kenyan border, represents the first American involvement in the tumultuous country since the the

1993 operation that resulted in the deaths of 18 American soldiers.

A Somali Defence Ministry official has additionally reported that American helicopters launched an attack against ICU militants in Afmadow, a city near the Kenyan border, 350 kilometres southwest of Mogadishu. The AC-130 gunship attack killed an unknown number of civilians, alternately reported as 4, 19 or 31.

Ban Ki-Moon, secretary-general of the United Nations, expressed concern that the unilateral actions represented a "new dimension" that could escalate hostilities.

The concern was echoed by the Italian foreign ministry declared its "...opposition to unilateral initiatives which could set off new tensions" the Italian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Ethiopia, which borders Somalia, sent in troops on Dec. 24 to defeat the Islamic movement that was in contradiction with Somalia's internationally recognized government, which at the time controlled only the western town of Baidoa.

"Prada", "Illusionist" among screen adaptations up for USC Scriptor

The finalists for the USC Scriptor Awards were announced recently. The teams behind Children of Men, The Devil Wears Prada, The Illusionist, The Last King of Scotland, and Notes on a Scandal all received nods.

For nineteen years, the USC Libraries Scriptor Award has honored "writers for the best achievement in adaptation among English-language films released during the previous year and based on a book, novella or short

story."

While there are many awards for either screenwriting in general, or adapted screenwriting, the Scriptor is the only award to recognize both the screenwriters and the original authors.

- Alfonso Cuarón & Timothy J. Sexton and David Arata and Mark Fergus & Hawk Ostby for Children of Men, based on the book by P.D. James
- screenwriter Aline Brosh McKenna and author Lauren Weisberger for The Devil Wears Prada
- screenwriter Neil Berger for The Illusionist, based on the story "Eisenheim the Illusionist" by Steven Millhauser
- screenwriters Peter Morgan and Jeremy Brock for The Last King of Scotland, based on the book by Giles Foden
- screenwriter Patrick Marber and author Zoe Heller for Notes on a Scandal

The titles were selected by committee, from a list of forty-five eligible films. The committee is made of Writers Guild of America members (including some Academy Award-winning screenwriters and Academy Award-nominated screen writers), authors, film industry executives, USC faculty, the dean of the USC Libraries, and selected members of the Friends of the USC Libraries, the sponsor of the event.

Previous screenwriters and authors honored include the teams behind Capote, Million Dollar Baby, The Hours, A Beautiful Mind, L.A. Confidential, The English Patient and Schindler's List.

Makeup Oscar nominee list narrowed to seven

According to a press release today

from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, there are seven films in contention for the "Academy Award for Makeup".

Alphabetically, the films are:

- Apocalypto
- Click
- Pan's Labyrinth
- Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest
- The Prestige
- The Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause
- X-Men The Last Stand

Ten minutes of each film will be screened for the Academy's Makeup Award Nominating Committee on Saturday, January 20, 2006. The committee will decide which of the three films should receive nominations. This list will then be voted on by the entire Academy.

The 79th Academy Awards will honor the outstanding film achievements of 2006. The ceremony is scheduled for Sunday, February 25, 2007, at the Kodak Theatre at Hollywood & Highland Center.

Hindu Holy Men in India threaten to boycott Ganges River Festival because of pollution

India's yearly pilgrimage to the Ganges river, worshiped by Hindus as the goddess Ganga, is the world's largest gathering of people, with around 70 million participants, dwarfing other religious pilgrimages. However, raw sewage from Varanasi has raised the levels of fecal coliform bacteria to 1.5 million times that safe for drinking.

This year thousands of Hindu Holy Men, also known as sadhus, threatened to boycott festivals during their pilgrimage to the

Ganges, where their rituals involve washing away their sins by bathing in the water. The sadhus say that the pollution level must be corrected by January 12, 2007.

A sadhu named Hari Chaitanaya Brahmachari said that, "Millions of people are taking baths in this river because Hindus consider the Ganges a pious river. But the fact is they are taking a dip not in river water but in effluents discharged from factories ... If (the) Ganges is not cleaned within next few days, I will take jal samadhi," which is a suicide ritual.

Prince Laurent of Belgium testifies in marine fraud case

Prince Laurent of Belgium, the youngest son of King Albert II of Belgium, has been questioned last night by the federal police and is attending today's court session in Hasselt in a marine fraud case that has gripped Belgian media since last December. He arrived in a Smart car and was accompanied by his lawyer and former politician Fred Erdman. The case turns around funds of the Belgian Navy that have been used to beautify the Prince's villa in Tervuren. The Prince is expected to testify this afternoon.

In total, € 2.2 million was supposedly diverted from the marine's purchasing services using false invoices. Roughly € 185 000 was allegedly used to paint the Prince's villa, install lights in the garden, for the purchase of carpet and furniture, and for his secretariat and for animal clinics the Prince supports via his Foundation. Twelve marine officers and contractors are being accused of document fraud, working as a gang, bribe, embezzlement of government money etc. and could face 10 years in prison. The money was part of the budget that wasn't

spent at the end of the year, and which would flow back to the government if the army didn't spend it.

The Prince, who is also an officer in the navy, is being treated only as a witness in this case, there have been no charges against him. The Attorney General in Hasselt Marc Rubens has said that there are no elements in the investigation that point to the fact that Laurent was aware of the affair, however several accused have contested this in the press. Technically, the villa is not the property of the Prince himself, but of the Royal Gift, which manages the real property of the Royal Family.

During his interview by the police last night, Prince Laurent stated that he needed funds to renovate his villa, and that Noël Vaessen, his adviser, told him the Navy could help him. The Prince stated that he thought it was legal, and that he had no reason to doubt his adviser.

Ex-Colonel Noël Vaessen was an adviser of the Prince between 1993 and 1999. Vaessen has declared in the media during the last month that the Prince actively participated in the fraud, and that he fears a cover-up. He said that the Prince was a demanding party in the operation, and that "he knew that we were arranging things to make his life and his work as comfortable as possible." According to Vaessen, the Prince was in need of money to support a royal lifestyle, and "didn't even have enough money to buy food."

In 2001, Vaessen was discharged with honour from the army "for medical reasons", but Defence Minister André Flahaut is investigating if there was no

agreement to give him his pension in exchange for the fact that he wouldn't incriminate the Prince. Vaessen also accused the Prince of other things, such as racing against the high-speed train TGV on a French highway. He has also incriminated Admiral Herteleer. Captain Johan Claeys, one of the accused, studied with the Prince and worked at the facturation services of the Navy in 1998 and 1999. One of the accused contractors, Marc Luypaerts, has told the press that the judge responsible for the investigation in Hasselt had forbidden him to speak about Prince Laurent.

Laurent's status as a Prince has several judicial consequences for the trial. In Belgium, it's against the law to incriminate the Royal Family during a trial. Also, the Prince is protected from judicial pursuit because he is also a Senator by law. Justice Minister Laurette Onkelinx has issued a Royal Decree, which the King has signed while on holiday in Naples, which would make it possible for Princes to testify in a trial.

However, Public Prosecutor Erwin Steyls has chosen to have Laurent interrogated by the police last night in Hasselt. This was the first time during the last six years of the inquiry that the Prince was questioned. Today in the court, the Prosecutor defended the act of having him questioned outside the trial, saying that there were several procedural issues. First, the subpoena for the Prince wasn't issued in time to be legal. Second, the details of the protocol to hear the Prince in court were not explained in the recent Royal Decree, making it worthless -something Minister Onkelinx denied. Thirdly, nobody can be forced to testify against himself, and if the Prince were to make

false statements under oath, he could only be sued for perjury. However, the court has decided to let him testify anyway this afternoon.

During the last month, the case has caused a several spin-off discussions in Belgium. One of the surprises during this period was the King's Christmas Message, in which he referred to the case. The regional governments are now investigating and discussing their donations to the IRGT/KINT, an environmental organisation supported by Prince Laurent. But there is also an ongoing debate over the position of the Monarchy in Belgium. Some politicians are suggesting to limit the role of the Monarchy, and other think that only the King and Queen, the Crown Prince or Princess and the widow(er) of the King or Queen should receive state funding.

Number of breaches during New Zealand's end of year exams

Wikinews has acquired, under the 1982 Official Information Act, documents that show how many breaches of exam rules occurred during New Zealand's end of year National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) exams in 2004 and 2005. The breaches includes all levels: level one, level two, level three and scholarships.

During the external exams, the supervisors have to report all breaches of the rules. Those breaches are then given a punishment, which includes a written warning, exam results from a subject being withheld, all exam results being withheld for a year or banning the student from sitting any external exams the next year which has only ever happened once. The student was banned for constant breaches of

the rules and constant disruptions in numerous exams. If a student causes disruption to other students during the exam, that student can expect harsh penalties as New Zealand Qualifications Authority say they consider a disruption very seriously.

In the first year of NCEA, 2004, a total of 129,853 students took part in external exams and of those, 186 breaches were filed by supervisors. 89 of those students had some subject results withheld. And, bringing the total to 90, one student had all results withheld and was prevented from sitting exams the next year.

In 2004 "Accessing Information or Materials" rules included, bringing in own paper which happened 13 times; using an electronic translator, 17 times; using a mobile phone, 18 times; bringing in notes, 41 times; using book(s), once. Rules relating to "Influencing/Assisting or Hindering" are, disturbing or communicating with other students, which happened 11 times and 26 times respectively. "Not following Instructions" rules are, drawing or writing rude notes on the answer paper, happened 20 times; continuing to write after exam has finished, eight times; listening to a music player, four times; prematurely starting the exam, four times; refusing to stay under supervision, two times; cheating (includes attempts to), 12 times; altering an answer booklet then getting it reconsidered, once. An Information Management external exam had to be held over several sessions due to low resources. All students were required to remain in a secure environment for 30 minutes after the exam following theirs had started, two did not which was considered a breach of

the rules. And seven peoples' submitted portfolios had authenticity issues.

"Forms of Misconduct" was changed in 2005, so the definitions have slightly changed.

Out of 132,241 students sitting exams, 208 of them broke the external exam rules.

95 of those students had some of their results withheld and only one person had all of his exam results withheld, for a year. The other students, 112, received written warnings.

89 students were investigated for "Accessing Information or Materials"; 13 for having a cellphone with them; 40 for having notes in the exam; 13 for copying, or attempting to copy, other students work and four were investigated for altering their answer booklet and then having it reconsidered. 70 students were investigated for "Not following Instructions"; 47 for writing rude messages on the answer booklet and/or drawing rude pictures. 14 students were investigated for "Influencing/Assisting or Hindering". 29 students were investigated for "Performance Based Authenticity", which is where a group of students work looks very similar to the other.

Only one student was investigated for "Impersonating another candidate".

Today in History

- 1475 - In the Battle of Vaslui, Stephen the Great and his Moldavian forces successfully repelled an Ottoman attack led by Hadân Suleiman Pasha, the Beylerbeyi of Rumelia.
- 1810 - Napoleon, childless after 14 years of marriage, divorced his first wife Empress Joséphine.
- 1776 - Thomas Paine published Common Sense, which galvanized the American Revolution among the populace.
- 1927 - The film Metropolis was released. It was the most expensive silent film of the time, costing approximately 7 million Reichsmark to make.
- 1946 - The first General Assembly of the United Nations opened in London's Westminster Central Hall. Fifty-one member states were represented.

Quote of the Day

Science and mathematics
 Run parallel to reality, they
 symbolize it, they squint at it,
 They never touch it: consider what
 an explosion
 Would rock the bones of men into
 little white fragments and unsky
 the world
 If any mind for a moment touch
 truth.

~ Robinson Jeffers ~

Word of the Day

ennui; n

1. A state of listlessness, boredom.
2. Melancholia, depression.

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