



Top Stories

Riots in Greece enter fourth night



The riots in Greece that started on December 6 have entered their fourth night. These are the worst riots the Hellenic Republic has witnessed in decades.

Image Credit:
Georgios Pazios

Small island gets first democratic election



Voters in the small Channel Island of Sark have voted in their first democratic election, bringing an end to almost 4.5 centuries of feudal rule. Voting in the election opened at 10:00 local time (UTC+0) today, and closed at 1800. The result is expected to be announced at 2200 UTC.

Image Credit:
Phillip Capper CC-BY 2.0

Wikipedia Current Events

The Channel Island of Sark, a British crown dependency, holds its first democratic elections.

- Anti-police riots continue in Athens and several cities across Greece.
- Ireland issues an international recall of its pork products following the discovery of contaminated pig feed.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Patriarch Alexy II, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, dies of heart failure in Peredelkino, Russia.
- A bombing kills 29 people and injures more than 100 in Peshawar, Pakistan.
- A cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe spreads, with hundreds dead and over 10,000 people infected since August 2008.
- At the request of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Governor General of Canada Michaëlle Jean prorogues the parliament until January 26, 2009, to avoid a confidence motion by a newly-formed coalition of opposition parties.

Riots in Greece enter fourth night

The riots in Greece that started on December 6 have entered their fourth night. These are the worst riots the Hellenic Republic has witnessed in decades.

The riots were triggered when Alexandros Grigoropoulos, a 15-year-old student, was shot and killed by police. The police claim that Grigoropoulos was throwing a bomb at them when they fired.

Cities throughout Greece have been hit by the unrest, not just Athens. Hundreds of shops and businesses have been destroyed.

"No one has the right to use this tragic incident as an excuse for acts of violence," said Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis, New

Democracy party.

"The government cannot handle this crisis and has lost the trust of the Greek people," George Papandreou of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement said. "The best thing it can do is resign and let the people find a solution ... We will protect the public."

The rioters are organizing on the campus of National Technical University of Athens (Athens Polytechnic). A constitutional clause enacted after the overthrow of the Greek military junta of 1967–1974 prevents security forces from entering the campus.

The Guardian is reporting that the University is being used by young men and women to stock up on firebombs and break up marble slabs to throw at police. From behind their makeshift barriers, they vowed the unrest would become "an uprising the likes of which Greece has never seen."

"We are experiencing moments of a great social revolution," leftist activist Panagiotis Sotiris told Reuters. Sotiris is among those occupying a university building. "The protests will last as long as necessary," he added.

"A switch has been flicked and the pressure cooker's boiled over," said David Lea, an analyst at Control Risks Group in London, to Bloomberg News. "There are certain places where anarchists are more likely to inspire violence, and that's Greece."

Two police officers have been charged in the shooting death of Grigoropoulos, who was buried on Tuesday.

Football: Ronaldo to play for Corinthians

Three-time soccer world player of the year Ronaldo has agreed to return home to Brazil and join Corinthians in São Paulo.

Ronaldo (born Ronaldo Luis Nazário de Lima), 32, is coming back from a major knee injury after rupturing a tendon in his left knee nine months ago - the third such injury in his career. In June, Italian powerhouse A.C. Milan let Ronaldo go instead of resigning him as he had reached the end of his contract. Many people thought this injury could be the end of Ronaldo's career - including Ronaldo himself.

"I don't know if I will continue to play or if I will retire," Ronaldo told *Gazzetta dello Sport* in November. "I have not taken a decision yet. I am in no hurry to make a decision. I want to complete my recovery."

Apparently, that decision has been made. Ronaldo's agent, Fabiano Farah stated today, "We've reached a verbal agreement for Ronaldo to play there [São Paulo])."

It is unofficially believed that Ronaldo will receive a one year contract, and the Corinthians posted a statement to their website, writing: "In the next few hours, the two sides should provide the final formalities to close the deal and set a date for the presentation of the athlete."

Ronaldo has scored 319 goals in 451 appearances over seventeen seasons with PSV Eindhoven, F.C.

Barcelona, Inter Milan, Real Madrid, and AC Milan.

Somali pirates release Greek ship, 19 sailors

According to East African Seafarers' Assistance Programme Kenyan chapter head, Andrew Mwangura, the Greek freighter MV Captain Stephanos and all its 19 crew, consisting of 17 Filipinos, one Chinese and a Ukrainian, had been released late Monday, after 78 days in captivity. It was unclear, however, if any ransom was paid. The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs said that "there are (still) 91 Filipino seafarers on board six ships still with Somali pirates."

Somali pirates seized the Bahamas-flagged vessel on September 21 near the Horn of Africa, as the bulk carrier, was cruising in the Gulf of Aden en route and transporting coal to Europe. The captors locked the crew inside the vessel and they were not fed well. The vessel is now headed to Italy and will sail from there to Greece, to meet the ship owners.

Reuters reported that "a surge in attacks at sea this year in the busy Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean off Somalia has pushed up insurance costs, brought the gangs tens of millions of dollars in ransoms, and prompted foreign warships to rush to the area."

Alleged 9-11 conspirators withdraw offer of guilty pleas

All five of the alleged 9-11 conspirators, including the self-professed ringleader and mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, have withdrawn their offer of guilty pleas after questions were raised on whether by pleading guilty they can receive the death penalty.

During a pretrial hearing at Guantanamo Bay, Mohammed was heard asking: "Are you saying if we plead guilty we will not be able to be sentenced to death?"

Mohammed has stated his desire to die as a martyr, but Army Col. Stephen Henley, the military judge at the head of the trial, stated that a death sentence may not be possible without a verdict. Attorneys for the conspirators say that the possibility of no execution led to the withdrawal of the offer.

Alice Hoagland, whose son Mark is believed to be one of the passengers of United Airlines Flight 93 who fought the hijackers of that flight, attended the proceedings, and expressed her opposition to any of the conspirators being executed, saying of Mohammed that "I can't think of anybody who less deserves martyrdom".

Small island gets first democratic election

Voters in the small Channel Island of Sark, a Crown dependency of the British Crown, have voted in their first democratic election, bringing an end to almost 4½ centuries of feudal rule.

Voting in the election opened at 10:00 local time (UTC+0) today, and closed at 18:00 (6 PM). The result is expected to be announced at 22:00 (10 PM).

28 candidates were competing for the votes of the 474 residents eligible to participate in the election.

Roger Olsen, the first person to vote in the election commented on the transition to democracy. "Sark has an opportunity to express itself, to determine its own destiny," he commented. "We like

to make our own decisions. Now we're set up to do exactly that," he continued.

He also stated the he believed the island needed "fresh eyes, new blood and a new perspective".

Suzie Thorpe, the next voter, commented on the issues which concerned her during this election. "We need a good sustainable economy. But we don't want the island to change too much. We don't want any helipads, thank you."

Sark was the last feudal state remaining in the Western world, and the transition was forced by European human rights legislation that requires democratic governments.

Formula One set to see standardised engines

Formula One looks set to enter an era of standardised engines. The FIA is meeting with teams in Monte Carlo and is expected to approve the use by some teams of a standardised power unit provided by Cosworth, an automotive engineering company, from 2010 onwards. The move to a standard engine, which is common in lower tiers of open wheeled racing such as GP2, was pushed for by FIA President Max Mosley earlier this year as he aims to reduce team costs. This would not see the exclusion of manufacturer made engines, as at this time participation in the system would be voluntary and teams would be free to build licensed Cosworth engines or their own powerplants but on a performance par with the Cosworth unit. Mosley has stated that stabilising Formula One means that the FIA "...must stabilize the system with a base engine which anyone can have and

which is inexpensive, as well as a standard gearbox" and has warned of future budget problems, saying that "Honda pulled out because of falling car sales and there is no guarantee that these falling sales, which affect all manufacturers, will not drop further".

Ahead of the meeting of the FIA there have been rumours in the Italian press that Formula One team Renault had broken with the Formula One Teams' Association (FOTA), rumours which Renault has strongly denied. FOTA was established earlier this year by the teams to negotiate with the FIA over cost cutting measures and other changes, changes it hopes will stop the introduction of compulsory standardisation of engines and other parts on F1 cars. The FOTA's position was hard hit last week by the announcement by Honda that they were leaving F1 due to the economic crisis, a move which has caused many teams to re-assert their commitment to a future in Formula One. David Richards, whose Prodrive entry to Formula One was called off last season due to costs, highlighted what he sees as the need for fundamental changes, saying that Honda's exit was 'a salutary lesson for the whole of F1 that things are going to have to change, and everything is going to have to come back a little bit if the whole sport is to prosper in the future'.

Five teams have reportedly expressed an interest in the Cosworth engines from the 2010 season, the five being all four independent teams (Williams, Force India, Red Bull Racing and Scuderia Toro Rosso) joined by manufacturer Renault. If only four teams sign up to the idea, the FIA has announced it will go ahead. Renault have been highly vocal in

criticising the failure of the engine development freeze that has existed in Formula One and have, after a couple of seasons of struggling, been under pressure from their parent company to justify the continued expenditure in Formula One. Cosworth have previously been prolific engine suppliers in Formula One, their last stint was supplying engines to Williams in 2006.

The talks come as many of the Formula One teams are in Jerez for part of their winter testing regime, with potential Toro Rosso driver Steve Buemi topping the time sheets for the first two day.

United Kingdom to begin withdrawing troops from Iraq

According to a senior defence source, there are plans to start withdrawing British armed forces from Iraq in March of next year. A large portion of the 5,500 troops are to return home within a year or less. It had been previously considered that the army could start leaving in January.

The Sunday Times reports that this plan has been recommended by Lieutenant-General Graeme Lamb, the deputy coalition commander and the most senior British officer in Iraq. It, however, has not yet won the approval of the Chief of Joint Operations, Lieutenant-General Nick Houghton.

The withdrawal would allow the troops and resources to move to Afghanistan.

Pilots rescued from ice flow south of Baffin Island

Two pilots who crashed their aeroplane in frigid waters south of Baffin Island in northern Canada were rescued Tuesday, after being stranded on an ice floe in for eighteen hours in temperatures as

low as -20°C.

The pilots' aeroplane, a Cessna Skymaster, was scheduled for a flight from Wabush, Newfoundland, to Iqaluit. Both the aircraft's engines cut out over the Hudson Strait. The pilots were forced to send a mayday call and ditch the aeroplane.

The pilots were eventually rescued by a fishing boat named the Atlantic Enterprise, which had traveled 290 kilometres out of its due path after hearing the pilot's mayday call.

The two pilots involved in the accident were Troels Hansen, aged 45, and Oliver Edwards-Neil, aged 25.

Somali pirates foil revolt plan by hostages onboard ship

An anonymous pirate told the AFP news agency that crew members of the MV Faina, a Ukrainian ship that had been seized by pirates two and a half months ago, attempted to "harm" two of their captors. The ship is reportedly carrying 33 battle tanks, as well as other military weapons.

"Some crew members on the Ukrainian ship are misbehaving," the pirate said.

A foreign ministry spokesman for Ukraine stated that he had not received any information about this.

Today in History

359 - Honoratus, the first known Prefect of the City of Constantinople, takes office.

1816 - Indiana becomes the 19th U.S. state.

1907 - New Zealand Parliament Buildings almost completely destroyed by fire.

1936 - Abdication Crisis: Edward

VIII's abdication as King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the British Dominions beyond the Seas, and Emperor of India becomes effective.

2001 - The People's Republic of China joins the World Trade Organization.

Quote of the Day

The belief that there is only one truth and that oneself is in possession of it, seems to me the deepest root of all that is evil in the world. ~ Max Born

Word of the Day

verbatim adv

1. Word for word; in exactly the same words as were used originally.

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+1-866-653-4265
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