



Top Stories

Kofi Annan: Iraq situation much worse than civil war

The UN Secretary General expressed sadness at being unable to prevent the Iraq war and described the present situation there as "much worse than civil war", a characterization disputed by the Iraqi National Security Adviser.

Clinton to run for United States President?

New York Junior Senator Hillary Clinton has been talking to high profile New York candidates, the first step in launching her possible 2008 campaign.

Featured story

Dion wins Canadian Liberal leadership on fourth ballot

Stephane Dion has won the Liberal leadership today at Palais des congrès de Montréal with 2,521 (54.7%) votes to Michael Ignatieff with 2,084 (45.3%) votes.

Wikipedia Current Events

- NASA announces plans to build a base on the north pole of the Moon.
- John Bolton will resign as US ambassador to the UN when his recess appointment expires in January 2007.
- It is now widely expected that Kazakhstan will head the OSCE in 2009 despite strong opposition from the United States. Kazakh President Nazarbayev is visiting

Wikipedia Current Events

Brussels, Germany, which supports Kazakhstan's bid, and recently visited London, meeting with Prime Minister Tony Blair, whose government also supports Kazakhstan.

- President of the Philippines Gloria Arroyo declares a "state of national calamity" following the death and destruction caused by Typhoon Durian.
- A US Marine is jailed for raping a woman at Subic Bay after joint exercises with the Philippines. Three other Marines were acquitted in a case which caused anti-American protests.
- Kevin Rudd is elected as the new leader of the Federal Australian Labor Party with the caucus electing him by 49 votes to 39 votes for Kim Beazley. Julia Gillard is the new deputy leader.
- Fijian troops take over the headquarters of the armed police division, occupy the main police station in Suva, and surround a police academy in an escalation of the 2006 Fijian coup d'état plot.
- The New York Times criticizes the Chinese Wikipedia for whitewashing in its articles on Mao Zedong, the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.
- The Government of Iran blocks Wikipedia, IMDb and nytimes.com, among many sites both commercial and informative.

Kofi Annan: Iraq situation much worse than civil war

In an interview with BBC's Lyse Doucet, retiring Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, confessed to sadness at being unable to prevent the war against Iraq. He said that although Saddam Hussein had been a brutal dictator, at least there had been peace in the streets and people were secure in their everyday lives. Saying the war had caused "killing and bitterness", he said that the situation is now "much worse" than a civil war".

Mr Annan's comments provoked the anger of Iraq's national security adviser, Mouwaffaq al-Rubaie, who said he was shocked by what Kofi Annan had said and, in turn, he accused the United Nations of failing in its duty to the Iraqi people.

Donald Rumsfeld, former US Defence Secretary and one of the architects of the invasion of Iraq by USA and Britain, admitted in a secret memorandum that the strategy in Iraq is not working properly. Just two weeks before his resignation he advocated a change in policy saying "Clearly, what US forces are currently doing in Iraq is not working well enough or fast enough".

Former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, who heads up the study group commissioned by the President to advise on the situation in Iraq referred to Iraq as being "a helluva mess". On Wednesday, Colin Powell, former

Secretary of State who was in post at the time of the invasion of Iraq, told a conference in the United Arab Emirates that Iraq was in a state of civil war. This was an opinion expressed in March by former Iraqi prime minister, Ayad Allawi.

Ignatieff, Rae say they'll run in next Canadian election

Michael Ignatieff, who was the runner-up in yesterday's election, says he will hang on to his seat in the House of Commons and run again in the next federal election. Bob Rae, former NDP premier and currently not an elected MP, also said that it's "still my intention" to seek a seat in Parliament. "I said during the leadership race that that was the plan and it's still the plan," said Rae.

There has been some speculation that Ignatieff would go back to Harvard University in the United States and Rae would go back to his Toronto law practice. Ignatieff and Rae were in the first and second spots until Stéphane Dion, former dark horse in the election, surged past three other candidates to win on the fourth ballot.

Dion discussed with Liberals yesterday what they felt about the recent Liberal election and the future of the party. Rae, Ignatieff, and all the other Liberals said Dion is a good leader. "[Dion's] going to be a good leader," Ignatieff said on his way to the luncheon. "He's going to be the next prime minister of the country and I'm going to work real hard to make all that happen." According to Rae, the conversation was "candid and very direct and Mr. Dion set a great tone for the meeting."

The newly elected leader hopes to win the next federal election which is expected in 2007.

Venezuela's Hugo Chavez re-elected

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has been re-elected to a third term in office with a large margin over social democrat rival Manuel Rosales.

The latest report from CNE, National Electoral Council from Venezuela at 10:00 pm local time (UCT -4) gives the current president Hugo Chavez Frias the victory with 61.35% of the total counted so far, 75.3%. His social democratic rival, Manuel Rosales, received 38.39%.

Shortly after the partial results were given, Hugo Chávez appeared on the Balcón del Pueblo of the in the presidential palace to celebrate his victory and address his followers. Chávez announced that a new era has started in Bolivarian development, focused in the expansion of the Bolivarian Revolution. Chavez' followers were already celebrating their victory with red flags in downtown Caracas.

The leftist president who has been a thorn in the side of the American government told his supporters "It's another defeat for the devil, who tries to dominate the world," referring to US President George W. Bush. "Today we gave another lesson in dignity to the imperialists, it is another defeat for the empire of Mr. Danger," Chavez continued.

The US has accused Chavez of being dictatorial and a destabilizing influence in Latin America which Chavez has accused the US of trying to dominate the region and of being behind an attempted coup to force him from power.

Chavez' popularity is greatest amongst the Venezuela's poor who support his policy of using oil revenues to fund social programs.

"Today a new era has started, with the expansion of the revolution," said Chavez to his supporters promising to continue with socialist policies. "Long live the socialist revolution, destiny has been written" said Chavez who added. "Nobody should be afraid of socialism... socialism is human, socialism is love.... (today) begins a new age... Venezuela, we have proven it, is red" said Chavez in reference to the colors of his political party.

Chavez was first elected in 1998 and was re-elected to a six-year term in 2000. He also defeated a recall election prompted by his opponents in 2004. Chavez is the fourth left-wing leader to win an election in Latin America in the past five weeks.

Blair to announce plans for UK nuclear defence today

UK Prime Minister Tony Blair is expected at 3:30pm to present a White Paper in the House of Commons today indicating the Government's plans to replace the Trident missile system with a similar system but on a reduced scale. The speech is called : Statement: Trident - The Future of the UK Nuclear Deterrent.

The Trident defence system was developed as Britain's response to the Cold War which ended with the collapse of the USSR in December 1991. The first Trident submarine went on patrol in December 1994.

The present system consists of Trident ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads carried by four Vanguard class nuclear powered submarines. The main issue is

about the replacement of the submarine fleet.

There is to be debate about the proposals. Supporters who include the majority of the main opposition party, argue that because of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and threats from countries such as Iran and North Korea, Britain must have a nuclear defence capability. Opponents including at least one Cabinet Minister and several Labour back benchers, say that the system is an inappropriate response to the present threats to national security, terrorism, energy shortage and climate change and that there are better ways of spending the money. The Liberals advocate delay in making the decision. Fifteen Anglican bishops have denounced the possession of such a weapon as 'evil'.

Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), said that although Scotland had no power to stop the replacment of the Trident weapons system, it had a host of powers to protect the environment. He promised that if the UK government went ahead with the Trident project, the SNP would propose to use those powers to stop it proceeding in Scotland. There are two establishments in Scotland, at Faslane and Rosyth, providing services to the nuclear submarine fleet.

Fiji Military Coup possibly underway

Fiji's fourth coup in 20 years rose today as troops disarmed Fiji's only armed police unit. This is the first step in the long expected military coup.

Fiji's president dissolved parliament on Tuesday and sanctioned the military to remove embattled Prime Minister Laisenia

Qarase, said New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark

Qarase, who is in his residence in Suva, said the military was staging a coup and he would not resign but would have to be forcibly removed from office.

"I am not going anywhere," Qarase told Reuters.

"I am the democratically elected prime minister of the people of Fiji. They will have to move me by force."

"I have been advised this morning that the president of Fiji has acted outside his constitutional powers and supported the removal of the democratic prime minister by the military," Clark said in a statement to the New Zealand parliament.

Acting Police Commissioner Moses Driver denied that any take over had occurred. He said soldiers arrived to inspect police weapons, and were waiting for approval for that inspection. Troops later surrounding the Nasova Police Academy in Suva demanding the handover of weapons, and occupied the main police station in Suva. No shots were fired when the police were locked out.

At a news conference inside the main Suva barracks, Commander Frank Bainimarama said that police weapons were confiscated so that "dissidents" did not use them against the military.

There are also reports that military checkpoints are been set up around the capital. There are approximately four roadblocks with 20 soliders at each.

Troops tried to arrest the Prime Minister of Fiji, Laisenia Qarase, in the afternoon by setting up a

roadblock between Suva and the province where Mr Qarase was attending a meeting, but he escaped in a helicopter, and has since been in hiding. The Prime Minister and his cabinet are understood to be in safe, secure places, and some of them separated for extra security.

The army kept up the pressure on Mr Qarase when he was later summoned to President Ratu Josefa Iloilo's residence.

Mr Qarase drove to the estate, but was told by soldiers at a roadblock outside that he would have to walk the rest of the way. A witness inside the grounds said the prime minister, whose bodyguards were also disarmed by the military, refused and returned to his office.

Mr Qarase will make another attempt to meet President Iloilo on Tuesday morning.

Military chief Commander Frank Bainimarama had repeatedly threatened to remove Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase's government unless it drops several pieces of legislation, including a bill that would grant amnesty to those involved in a coup in 2000. Commander Bainimarama has laid allegations on PM Qarase of stalling his pledge of ditching of the controversial legislation.

However Bainimarama is denying a coup is under way. "This is not a coup," Bainimarama said today. "Everything is normal. Nothing is going on."

He had earlier imposed a deadline of noon (0000GMT) on Friday, December 1 but that deadline was extended to today as there was the annual rugby game between the police and the military. Commander Bainimarama is both

an avid rugby fan and active church goer. The police won the rugby game. "I maintain my demands and the deadline still stands and I will make a commitment to my stand after the rugby match," he said.

Mr Qarase told Fiji radio on Monday morning that he remained in control and has called an emergency cabinet meeting for Tuesday.

Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs called for calm on Monday and for the military to return to negotiations with the government.

Local radio reported seven government vehicles used by ministers and parliament's Speaker had been confiscated by the military since Monday night.

World leaders have commended Commander Bainimarama actions. Including New Zealand which has banned Commander Bainimarama from entering New Zealand except if he is attending political crises talks. Helen Clark described the situation as "...it's a very disturbing situation." Some of Commander Bainimarama's close family live in New Zealand.

Conditions on the street of Fiji are said to be mixed, with some apprehension.

The United Nations might discontinue use of Fijian soldiers in peacekeeping operations of which is a large source of Fiji's income. Also the British army might not use Fijian soldiers. The International Community have said they will discontinue aid to Fiji which is worth millions annually.

Past Fijian coups
Fiji has suffered three coups since 1987.

On the morning of May 14, 1987, 10 masked, armed soldiers entered the House of Representatives.

Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, dressed in civilian clothes and motivated by claims of racial discrimination against ethnic Fijians, approached Prime Minister Timoci Bavadra from the public gallery and ordered MPs to leave.

The bloodless coup was a success but subsequent talks proposed a government of national unity under the leadership of the governor-general, involving both the deposed government and the indigenous-supported Alliance Party.

Fearing the gains of the first coup would be lost, Mr Rabuka staged a second coup on September 25 that year.

This time he severed ties with the British monarchy, who held the title Queen of Fiji (Ilisapeci-Na Radi ni Viti kei Peritania, or interpreted Elizabeth- Queen of Fiji and Great Britain) and proclaimed a republic.

A new constitution ratified in 1990 guaranteed indigenous Fijians the offices of President and Prime Minister, along with two-thirds of the Senate and a substantial majority of the House of Representatives.

But these provisions were overturned by a constitutional review in 1997.

Hardline Fijian nationalists led by bankrupt businessman George Speight led a further coup in May, 2000, when they overthrew the nation's first Indo-Fijian prime minister Mahendra Chaudry, holding him hostage inside

parliament for eight weeks along with most of his cabinet and many MPs and their staff.

Mr Speight declared himself Prime Minister, and ordered the President, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara to step aside as president. Mr Mara refused to negotiate with the plotters, and decided instead to dismiss the kidnapped government and assume emergency powers himself. His move backfired, however. In what politicians called "a coup within a coup," Ratu Mara was whisked away on the naval ship *Kiro* on 28 May, where he was allegedly approached by a group of present and former military and police officers and ordered to suspend the Constitution. When he refused, ("If the Constitution goes, I go," he defiantly declared) the group, are alleged to have asked for, and possibly forced, Mara's resignation.

Frank Bainimarama then declared martial law, abrogated the constitution and set up an interim government.

Commander Bainimarama was almost killed in a failed, bloody mutiny linked to the 2000 coup on the 2 November that year, when rebel soldiers mutinied at Suva's Queen Elizabeth Barracks. The mutiny resulted in the death of four loyal soldiers, and blames Mr Qarase for being soft on those behind it.

He appointed Laisenia Qarase as prime minister before handing power to an interim administration headed by Ratu Josefa Iloilo as President.

Mr Speight was arrested on July 27 along with 369 supporters.

The government reneged on an agreement granting Speight

immunity from prosecution, Commander Bainimarama saying the military had signed it "under duress".

Mr Speight remains in prison on an island off Suva.

Turkish passports will soon use RFID chips

Turkey will be adopting new passports standardized according to the International Civil Aviation Organization guidelines. The passports, which are expected to be distributed at the beginning of next year, will have RFID chips embedded in them. These chips, loaded with the passport owner's private information, will be used in airport gates via optic machines. To obtain a new passport, one will need only a national identity card.

RFID chips, sometimes called "spychips", are controversial, especially when loaded with personal information. For instance, one can scan the chip and obtain the private information in it from a distance without the information or consent of the individual carrying the chip. Currently, there seems to be no discussion about the controversies surrounding RFID chips in the Turkish media.

New Zealander fired for checking background information on girlfriends

Les Neilson is no longer a New Zealand emergency call operator on 111 in Wellington as he checked up on the background of his potential girlfriends. Mr Neilson said the he will take his case to the Employment Relations Authority as he claims that everyone is doing it and he is being made a scapegoat.

Mr. Nielson was fired in April of this year because of "inappropriate accessing and disclosure of police information."

Mr. Neilson said: "Many police regularly look up acquaintances and friends on the database. I've basically been screwed for doing something that's a common practice. I've used the information the same as everyone else has. If I'm socialising with people and I'm meeting new partners then I need to know the background of those partners because I don't want to put myself or the department in a compromising position." He did it "to protect himself and the organisation."

Mr. Neilson had worked with the New Zealand police for 20 years and has used the background checker "...for the last 20 years."

However he never sold the information to third parties and never used it for personal gain. "I have not disclosed the information to anyone. I've given an explanation. If they investigate it they'll find out it's a very legitimate explanation."

"There's nothing that says I can't do that..."

Howard Broad, Police Commissioner, said: "Staff knew it was wrong to access the database for personal use. If they do, it's wrong and they would know that it's wrong. It's quite a clear breach."

Police can be sued for accessing police information which contain addresses, vehicle details, family, gang links, etc., according to Scott Optican, associate law professor at Auckland University, as it is private information. "The revelation was a significant breach of privacy and police could face lawsuits as well as formal complaints. Police had a duty to investigate how many people had accessed the database

for personal use, and what they did with that information. If it looks like there were consequences [for the person who was looked up], they need to contact that person and find out what happened."

The information regarding name and address is said to be worth between NZ\$100 and \$200 alone to private investigators and debt collectors.

Mr. Nielson is working as a private investigator in Wellington, the capital of New Zealand.

"How many of the general public would be upset that the local policeman or someone working for the police checks up on them, or who's in the street, or checks up on potential tenants for flats or aunts' and uncles' criminal histories?" Mr. Neilson said.

A spokeswoman for the police headquarters said: "The police organisation is intolerant of any abuses of information that is held. As this case illustrates, action will be taken against any staff member who seeks to use police information for purposes unrelated to their duties." She would not comment any further due to the case being before the Employment Relations Authority.

Greg O'Conner, president of the Police Association, said that their union had reminded members to be aware of their use of police information and facilities. "Operation Insider, which investigated the distribution of pornographic e-mails among police, had highlighted the importance of using such facilities appropriately."

"Quite frankly, I think the police should explain to members of the

public exactly what happened here and what they'll do to make sure it doesn't happen again," Mr. Optican said.

Rudd rises to Australian opposition leadership

Kevin Rudd has been elected as leader of the Labor party by the party's caucus. His running-mate Julia Gillard was elected unopposed to the deputy leadership.

The vote was called on Friday after Kevin Rudd challenged former leader Kim Beazley for the leadership. Rudd won the leadership by a vote of 49-39.

Rudd becomes the party's third leader since the 2004 election, where the Howard government won a fourth consecutive term in government.

Long-serving deputy leader Jenny Macklin did not contest the deputy leadership following the defeat of Mr Beazley. Mrs Macklin has been deputy leader under three leaders since 2001.

The party will elect its shadow ministry in a separate ballot on Thursday.

Premier of Queensland Peter Beattie has said that the leadership change could bring a period of stability for the party.

"What I think this will herald is a new period of stability for the party," he said.

"It's important that if you have good policy and good government, it's important you also have stability in leadership.

"I'd urge everyone to get behind Kevin - having a Queensland as the alternative prime minister is

good for the state and good for Australia."

Labor MP Dick Adams said even though he voted for Beazley to remain as leader, he supports the party's new leadership.

"There'll be a lot more harmony and a lot more opportunity of ideas," he said.

"I think the new ideas need to flow and I think if it's opened up, as some people have said, they want those ideas to come forward, but I think we'll have some interesting policy direction to take to the people."

Sharan Burrow, the president of the ACTU - the peak union body in Australia said Mr Rudd will be a strong leader.

"I have no doubt that Kevin Rudd will say that these laws have to go, that they will be replaced by a policy that reinstates rights," Ms Burrow has told Sky News.

"Kevin won't vary from that and I think that he will be a strong leader," she said.

Government MP, Christopher Pyne said that the new leadership was a poor choice for the party "The combination of Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard will have all the hallmarks of the mongoose and the cobra,"

"It shows Labor is obsessed about leadership rather than policy and strategy," Mr Pyne said.

In a poll released by Newspoll today, a Rudd-Gillard leadership team had 48 percent support of the public, compared to the outgoing Beazley-Macklin team's 27 percent.

Today in History

1492 - Christopher Columbus became the first European to set foot on the island of Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic).

1590 - Niccolò Sfondrati became Pope Gregory XIV, succeeding Pope Urban VII who died two months earlier.

1766 - Auctioneer James Christie conducted his first sale in London.

1933 - Prohibition of alcoholic beverages in the United States officially ended when the 21st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified.

1936 - The 1936 Soviet Constitution, also known as the "Stalin" constitution, was adopted. December 05 is Father's Day in Thailand, St Nicholas's Eve in various European countries.

Quote of the Day

We have to remember that what we observe is not nature herself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.
~ Werner Heisenberg

Word of the Day

prevaricate; v

1. To evade the truth; to waffle or be intentionally ambiguous.
2. To speak with equivocation; to shuffle; to quibble.

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