



Top Stories

Insurgents in Iraq kill 32 with chemical bomb

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Recently discovered planet may contain 'hot ice'

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Featured story

Whales that swam into Sacramento River are injured

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Wikipedia Current Events

•Paul Wolfowitz, President of the World Bank, is due to resign on June 30, after a scandal involving his fiancée, Shaha Riza who was employed by Wolfowitz.

•United States Senate Democrats seek a vote of no confidence on Attorney-General of the United States Alberto Gonzales.

•Gordon Brown is confirmed as the next leader of the British Labour

Wikipedia Current Events

Party, taking effect on 24 June. Brown will succeed Tony Blair as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom when he kisses hands with Queen Elizabeth II on 27 June.

•An Israeli aircraft has bombed a building of the Hamas-run Executive Force in Gaza, killing at least one person and injuring about 45 others.

•Trains travel between North Korea and South Korea for the first time since the Korean War.

•Voters in Algeria go to the polls to elect a new People's National Assembly with tight security arrangements after recent bomb attacks.

•French President Sarkozy appoints François Fillon as Prime Minister of France.

•Canada: The CRTC announces that all over-the-air TV broadcasts must be all digital by August 31, 2011.

Poll: Finns favor gender-equality in pay

According to a poll commissioned by Helsingin Sanomat and conducted by Suomen Gallup, nearly 80% of Finns are in favor of pay raises that will promote gender equality.

A majority of 78% favored higher pay raises for public sector professions like nursing, that are predominantly female.

The survey also found that densely

populated areas, tend to be more in favor of gender equality.

Wolfowitz to quit as head of the World Bank

The Executive Directors of the World Bank have issued a statement to the effect that Paul Wolfowitz is to resign as President of the World Bank Group effective 30th June 2007, and that further meetings will take place tomorrow to deal with arrangements for the interim period.

Wolfowitz has faced a number of calls for his resignation in recent weeks after accusations that he had behaved improperly and overlooked a conflict of interest with regard to the pay rise given to his partner, Shaha Riza, an employee of the Bank at the time of his appointment as President, and subsequently re-assigned to the State Department.

In their statement, the Executive Directors indicate that having carefully considered the report of the group which had investigated the Wolfowitz case, they accepted that all parties had acted ethically, in good faith, and in what were believed to be the best interests of the institution. However the conclusion had to be drawn that there is a need to review the governance framework of the World Bank Group and in particular procedural and other aspects of the Ethics Committee.

The Directors pay tribute to the service that Wolfowitz has given to the World Bank, citing a number of

achievements, particularly a number of initiatives involving countries and relief programmes in Africa. They also added regret that the recent events had overshadowed his achievements at the Bank.

It is unfortunate that the Bank's well publicised strategy for work on governance and anti-corruption has been tainted by the perceived failings of Wolfowitz and those involved in the circumstances which have resulted in his resignation.

In a separate and lengthy statement, Wolfowitz outlined many of the achievements of the Bank during his time as President, and acknowledged the contribution of those working for the Bank in the delivery of its programmes and support for a wide range of organisations throughout the world. He considered however that his resignation was in the best interests of the Bank.

Wolfowitz had enjoyed considerable support from the US Administration, and particular endorsement from President Bush and Vice-President Cheney. However he had been less popular with other governments around the world, particularly in Europe.

Cyber attacks in Estonia threaten national security

Recent cyber attacks in Estonia that have paralyzed the high tech country's Web sites are a threat to national security, according to the country's Minister of Defense. This has concerned NATO, seeing that Estonia is a member state of the organization. The attacks have subsided this week.

The Defense Minister Jaak Aaviksoo also mentioned that Russia may have been behind the attacks. He stated that the IP numbers in the

initial attack belong to Russian government offices, but says that it's insufficient evidence that the government is behind it. The Kremlin is dismissing the accusations, saying that its caused by hackers producing fake Kremlin IP addresses.

The cyber attacks came after Estonia removed a Soviet-era statue of a Bronze Soldier in Tallinn, which angered many Russians. Riots have left 160 injured, and 1 dead.

Both NATO and the European Union views this as an attack on one of their member states. Three hundred Estonian IT specialist worked day and night to fix the problem.

The Estonian government plans to analyze server logs and data to find out who is behind the attacks.

MLB: Ninth-inning rally lifts Mets over Cubs

The New York Mets hosted the Chicago Cubs at Shea Stadium in Flushing, New York, and was behind by five runs going into the ninth inning, but a rally brought them ahead at the end.

Cub starter Ángel Guzmán gave up six hits, but only allowed one run in his seven inning appearance, an RBI single by Endy Chávez in the fifth inning. Mets starter Jason Vargas gave up all five of the Cubs' runs: a sacrifice fly RBI in the fourth, and two two-run home runs in the sixth inning. Angel Pagán hit his second home run of the season with a two-run fly ball over the left field fence, scoring Endy Chávez. Two batters later, Aramis Ramírez picked up his tenth home run of the season with a two run line drive over the same fence, scoring Alfonso Soriano.

Cub pitcher Ryan Dempster got stuck in a jam in the bottom of the ninth, filling the bases and giving up two runs. Reliever Scott Eyre came in to try and end the game, but gave up two hits, including the two-run single by Carlos Delgado that gave the Mets not only their first lead of the game, but the win.

The Mets, who took the four-game series 3-1, are playing an inter-league game against the New York Yankees in a three-game "subway series" starting Friday. Meanwhile, the Cubs are preparing for their own inter-city, inter-league game at Wrigley Field against the Chicago White Sox.

Marble slab falls off skyscraper in Toronto

On Wednesday, it was raining rocks in Toronto. A 115 Kilogram marble panel fell 51 stories from the side of First Canadian Place, 100 King Street West, which is the heart of Toronto's Business district. The panel was one of many that were identified as a risk during an inspection.

The rock fell onto a third story roof, where its fall was broken.

There were no reports of injuries, but the event snarled traffic in Toronto, as many major roads were closed. It also backed up street car traffic along King Street. King St. W. from York St. E. to Bay St. is expected to be closed for several days. Traffic continues normally now along all other previously closed streets.

As investigations continue, an expert has commented that there is no need for alarm. David Bowick, a professor of architecture at the University of Toronto, says such incidents are rare, given the improvements to architectural technology over the years. Several

experts, Bowick included, have commented that the incident was probably caused by a major storm which occurred Tuesday night.

Bowick added that natural materials like marble have inherent flaws which are susceptible to such destruction.

According to the official website, First Canadian Place, constructed in 1975, is 2.8 million square ft., has 72 storeys, and is still today Canada's tallest office building (tallest skyscraper) measuring 298 metres in height. It has 3-levels of over 120 offices, banks, restaurants, and stores. The world's tallest freestanding structure is the CN Tower in Toronto, built a year after the First Canadian Place, standing at 553.33 metres (1,815 ft., 5 inches).

Historic crossing of Korean border

There has been no rail connection between the north and the south since the Korean War divided Korea. But today, for the first time in 56 years, two passenger trains crossed the border between North Korea and South Korea.

Riding on rails built by South Korea several years ago, a train traveled from Munsan in the south to Kaesong in the north. The train was the first train to be allowed through the demilitarized zone since 1951, the border between North Korea and South Korea is the most heavily guarded. And from the north a train traveled from Kumgang to Jejin. Each train carried 150 specially invited passengers.

Although largely symbolic, it is seen as an important step in thawing relations.

Sarkozy appoints François Fillon as Prime Minister of France

The new President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy has appointed François Fillon to head the new French government. Fillon's predecessor Dominique de Villepin stepped down yesterday, and formally handed over the post during a ceremony today.

The nomination did not come as a surprise after the British newspaper the Financial Times had reported on May 8 that Sarkozy had introduced Fillon to Tony Blair in a telephone conversation.

François Fillon (53) has been the political advisor of Sarkozy in the UMP for the past 2 years, and he was Sarko's campaign leader during the recent presidential elections. Fillon has experience in negotiating with the trade unions, having undertaken controversial reforms of the 35-hour workweek and the pension system. Sarkozy in his inauguration speech on Wednesday reiterated his plans to reform the French labour and social system, and Fillon will have to oversee these reforms as the new Prime Minister. Sarkozy said he wants to make the economy more flexible and lessen social tensions. "I expect I'll end up being the first French premier with a Welsh wife." —François Fillon on the phone with Tony Blair, according to the Financial Times.

The Guardian reported that Fillon is an Anglophile; his wife Penelope Clarke, with whom he has 5 children, was born in Wales. Ideologically, Fillon is being described as a moderate left-leaning member of the conservative UMP party.

Fillon had his first experience as a minister in 1993 when he became

Minister for the Higher education and Research under PM Édouard Balladur. He later became Minister for the Post office, Telecommunications and Space, then Minister for the social Affairs, Work and Solidarity, and finally Minister for national Education, the Higher education and Research. At the university, he studied public law and political sciences.

Sarkozy might announce his cabinet of 15 ministers as early as Friday, half of which are going to be women, he said. Fillon will lead the UMP in the parliamentary elections next month. A poll on Wednesday predicted a 1.5% increase in votes for the UMP, up to 40%, compared to 28% status-quo for the allied socialists.

Reports say that Sarkozy has offered the foreign minister post to Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of Médecins Sans Frontières, who is seen as being on the left in French politics.

Recently discovered planet may contain 'hot ice'

A team of European and American astronomers say that a recently discovered extrasolar planet, located not far from Earth, contains oceans and rivers of hot solid water.

The team discovered the planet, Gliese 436 b, which is roughly the size of Neptune, using the Geneva Observatory and it is roughly 33 light-years away from Earth.

"The water is frozen by the pressure but it's hot. It's a bit strange -- we are used to water changing conditions because of temperature, but in fact water can also be solidified by pressure. It's not a very welcoming planet," said one of the astronomers who discovered the planet, Frederic

Pont.

Scientists say that there is not likely to be any life on the planet, but that if there is such a large amount of water on it, then it is likely that other planets will also have water. It orbits closely around the Red M-dwarf star Gliese 436 which is significantly smaller and cooler than the Sun. The planet's surface temperature is believed to be near 540 degrees Fahrenheit (250 degrees Celsius). It circles Gliese 436 every 2.6 days at a small fraction of the distance between the Sun and Earth, or 4.1 million kilometers (2.6 million miles).

"It shows there are many ocean planets. From the size and the mass we get the density," added Pont who wrote in a report about the planet saying "the mass and radius that we measure for GJ 436b indicate that it is mainly composed of water ice. It is an 'ice giant' planet like Uranus and Neptune rather than a small-mass gas giant or a very heavy 'super-Earth.'"

American astronomers first discovered GJ 436b back in 2004, but no clear indication was found on what it might contain on its surface.

The same team of astronomers were made famous when they discovered the first "earth-like planet" Gliese 581 in April.

NHL: Buffalo Sabres beat Ottawa Senators 3 to 2

The Buffalo Sabres have beat the Ottawa Senators in a score of 3 to 2 in game four of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Just 9 seconds into the first period, Derek Roy scored the first goal to give Buffalo the lead of 1 to 0, making Sabres-franchise history as

the fastest goal to start a playoff game.

In the second period, Maxim Afinogenov and Chris Drury of the Sabres both scored goals to bring the Sabres lead 3 to 0.

Also in the second period, Dean McAmmond and Peter Schaefer of the Senators scored two goals to bring the Senators down by one at 3 to 2.

No goals were scored in the third period, with the Sabres winning the game. Ryan Miller, the goalie for the Sabres stopped 31 of the 33 Senators shots on goals.

"When things weren't going our way at the end of the second period, we could've packed it in there. You know it's too tough. But we battled through some tough situations," said Miller to reporters after the game.

"They were trying their hardest to give it to us, but their goalie decided that he didn't want to let anything by him," said defense man Joe Corvo of the Senators.

The Sabres are hoping that this begins the comeback after their 3-0 deficit, a feat only achieved by three North American sports teams, the 1942 Toronto Maple Leafs, the 1975 New York Islanders, and the 2004 Boston Red Sox.

Game 5 of the playoffs will be held at HSBC Arena in Buffalo on Saturday, returning Home Ice advantage to the Sabres.

Whales that swam into Sacramento River are injured

Marine biologists say that the two lost, mother and male calf Humpback Whales that swam into the Sacramento River in Sacramento, California, have

sustained injuries from a boat propeller blade and need medical attention if they do not return to their homes in the Pacific Ocean.

The injuries were first spotted when pictures were taken of the whales by biologists at the Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, California. They then enlarged all the photographs using a computer and determined the extent of the injuries.

"The injury on the female is about 2 feet long, 6 inches deep, and has sharp edges typical of a propeller wound. We don't think it's life-threatening. The calf has a wound that looks a little bit more severe than the female," said Director of Veterinary Science at the Mammal Center, Frances Gulland who added that the calf was a bit more difficult to assess because the injuries are located on his back side which remains under water.

Biologists will attempt to lure the whales back into the ocean using sounds recorded from other Humpback Whales. A boat will be used to send the sounds underwater during low tide. No boats or ships are allowed in the river during the operation.

The two whales are reported to have traveled from the waters off Baja California, Mexico.

Insurgents in Iraq kill 32 with chemical bomb

Insurgents in Iraq have used a chemical car bomb to kill at least 32 people and injure at least 50 in the Diyala Province, in the village of Abu Saydah on Tuesday. Reports say that the vehicle used in the attack was parked at a market near two tea stalls.

"A small van with gas cannisters exploded in a crowded market; there were many people dead at

the scene," said Iraqi police officer, Captain Sadiq Mohammed.

According to police, the bomb was described as being filled with chlorine gas and injuries reported at the local hospital include burns from a "poisonous gas," but the United States military in Iraq denies those reports.

"Our folks on the scene... who are investigating this do not have any of those indications," said a spokesman for the U.S. military in Iraq, Lt-Col Michael Donnelly.

One of the injured, Kadim Hussein, who was taken to the Imam Ali hospital in Sadr City for treatment, complained of eye irritation. "My eyes became puffy due to the chlorine gas that was packed in the car bomb...also I had many pieces of shrapnel in my chest and right shoulder," he said.

Hospitals in Muqdadiyah and Sadr City received most of the victims of the bomb blast. Doctors and authorities at the Imam Ali hospital reported that 11 of the patients they treated presented with symptoms typical of chlorine poisoning and that many of the victims had trouble breathing.

Chlorine can burn the skin almost instantly and can kill a person if he or she inhales too much of the fumes. Chlorine is usually used domestically as a disinfectant as well as a bleach.

In April, at least 35 were killed when insurgents detonated a chlorine bomb in the city of Ramadi.

This comes just 6 days after Army Maj. Gen. Benjamin R. Mixon, commander of the 25th Infantry Division based in Iraq's Diyala province, asked for more troops to

help with insurgents.

Complaints about Bible surge after HK student paper classified as indecent

The Hong Kong Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA) has received more than 1,700 complaints calling for the Bible to be reclassified as "indecent", following a heated controversy sparked by the sex column of an university student magazine, which was classified by the government's publication tribunal as "indecent".

Two weeks ago, Chinese university of Hong Kong's student newspaper sparked a public debate when it was found that they had asked readers if they fantasised about incest or bestiality, along with some soft sex stories and an unrelated abstract drawing about sex.

Although there is no explicit description or pornographic photos, the paper was classified as "Category II: Indecent" by Obscene Articles Tribunal (OAT) on 14 May because it asked the question--- "Are you fantasised about incest or bestiality?". This classification means that the student editors have breached the law by distributing the paper to the public, will have a criminal record, and risk a jail sentence.

Since then, OAT's decision has been hotly contested among teachers, activists, commentators and scholars.

Complaints about the bible have immediately flooded to authorities, claiming that the Bible is "indecent" due to its textual description on rape and incest. The accusation was first made by a web site truthbible.net which said the holy book is full of sexual and violent content and its "indecent" far

exceeds that of the recent sex column published in the Chinese University's student newspaper.

A webmaster of truthbible.net, who wishes to remain anonymous, said if the sex column of the student's newspaper is indecent because of public complaints, "there's no reasons not to judge the bible as indecent" because of its sexual content.

By May 17 (UTC+8), TELA has received 1,766 complaints on the indecency of the bible, up from 200 in two days. By the same day, TELA announced it will not submit the Bible to the Obscene Articles Tribunal for classification. "The Bible is a religious text which is part of civilisation. It has been passed on from generation to generation. TELA considers that such longstanding religious texts or literature have not violated standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable members of the community."

According to the regulations in Hong Kong, any books classified as "indecent" by the OAT can only be sold or distributed to people over 18. All such publications must be sealed in a wrapper with a statutory warning notice.

The CUHK Student Journals editing panel expressed that the bible complaints are not related to them, and they had no prior knowledge of such a movement.

Today in History

1268 - Baibars and his Mamluk forces captured Antioch, capital of the crusader state, the Principality of Antioch.

1896 - "Separate but equal": The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the landmark case Plessy v. Ferguson, upholding the legality of racial

segregation in public transportation.

1944 - World War II: Polish forces under Lieutenant General Władysław Anders captured Monte Cassino and broke the Winter Line, a German defensive line in Italy.

1958 - The F-104 Starfighter, a supersonic interceptor aircraft, set a world speed record of 1,404.19 mph (2,259.82 km/h).

1980 - Mount St. Helens erupted, killing 57 people in southern Washington State and causing over a billion U.S. dollars in damages.

Quote of the Day

The opposition of instinct and reason is mainly illusory. Instinct, intuition, or insight is what first leads to the beliefs which subsequent reason confirms or confutes; but the confirmation, where it is possible, consists, in the last analysis, of agreement with other beliefs no less instinctive.

Reason is a harmonising, controlling force rather than a creative one. Even in the most purely logical realms, it is insight that first arrives at what is new.

~ Bertrand Russell

Word of the Day

yin-yang; n

1. A circular symbol consisting of a white and a black droplet representing the fusion of the concepts of yin and yang.

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

Quote of the Day

http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Main_Page

Word of the Day

http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Main_Page

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