



Top Stories

US declares vital interest in space

President Bush has declared space to be essential to US defence in a new National Space Policy. Not only has the United States declared that it has rights in space, but, if necessary, it will deny its adversaries access to space.

Featured story

Thai Prime Minister to consider lifting martial law

Thai Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont has indicated that he is considering lifting the martial law imposed in the country following the September 19 coup, during talks with Indonesian President Yudhoyono.

US population reaches 300 million

On Tuesday, October 17, 2006 at 7:46 A.M. (EDT), the estimated population of the United States crossed the 300 million mark. The United States population reached the 100 million mark in 1915 and the 200 million mark 52 years later in 1967. Only 39 years later, it has touched 300 million.

Wikipedia Current Events

- A police union in France warns police are fighting a "permanent intifada."
- "Mohammed Shahadeh," leader of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades terrorist organization, is shot to

Wikipedia Current Events

death outside his home. Fatah officials accuse members of Hamas of being behind the assassination.

- Alberto Fernandez, Director of Office of Press and Public Diplomacy in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the United States Department of State, says the United States Government has shown "arrogance and stupidity" in Iraq.

- Gunmen kill 15 police recruits and wound 25 south of the city of Baqouba in Iraq.

- Based on extraofficial partial results, Panama has approved in a referendum a \$5.25 billion USD plan to expand the Panama Canal by 79% (40% of votes counted). Real-Time counting of votes

- Icelandic fisherman kill a Fin Whale, breaking the International Whaling Commission's ban on commercial whaling.

- The government of Sudan gives United Nations envoy Jan Pronk three days notice to leave the country over comments on the military situation in Darfur made on his weblog.

- Israeli defense minister Amir Peretz says flights over Lebanon will continue until UN Security Council Resolution 1701 is fully implemented.

- Michael Schumacher, seven times Formula One World Champion, retires from the sport.

Mahathir won't stop criticisms of Malaysian gov't.

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad has said that he will not stop his criticism of the Malaysian government, even after "peace talks" were held yesterday between him and current Prime Minister Dr. Abdullah Badawi.

The 82-year old political veteran, who's now known for publicly regretting his handing of power to Dr. Badawi, said that the atmosphere during the dialogue was "cordial", but added that he was not entirely pleased with the results.

I can't say I am happy, I am satisfied I am able to say these things directly to him...I will continue to criticise if I feel something is done which is not beneficial to the country...

Political analysts have hailed the meeting as an opportunity for the two leaders to thrash out their differences in private, but some fear that their difference have already divided them beyond quick resolution.

US considers taxing earnings from online games

With online gaming in persistent worlds becoming more prevalent, a US congressional committee has begun to look into the tax implications of these booming online economies. Games such as World of Warcraft and Second Life have large player driven economic

systems in which - either following the rules or against them - real world currencies are exchanged for in-game currencies. With the GDP of some of these economies rivaling that of some small countries, the US government is wondering if it is missing out on a potential source of tax revenue: or as some gamers might put it, the IRS is asking "You buy gold?".

In cases where exchange of a real world currency for in-game currency is permitted by the rules of the game, some of these online games such as Second Life require that players report any income generated by these means to his or her government. In most on-line games however, a black market exists where players buy and sell in-game currencies in direct violation of the game's rules; situations involving black markets are notoriously hard to tax.

Compounding the issue of currency exchange is the existence of in-game assets. In the real world if someone wins a luxury vehicle, he or she is expected to pay a capital gains tax on his or her winnings. If a 40 person "raid" in World of Warcraft gets a rare "drop," worth up to thousands of dollars if sold illegally, should they be required to pay a capital gains tax?

Even if the issue of capital gains is ignored, there is still the matter of sales tax. In many of these games, non-player characters and players alike sell items to one another. If sales tax is to be applied, at what rate should it be charged and to what State does it go? Questions such as these have just recently been answered in much less hazy situations such as online versions of brick and mortar establishments.

Dan Miller, senior economist for the Joint Economic Committee had this to say on the issue, "I found that talking about this issue with some of the other economists on the committee, they are not really familiar with what a virtual economy is. The idea of Second Life or World of Warcraft or some of these other synthetic universes, they have trouble wrapping their head around it. So there's an educational hurdle to overcome here."

The preliminary findings of the committee state that virtual economies deserve clarification of existing tax laws, not new taxes.

Massa wins 2006 Brazilian Grand Prix, Alonso and Renault win championships

Brazilian driver Filipe Massa, driving for Ferrari, won the Brazilian Grand Prix at Autódromo José Carlos Pace in Interlagos, São Paulo. This is his second Grand Prix victory. Massa became the first Brazilian to win on home soil since Ayrton Senna in 1993. Massa started from pole and controlled the race from start to the finish line.

Fernando Alonso finished second to win the drivers' championship. He became the youngest second-time champion. Alonzo, along with the second Renault driver, Giancarlo Fisichella who finished sixth, won the constructors' cup for their team with only five points ahead of Ferrari. Jenson Button, one of Honda's drivers, finished behind Alonso.

Michael Schumacher had a few problems this weekend. In the beginning of the third qualification session his car slowed down and forced him to start 10th on Sunday. In the race he was almost

on the back of Fisichella, but damaged his tyre in the overtaking attempt and lose all positions. But the retiring champion was right on the back of Fisico for the second time near the end of the race. Giancarlo made a crucial mistake prior to Senna's "S"-curve allowing Michael to pass him. Next aim was Kimi Räikkönen, from McLaren-Mercedes, who lost his place to Schumacher in the same turn. Must note that all Schumacher overtook most of the other drivers in the same turn. The "Red Baron" set up the fastest time and the top speed record for this track. Let's say the words Nick Heidfeld, Sauber-BMW team driver, wrote on the back of his aerodynamical spoiler - "Danke, Michael!". Danke, Michael, for the fantastic race and so many seasons together. You overcame the difficulties as the true champion.

Kimi and Giancarlo finished 5-th and 6-th respectively. Rubens Barrichello (Honda, Pedro de la Rosa (McLaren-Mercedes) and Poland Robert Kubica (Sauber-BMW) were 7-th, 8-th and 9-th respectfully. Takuma Sato closed the season with 10-th place, first who finished in one lap after the winner, the best result for Super Aguri-Honda team.

With ten laps to go, the most surprising event was Kimi resistance when his open wheels intinely imbricated with Michael's ones especially when one knows Kimi will run on Ferrari next season.

Racial Equality commissioner warns of racial violence in UK

The head of the Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Phillips, in an article in today's Sunday Times, warns that, unless people are prepared to talk honestly with each other about racial prejudices,

there could be violence in the streets, much worse than the riots in the North of England five years ago.

This intervention follows two weeks of interviews and phone-ins, an "air war", involving politicians and Government Ministers, including Prime Minister Tony Blair triggered by leader of the House of Commons, Jack Straw's comments urging Muslim women to drop the full veil.

Phillips describes the situation, "On one side of the trenches we have those who want a fully fledged auto-da-fé against British Muslims, in which anything any Muslim does or says must be condemned as a signal of their willful alienation and separation; on the other hand the defensiveness of some in the Muslim communities has hardened into a sensitivity that turns the most neutral of comments into yet another act of persecution".

Phillips writes that although there are other contributory factors, the "real crisis is our failure to adjust to change in our society and our failure to find a civilised way of talking about our diversity."

Wikinews Shorts: October 21, 2006

[Annan Wants Quicker Hezbollah Disarmament](#)

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has urged the Lebanese government to speed up the process of disarming the Hezbollah. Annan said that transforming Hezbollah into a solely political party with no armed branch should bring the country a step closer to full sovereignty.

[Explosion in Paracin, Serbia](#)

Early this morning at approximately 5 a.m. local time, the weapons warehouse in Paraćin,

Serbia caught on fire. Most of the weapons in the warehouse were the explosives so there were explosions in the warehouse for more than 1 hour. Approximately 8 people were wounded in the accident; among them were a few policemen.

[President Bush signs 2006 Military Commissions Act into law](#)

On Tuesday morning, United States President George Bush signed into law the Military Commissions Act of 2006.

[Iran reportedly bans high-speed Internet access](#)

The government of Iran has banned service providers from offering high-speed internet access, of speeds above 128kbps. The telecom regulator declined to explain the reasons for the ban, which is seen by a pro-reformist newspaper, Etemad as part of an effort to counter western "cultural invasion".

[Two subway trains collide in Rome](#)

A subway train in Rome collided with another in Vittorio station. At least one woman has died and 60 people are injured.

Indian Government gives green signal to community radio

The Group of Ministers (GoM) set up by the union government has given the thumbs-up for community radio stations to operate in India. The GoM has proposed that universities, registered trusts, civil society bodies and NGOs be allowed to run such stations. It has also proposed a single window clearance system to authorise such networks, with the assurance that the requisite clearances will be provided within three months. The GoM has also proposed that community radios be allowed upto 5 minutes of commercial advertising for every

hour of broadcast.

The possibility that the proposal may run into some trouble when put before the Cabinet does exist. Many private FM channels are supposedly displeased with the idea of having to face more competition. There are also concerns that community radios may be used by insurgent groups to compromise India's internal security. Those in favour of the proposal, however, say that this concept will start a revolution and empower rural India.

Columnist, author and visiting professor at Centre for Policy Research, B G Verghese says, "This operates at the grassroot level and once people can have access to this kind of information, you can put across anything to them, whether it is education or health. It's an absolute necessity. The twin towers have happened, there is no way you can stop it. They don't need community radio to do that."

Headmaster to meet parents after student sex parties

The headmaster of Scotch College in Perth, Western Australia is set to meet the parents of the school's Year 11 (aged 15 - 17) students after a set of incidents involving alcohol, use of recreational drugs and the hire of a stripper, who used vegetables in her act, at a Rugby union wind-up.

Reverend Andrew Syme issued a letter late last week to parents informing them of the seriousness of these events and the actions parents need to take. Syme stated in the letter that a number of parents approached him during the year.

Other incidents to occur during the year include 300 gate crashers

turning up at a student's party in July, causing injury to the bouncer, and "inappropriate sexual behaviour in parks and other public places".

The meeting is to be held on October 31 in the school's library.

Waikato win Air New Zealand Cup

Waikato won the inaugural Air New Zealand Cup final, winning their first championship since the 1992 National Provincial Championship season. Waikato defeated Wellington 37 to 31 at Waikato Stadium in Hamilton.

Waikato scored two tries through Byron Kelleher, as well as one from both Richard Kahui and Brendon Leonard. David Hill kicked four conversions and three penalties. For Wellington, Ma'a Nonu scored two tries, along with a late try to Tana Umaga. Jimmy Goperth kicked two conversions and four penalties for Wellington.

Waikato had finished at the top of Pool B in the 2006 competition, whilst Wellington finished in third place in Pool A. Waikato got to the final defeating Southland 24 to 12 in the quarter-finals, and then a 44 to 15 win over Otago saw them into the championship match. Wellington defeated Canterbury 36 to 23 in the quarter-finals, and then Auckland 30 to 15 in their semi-final.

Today in History

4004 BC - The universe was created, according to the Ussher-Lightfoot Calendar.

1911 - First use of heavier-than-air aircraft in war: an Italian pilot flew from Libya to survey Turkish lines during the Italo-Turkish War.

1958 - Belgian cartoonist Peyo introduced a new set of comic strip characters, The Smurfs.

1983 - Lebanese Civil War: Suicide bombers destroyed two barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 241 U.S. Marines and 58 French paratroopers of the international peacekeeping force.

2002 - Chechen rebels seized a crowded theater in Moscow, taking approximately 700 theatergoers and performers hostage in the Moscow theater hostage crisis. October 23 is Eid ul-Fitr in Islam begins at sunset, Labour Day in New Zealand (2006); Chulalongkorn Memorial Day in Thailand.

Quote of the Day

I am certain there is too much certainty in the world.
~ Michael Crichton

Word of the Day

doctored; adj

1. Altered or falsified.
2. Repaired, as by a doctor.

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