



Top Stories

"Low pathogenic" H5N1 Bird Flu virus found in wild ducks in Maryland, Pennsylvania

The United States Department of Agriculture has announced that a "low pathogenic" form of the H5N1 Avian Flu virus (Bird Flu) has been found in fecal samples taken from wild Mallard ducks in located in Queen Anne's County in Maryland and in Crawford County located in Pennsylvania.

IMF proposes quota increases for China, South Korea, Mexico and Turkey

The international Monetary Fund has proposed larger quotas for these emerging economies to bring these countries' share in IMF in line with their growing economies.

Featured story

Ghana bans gay and lesbian conference

A conference between gay men and lesbians that was scheduled to meet in September has been banned by Ghana's government which has said that "disciplinary action" will be taken if the conference proceeds, due to the fact that homosexuality is illegal in that country.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki meets with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in Najaf, Iraq.
- In Afghanistan, 14 British armed forces personnel are killed after

Wikipedia Current Events

their aircraft crashes in Kandahar

- Offices of at least six Alaska legislators, including Republican Senate President Ben Stevens, son of the senior Republican U.S. Senator Ted Stevens, are raided by federal agents searching for possible ties between the lawmakers and VECO, an Anchorage based company whose executives are major contributors to political campaigns.
- British police hold 14 men after anti-terrorism raids on locations in south and east London including one restaurant.
- Hezbollah sets up armed militias comprised of more than 2,000 children of shahids aged 10-15, training them to sacrifice their lives, an Egyptian weekly reports.
- Italian troops arrive in Lebanon as part of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Indonesia announces plans to contribute 1,000 troops to the force.
- Donors promise \$500m in aid for the Palestinian territories but the UN warns there must be a new peace process too.
- A senior Palestinian official calls for an end to the Israeli siege of Gaza and a political solution to the humanitarian crisis.

"Low pathogenic" H5N1 Bird Flu virus found in wild ducks in Maryland, Pennsylvania

The United States Department of Agriculture [USDA] has announced

that a "low pathogenic" form of the H5N1 Avian Flu virus [Bird Flu] has been found in fecal samples taken from wild Mallard ducks in located in Queen Anne's County in Maryland and in Crawford County located in Pennsylvania. Officials stress that the strain is of no risk to humans. Samples from the ducks in Pennsylvania were taken on August 28.

"Testing has ruled out the possibility of this being the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain that has spread through birds in Asia, Europe and Africa. Test results thus far indicate this is low pathogenic avian influenza, which poses no risk to human health. The fecal samples were collected on August 2 from resident wild ducks in Queen Anne's County, Maryland, as part of a research project conducted by Ohio State University. The fecal samples came from mallards that showed no signs of sickness," said the USDA in a statement on its website. Ducks in Pennsylvania also had shown no signs of being sick.

"Additional testing at NVSL will confirm the pathogenicity of the virus. These results are expected within two weeks and will be made public when completed. It should be noted that wild birds are known to harbor many influenza viruses, and the finding of these viruses during routine testing is not unusual," added the statement.

Officials also state that there is no threat to the U.S.'s chicken industry.

"There is nothing in international rules that would indicate this low-pathogenic bird flu case being a problem" for the poultry industry in the U.S said, director of communications with the National Chicken Council, Richard Lobb, but some poultry groups are worried that some countries may impose sanctions on American chickens.

This is the second time this year a low pathogenic strain of the Bird Flu has been found in the U.S.. Two wild swans in Michigan tested positive for the same strain on August 14.

Since 1975, the same strain has shown up at least six times in the U.S.

European Union gives Iran two more weeks to comply with UN resolution

The European Union has agreed to give Iran two more weeks to comply with the United Nations resolution to stop its nuclear program.

"We in the EU and Germany have no interest in an escalation in the coming weeks due to deliberations in the Security Council. That's why we will neglect no opportunity to keep trying to find out through talks whether there is a possibility to return to the negotiating table," said Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the German Foreign Minister.

The U.N. gave Iran until August 31 to halt its nuclear program which Iran states is for peaceful purposes.

"Hyperbole against Iran's peaceful nuclear activities by Western countries especially the US will continue. Today those countries, which have filled up their arsenals with nuclear weapons, threaten

nations and make claims about human rights and democracy. They are the biggest liars of the world. Avaricious powers can't create any obstacles on the way to the progress of our nation," said Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Germany, China, Russia, the United States, Great Britain and France are scheduled to meet on September 7, 2006 in Berlin, Germany to discuss the next step regarding Iran's nuclear program.

Football: England beat Andorra in their first Euro 2008 qualifier

The England football teams first Euro 2008 qualification match against Andorra finished 5-0 to the home nation. It was Steve McClaren's first competitive game as Manager after replacing Sven Goran Ericsson a few weeks ago.

Peter Crouch, in continued good form, opened the scoring after 4 minutes with a close range shot past Koldo (the Andorran goalkeeper). Eight minutes later Liverpool FC captain Steven Gerrard double the score with a half volley on the edge of the box. England went to the dressing room at half time 3-0 up after Jermain Defoe scored a third goal eight minutes before the end of the half. Soon after the break England scored twice more, the first from a Defoe header off a cross from Phillip Neville (brought in to replace his brother Garry Neville who usually plays right-back). Crouch got his second goal in the just after the hour mark (another header, this time from an Aron Lennons cross) to end the scoring. Owen Hargreaves was noted for his continued consistent form (as was Peter Crouch), hitting the post twice - once from a free kick suggesting he may be a

worthwhile replacement for Beckham (who was recently dropped from the squad).

Andorra had a very poor game, raising concerns over their suitability for entry to the competition, and never managed a full attack or shot on the England goal.

Before the match England had suffered injury worries with strikers Michael Owen out long term and Wayne Rooney suspended. They were also missing Joe Cole, Gary Neville and Rio Ferdinand from the side.

England's next qualifying match will be against Macedonia on Wednesday night.

England: Robinson, Neville, Brown, Terry, Cole, Gerrard, Hargreaves, Lampard, Downing, Crouch, Defoe. Subs: Kirkland, Dawson, Carrick, Richardson, Lennon, Bent, Johnson.

Andorra: Alvarez, Antoni Lima, Garcia Luena, Ayala, Sonejee, Javi Sanchez, Sivera, Vieira, Silva, Pujol, Ruiz. Subs: Alfonso Sanchez, Juli Sanchez, Moreno, Jimenez, Garcia, Rubio, Fernandez.

Referee: Bernhard Bruggner (Austria)

Former Israeli PM Ariel Sharon moved out of ICU

Former Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, 78, has been moved out of the intensive care unit at Sheba Medical Center after his condition "improved."

"[There has been] noticeable improvement in his kidney function and the pneumonia in his lungs," said David Weinberg, a spokesman for the medical center.

Sharon's condition is still being called "serious" and he is still being held in the care department for respiratory functions.

Sharon suffered a major stroke in January and has been in a coma since then. On August 14, Sharon was admitted to ICU when he developed pneumonia.

Dissent in Canada's NDP over Layton's call to withdraw from Afghanistan

New Democratic Party leader Jack Layton's call to withdraw the 2,000 Canadian troops stationed in Afghanistan by February 2007 has not been universally greeted by his caucus.

NDP Member of Parliament Peter Stoffer of Nova Scotia said his views were more in line with those of expressed by Liberal defence critic Ujjal Dosanjh who supports keeping troops in Afghanistan but altering their mission. Stoffer represents a riding that includes a large military base.

"To be honest with you, Mr. Dosanjh got it right the other day when he said just to extend the mission for two years without a proper debate and a plan is wrong, but to do an immediate pullout, or a very quick pullout, is also wrong, Stoffer said to the Globe and Mail adding "without a comprehensive plan, what are you pulling out for? What are you leaving behind?"

Layton said on Thursday that Canada must withdraw its troops as there is no "comprehensive strategy to achieve peace", no clear goals and no exit strategy. He has also called for negotiations with the Taliban.

In another interview, Stoffer said, "I think just to ask for a pullout

right now may be a bit early."

"You just can't say, 'Well, we're going to stay in Afghanistan for two more years' without a plan. And I don't think you can say, 'We'll pull out right away or in February' without a plan. I think both elements of that discussion should be more comprehensive in their approach," he added.

In May, MPs voted narrowly 149 to 145 to extend the mission in Afghanistan by two years. At the time Stoffer voted against extending the mission. 28 Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have died since the mission began four years ago.

The disagreement within the NDP caucus comes as the party prepares for its policy convention in Quebec City later this week.

Mexican presidential address stopped by protests

Protests over allegations of fraud in Mexico's razor-thin election forced outgoing President Vicente Fox to abandon his state of the union address, Friday, after a protest by left-wing legislators who stormed the podium from which he was to speak carrying placards and shouting demands for a full recount of the presidential vote. Unable to address Congress, Fox withdrew to a television studio in his official residence to broadcast his speech which called on the country to mend its divisions.

It is the first time in modern history that a Mexican president has had to cancel his annual speech to the country's Congress.

Fox did not enter the legislative chamber. Instead, after waiting for several minutes in a back room, he handed over a written copy of

his speech, as required by the constitution, before withdrawing to his residence. In his television speech Fox criticised opposition politicians saying "all voices should be heard... [but] respect for the law is not discretionary."

Thousands of protesters have occupied the centre of Mexico City throughout the summer to demand a full recount of the July 2nd presidential election in which conservative Felipe Calderón of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) defeated leftist Andres Manuel López Obrador, the former mayor of Mexico City running under the w:Alliance for Wellbeing of all coalition banner, by a margin of less than 0.6%. An electoral tribunal ordered a limited recount of 9% of all polling booths. Following the limited recount, the electoral court ruled that a further recount was unnecessary as the limited re-examination showed no significant change.

López Obrador has rejected the court's rulings and vowed to lead a parallel government from the streets.

The Congress building was surrounded by 10 blocks of steel barriers, caged attack dogs, water cannon and riot police in order to prevent demonstrators from storming Congress.

Cuauhtemoc Sandoval, a legislator for the left wing Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), part of López Obrador's coalition, said ""It's completely militarized around here. It is completely illegal, unconstitutional, Vicente Fox started out as a president and is finishing up as a dictator."

López Obrador called on supporters to remain in the city's Zocalo plaza rather than march on

Congress, "We aren't going to fall into any trap. We aren't going to be provoked," he told tens of thousands of supporters.

The electoral court has until September 6 to either declare a winner or annul the election.

Wikinews interview with America's Got Talent finalists At Last

Singing group At Last was recently a finalist in America's Got Talent, covering songs like "Let's Stay Together" and "Ain't No Sunshine". Talent was a NBC television series search for America's next big talent, featuring singers, dancers, magicians, comedians and other talents of all ages. The series was hosted by Regis Philbin, and judged by former tabloid editor Piers Morgan, singer Brandy, and actor/singer David Hasselhoff.

They talked to Wikinews about their group's performances and the America's Got Talent experience.

Q: At Last performs "hip-hopapella" (hip hop a cappella). For those who didn't see you on America's Got Talent, how would you describe this sound?

A: Hip-hopapella was born out of a rehearsal when we were just messing around between songs. We were singing "Killing Me Softly" and harmonizing when Mike decided to throw in a beatbox, and it was like WOW... it was just magical and we knew right away we had discovered a new sound for us. Our producer came up with the name. Since then it's really evolved into fat layers of harmonies over a hip hop style bassline and beatbox. We like taking old school songs and flipping it hip-hopapella style to create something recognizable yet fresh.

Q: The band has sung at concerts with many noted names, and on quite a few television series. Where in America have audiences been most enthusiastic?

A: We think we get the most enthusiastic responses in areas where there aren't a lot of Asian people. For example, in the midwest or the south. At first, they have their typical stereotypes of what we are. All they see is William Hung. But then they hear these four Asian guys sing R&B, and they're shocked. After the shock wears off, they realize they just like what they hear, regardless of the faces.

Q: How did At Last first form?

A: We all met at an audition, held by actress Ming-Na, and have been together for five years. Together with her, we have the goal of showing America and the world that Asian Americans love music too.

Q: Of your competitors, who was your personal favorite? (Any point in the competition, not just among the finalists.)

A: We loved Bobby Badfingers. He just had an incredible energy and has flat out the best showman in the competition. Backstage, he was so personable too. Actually everyone on the show was very friendly and open... we made a lot of new friends on that show.

Q: Who was your favourite judge?

A: It's hard not to answer Brandy, because she had so much love for us, especially early on. But we have to go with Piers because of his honesty. Ultimately, his comments are the ones America respects the most.

Q: Overall, are you satisfied with the experience "America's Got Talent" provided?

A: We're very happy with our

experience on the show. We got more exposure than we ever have before and we've made some great new friends and contacts. We got to show America who we are and what we can do, and even though we didn't win, we've gained so much.

Q: What's next for At Last?

A: We finished an album just before we started doing AGT, so we're going to get back to promoting that and start touring.

To find out more about At Last, visit their official site, www.atlastmusic.com/. You can "friend" them at MySpace: At Last, or keep current with their biweekly webcast on Youtube.

NATO plane crashes in southern Afghanistan, killing 14 British troops

A NATO aircraft, a Hawker-Siddeley Nimrod MR2, crashed in Kandahar in southern Afghanistan today, killing 14 British servicemen. There is no indication that hostile fire was involved.

The crash came a day after fighting across the volatile south killed nine Afghan policemen, at least 13 suspected Taliban and a British soldier.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair said the incident would "distress the whole country", adding that the mission in Afghanistan is "vital". "Our thoughts go out immediately to the families of those who have died," he said. "British forces are engaged in a vital mission in Afghanistan and this terrible event starkly reminds us of the risk that they face daily."

The "aircraft was supporting a NATO mission. It went off the radar and crashed in an open area in Kandahar" province, about 12

miles west of Kandahar city, said Maj. Scott Lundy, spokesman for NATO's w:International Security Assistance Force.

The British Ministry of Defense said the dead included 12 Royal Air Force personnel, a Royal Marine and an army soldier.

Lundy said "there was no indication of an enemy attack." He gave no other details, but an ISAF statement said the plane's crew reported a technical problem before going down. It also said that "enemy action has been discounted at this stage."

However, shortly after the crash, a purported spokesman for the Taliban, Abdul Khaliq, claimed responsibility. "We used a Stinger missile to shoot down the aircraft," he said.

British w:Secretary of State for Defence w:Des Browne said: "This is dreadful and shocking news. I know that the people of Britain will join me in sending our deep condolences to the loved ones of those who have lost their lives. "At this stage all the indications are that this was a terrible accident and not the result of hostile action," he added.

Haji Eisamuddin, a local tribal elder, told The Associated Press by phone that the plane's wreckage was burning in an open field.

"I can see three, four helicopters in the sky, and coalition forces are also arriving in the area," he said.

People can call a special helpline on 08457 800 900 if they are worried about relatives.

South Africa end All Blacks' 15-game winning streak
South Africa have defeated the All

Blacks (New Zealand) in a rugby union Tri Nations at the Royal Bafokeng Stadium in Rustenburg, South Africa. The final score was a one-point victory, 21 to 20, ending the All Blacks' 15 game winning streak. For the Springboks, it ended a five-match losing streak. The All Blacks performed the controversial Kapo O Pango haka before the match. It was the final match for the All Blacks, who had already won the trophy two weeks ago. The final match of the series will take place at Ellis Park in Johannesburg next week, when the Springboks play Australia.

The first opportunity for points came in the 6th minute when New Zealand were penalised. South Africa opted to kick at goal, and even though there was some breeze at the ground, André Pretorius slotted it through the posts, giving South Africa a three point lead. However the All Blacks were able to even the scores in the 10th minute, with Dan Carter kicking a penalty goal after the Springboks were penalised for off-side near their line. Pretorius' boot was accurate once again, when he successfully kicked another penalty goal in the 17th minute, giving South Africa the lead once again, six points to three. The first try of the match was scored in the 20th minute, when Carter crossed the line and after converting his own try, the All Blacks led 10 to six. However the Springboks bounced back within minutes, with wing Bryan Habana intercepting a New Zealand pass, and racing down to score under the posts. Pretorius converted from in front, and South Africa were back in front, leading 13 to 10. The All Blacks were unable to level the scores in the 27th minute, with Carter missing a penalty goal. The All Blacks' were denied a try in the 37th minute when the television

match official deemed one of the New Zealanders to have been an obstruction. Carter was able to level the scores on the stroke of half time with a penalty kick.

Pretorius attempted to put South Africa back in front, attempting two drop goals, though both missed. A line-out turnover soon led to Pedrie Wannenburg getting over the try line to score South Africa's second try. Pretorius' conversion was away to the left, however, South Africa were now leading 18 to 13, with over 20 minutes remaining in the game. Joe Rokocoko scored a try for the All Blacks in the 66th minute, and Carter converted the try from the touchline to give the All Blacks a 2 point lead, the score now 20-18 with 14 minutes remaining. Pretorius attempted another drop kick with nine minutes remaining, though it missed, and the All Blacks remained in front. The Springboks were back in front, by one point, 21 to 20, when Pretorius landed a penalty kick with two minutes remaining in the match. A New Zealand knock-on in the 79th minute led to a South African scrum. The scrum needed to be set a number of times, sending the clock into overtime. However the ball got out and the whistle was blown, sending the crowd and players into celebration.

Ghana bans gay and lesbian conference

A conference between gay men and lesbians that was scheduled to meet in September has been banned by Ghana's government which has said that "disciplinary action" will be taken if the conference proceeds.

As in many African countries homosexuality is illegal in Ghana, primarily for cultural reasons, "[The] Government does not

condone any such activity which violently offends the culture, morality and heritage of the entire people of Ghana," said Kwamena Bartels (Ghana's Information Minister). Homosexuality is described as being "un-African" and a "disease" in parts of Africa, often regarded as a "Western" import. Bartels continued "Unnatural carnal knowledge is illegal under our criminal code. Homosexuality, lesbianism and bestiality are therefore offences under the laws of Ghana."

Although Ghana law does not stop groups from meeting the government has actively discouraged the event: "[The] Government would like to make it absolutely clear that it shall not permit the proposed conference anywhere in Ghana...." "...It's not illegal for them to meet and talk, but we in Ghana don't want to encourage it. They can go and do it elsewhere" added Bartels.

BBC reporter Kwaku Sakyi-Addo (based in the Ghanaese capital Accra) said that it was difficult to establish who had organised the conference. He noted that the Gay and Lesbian community operates underground in Ghana because of the social stigma. It is believed that the meeting was to be at the Accra International Conference centre, Koforidua on Monday. Managers at the centre have denied the conference was due to take place there.

A researcher at the South African-based gay and lesbian rights group, Wendy Landau, condemned the ban: "It seems the government got wind of something. It goes along with all the things that have been happening in places like Cameroon and Nigeria. It's kind of the spirit of the times in Africa,"

The Ghana public may be divided over the issue, whilst the Ghana News Agency reports many members of public and the clergy have spoke out in support of the ban, anonymous callers to radio phone-in programmes have called it an infringement of freedom of speech.

In recent times homosexuality has been regular news in African nations, earlier this year Cameroon newspapers launched an attack against "deviants" publishing the names of suspected homosexuals.

South Africa, by comparison, has recently had a gay marriage bill approved by it's cabinet to allow equal rights for homosexual couples; making it the first African nation to officially recognise gay and lesbian couples.

Wikinews Shorts: September 2, 2006

[Greece beats USA 101-95 in the semifinals of the FIBA world championship in Japan](#)
European champions Greece extended their winning streak to 8-0 at the Fiba world championship in Japan, by beating USA 101-95 in one of the finest moments of Greek sports. Greece turned around a 12-point deficit into a 14-point lead, and finally beat the Americans on a dramatic 4th quarter, in the semifinals of the world championships. Millions of Greeks were seen partying in the roads, as it is usual in this country after big athletic wins. The American team, after this defeat is falling short of a championship in a major international tournament for the third straight time. Vasillis Spanoulis scored 22 points for the European Champions, while Carmelo Anthony scored 27 for the Americans.

[200,000 expected at Southport, England air show](#)

The BAE Hawks of the RAF Red Arrows display team, flying in Concorde formation

Southport Merseyside England will stage it's 16 annual air show over the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd of September, around 200,000 are expected.

The Red Arrows, will close Saturday's flying at 5pm. Other displays will include Eurofighter Typhoon, The Blades, Russian-built Yakovlevs and French Patrouille Reva.

[Vice-Admiral Mehta appointed Chief of Naval Staff](#)

India's senior most naval officer, Vice-Admiral Suresh Mehta was, on Friday named the country's new Chief of Naval Staff. Born on 18th August 1947, three days after India's independence from Britain, Mehta is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and has held numerous prestigious appointments.

He is currently the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Command, and headed the Western Fleet during Operation Parakaram in 2001. He has also operated from aircraft carriers such as the INS Vikrant and is also an aviator. He will take charge from the outgoing Admiral Arun Prakash on the 31st of October this year.

Today in History

301 - San Marino, one of the smallest nations in the world and the world's oldest republic still in existence, was founded by Saint Marinus.

1260 - Mamluk forces defeated a Mongol army in Palestine in the Battle of Ain Jalut, marking the point of maximum westward

expansion of the Mongol Empire.
 1783 - The signing of the Treaty of Paris formally ended the American Revolutionary War.

1901 - The National Flag of Australia, a Blue Ensign defaced with the Commonwealth Star and the Southern Cross, flew for the first time in Melbourne.

1976 - The Viking 2 spacecraft landed on Mars and took the first close-up, color photos of the planet's surface.

September 03 is Father's Day in Australia and New Zealand (2006); Independence Day in Qatar (1971); Armed Forces Day in Taiwan.

Quote of the Day

"Your pretended fear lest error should step in, is like the man that would keep all the wine out of the country lest men should be drunk.

It will be found an unjust and unwise jealousy, to deny a man the liberty he hath by nature upon a supposition that he may abuse it."

~ Oliver Cromwell

Word of the Day

sublimate; v

1. (chemistry): To change state from a solid to a gas (or from a gas to a solid) without passing through the liquid state.
2. To redirect the natural expression of a sexual or primitive instinct in a socially acceptable activity.

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