



Top Stories

Thai military bans political party meetings

Thailand's governing regime on Thursday have banned political party meetings of more than five people. There is also a ban on new political parties from being formed. However current political parties still have the right to exist. The military also promised that civilian rule will be restored within a year. Meanwhile the military is taking hold of all duties and responsibilities of the parliament.

Space shuttle Atlantis lands

Space Shuttle Atlantis has made a night landing at the Kennedy Space Center on Thursday finishing off STS-115 which lasted 13 days. The orbiter landed safely at 6:21:30 a.m. EDT, on runway 33 at KSC.



Featured story

Canadian terror suspect Arar cleared after one year of torture

The RCMP bungled the case of Maher Arar leading to an innocent man being tortured in Syria following his deportation from the United States. Justice Dennis O'Connor's report, released yesterday, reveals that the RCMP erroneously told the United States that Arar was linked to Al Qaeda and was wrongly described as an "Islamic extremist individual".

Wikipedia Current Events

- A federal judge in San Francisco orders two San Francisco Chronicle reporters jailed for up to 18 months for refusing to reveal who leaked them secret grand jury testimony about steroids in baseball.
- Cong Thanh Do, a U.S. democracy activist, is released by Vietnam.
- Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf says U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage threatened to bomb his country "back to the Stone Age" after the 2001 September 11 attacks if he did not help the U.S.-led War on Terror.
- The Government of Indonesia executes Christians Fabianus Tibo, 60, Marinus Riwu, 48, and Dominggus da Silva, 42 by firing squad in direct violation of a government pardon for all those involved in the Poso conflict. The three men were accused of leading attacks on Muslims in 2000 that left 70 people dead. Thousands of police are blocking roads leading to the prison and are guarding churches. Various human rights workers have called the trial a sham.
- Democratic United States Representative Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi calls President of Venezuela Hugo Chávez a "thug."
- United States Representative Charles Rangel (D) also said in a press release that an attack on Bush is "attack on all of us (Americans)."

Wikipedia Current Events

- Iowa Senator Tom Harkin (D) says that Chávez's comments were "incendiary."
- United States Senate Republicans and the Bush administration announce an agreement on interrogation methods and the trial of suspects in the War on Terror.
- The Space Shuttle Atlantis lands at Kennedy Space Center, ending STS-115.
- The leaders of Thailand's coup ban all meetings and other activities by political parties, two days after taking power.
- Thaksin Shinawatra urges the coup leaders "to reconcile and work toward national reconciliation for the sake of our king and country". Currently in London, he stated he was going to take a "deserved rest" for the time being.
- BBC Top Gear presenter Richard Hammond has a "significant brain injury" following a high speed car accident whilst filming, doctors say.

Space shuttle Atlantis lands

Space Shuttle Atlantis has made a night landing at the Kennedy Space Center on Thursday finishing off STS-115 which lasted 13 days. The orbiter landed safely at 6:21:30 a.m. EDT, on runway 33 at KSC. The return of Atlantis to Earth avoided a traffic jam at the space station, as Soyuz TMA-9 Expedition 14 docked with the ISS on September 20, 2006 at

12:21AM CDT (09:21AM Moscow Time) which included space tourist Anousheh Ansari.

Harper makes speech at UN in New York

Canadian PM Stephen Harper made a speech at the UN General Assembly today in New York. He talked about Canada's role in Afghanistan.

Canada has 2,300 soldiers in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, scene of a series of major clashes with the Taliban. In the last three months alone, 36 Canadians have died since 2002.

"Let us be realistic. The challenges facing Afghanistan are enormous. There will be no quick fixes. Moreover, success cannot be assured by military means alone," Harper told the U.N. "Difficulties don't daunt us. But lack of common purpose and will in this body would. ... If we fail the Afghan people, we will be failing ourselves."

Harper spoke to the Economic Club of New York on Wednesday night, talking about recent opinion polls that show most Canadians are opposed to the mission. "I don't really accept that Canadians are opposed to the mission. I think what Canadians regret, what hurts Canadians a lot, is seeing their brave men and women in uniform lose their lives," he said.

Harper also talked about other challenges facing the UN, including conflicts affecting Haiti, Darfur and Lebanon, and suggested that the time for getting tough with Iran over its nuclear ambitions is getting close.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai is due to address the Canadian Parliament on Friday and also

making a three day visit to Canada which started today.

Eyewitness account: from the streets of Bangkok

A businessman currently representing his place of employment in Thailand has left the following eyewitness account for Wikinews:

"How safe are the streets of Bangkok? As a somewhat nervous US citizen holed up in a hotel room in this massive South Asian metropolis, I decided to venture forth and see for myself. For courage as much as anything, I walked with my close friend and business partner, who like me, hails from San Diego, California. "I left my suite at the Royal River Hotel and walked down Soi Charansandwong, the narrow street that leads from the hotel to the busy road that crosses the city and shortly thereafter, the Chao Phraya River, known as the 'River of Kings.'

"Thailand does, indeed, love their kings, or particularly, their current King. Evidence of this is clear: at least a third of the people walking on the streets wear the 'King Shirt,' a bright yellow shirt that bears the crest of the King.

"Even newsreaders on the local television news can sometimes be seen wearing the yellow shirt as a showing of support for the King.

"Leaving the alleyway, we walked to the busy Thonburi district. Immediately, I could see a group of soldiers, some standing, others sitting, along a sidewalk on the main street. They had set up a check point, but I saw but one vehicle stopped, a beat up truck that appeared to have come in from the countryside, loaded with fruit.

"We passed all the various businesses along the street as we walked, all open and apparently unaffected by the Coup.

"Walking slowly down to where the soldiers were and smiling at them as we walked, we approached the man who appeared to be the commanding officer. He smiled back and asked us where we were from. He was a bit business like at first, but this was a man who had a job to do, of course. What his overall job was, I am not sure. It appears that the military, for the most part, is present as a show of support and to act if any anti-Coup action should take place. Perhaps they are merely present to keep the peace.

"My friend noticed that the soldiers appeared to be uncomfortable in their uniforms, not the most comfortable clothing to wear in the hot and humid world that is Bangkok.

"Each soldier, unable to wear a yellow shirt and stay in uniform, instead bore a yellow ribbon of support for the King, usually tied to his rifle.

"Walking back to a small stand, we purchased twenty bottles of cold drinks and returned to the soldiers and handed them to the officer in charge. He smiled and accepted the offering and handed them out to his men.

"As we continued to walk down the sidewalk, three women came out of their shop, one wearing a yellow king shirt, and they thanked us for the gesture.

"The streets of Bangkok, otherwise, appeared completely normal in all respects. Street vendors hawked various items of food, car shops were installing high tech stereo systems and dogs, here and there, sat quietly in whatever shady spot they could find.

"We crossed the street and walked down an alleyway to the nearest Temple. Walking on the cool, green grounds of the Temple complex, the Coup felt like it was a million miles distant. Bowing and

placing our palms together, we greeted a monk on the grounds who was trimming a hedge. Despite the Coup, Bangkok seemingly remains peaceful in all respects. We could smell the delightful scent of freshly cut grass.

"Earlier, I asked the doorman at the Royal River Hotel what he thought about the Coup. 'We needed it, " he smiled, "things were too corrupt. Don't worry. It should all be over in three days or so.'

"Perhaps. But, certainly, I felt no danger on the street from the army or from anyone I encountered. Returning to Soi Charansandwong, I approached an ATM and withdrew a couple of hundred dollars worth of Baht, the currency of Thailand, with my US bank issued card.

"Money in hand, I entered a tailor shop and sat down with the shop manager, who was from India, and ordered a new suit to be made. As he measured me, I asked if business had been slowed due to the Coup. 'No, not at all. I sold a suit today to another American, as a matter of fact.' He promised me that my suit, which included two pairs of pants and two custom made dress shirts, would be ready early the next morning.

"We left the alleyway and once again walked down the busy road. The commanding officer gave us a very big smile this time as we passed him and several of the soldiers gave smaller, shy smiles as we passed. Encouraged, we once again popped into a small shop and bought additional soft drinks to hand out."

Thai military bans political party meetings

Thailand's Council for Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy (CDRM) on Thursday have banned political party

meetings of more than five people on national television. Moreover there is also a ban on new political parties from being formed. However political parties still have the right to exist. The military also promised that civilian rule will be restored within a year. Meanwhile the military is taking hold of all duties and responsibilities of the parliament.

On Tuesday the coup leaders suspended the 1997 constitution and imposed martial law. This prompted concern over the international level. The U.S. warned on Thursday that any ban on political parties would be a 'setback' for democracy.

The army issued the following statement shown on national television:

To ensure the constitutional monarchy is functioning after reforms have been completed, the Council for Democratic Reform Under Constitutional Monarchy has ordered political parties to halt all meetings and political activities.

Thai citizens returned to work on Thursday ever since Tuesday's coup. Bangkok appeared to have returned to normalcy even though there were tanks on the streets as well as soldiers manned on major traffic checkpoints.

Microsoft to release HD-DVD, upgrades to 1080p, on Xbox 360

Microsoft is set to release an HD-DVD upgrade to its media centre, gaming device, the Xbox 360. The HD-DVD add-on would be an external accessory, and is expected late November in Japan for about ¥20,000, and in the US, about \$170.

Microsoft will also be releasing a

Software Update to the Xbox, that will allow full 1080p output, with automatic 1080p upscaling. However, they have not announced if future games will have native support at 1080p

Wales to call time on smoking in April 2007

The Welsh Assembly Government has announced that smoking will be banned in enclosed public places on 2 April 2007. The ban will affect pubs, clubs, bars and restaurants and all other enclosed public spaces, although smoking in beer gardens etc will be at the discretion of the landlord. The ban will come into effect one month before the Welsh general election, on the same day as a similar ban in Northern Ireland and before a ban in England. Scotland already has a similar smoking ban in place.

People lighting up after April Second will face on the spot fines. New bilingual no smoking signs will need to be prominently displayed.

Near collision between military and civilian planes in India

A Jet Airways Boeing 737 with 89 people on board was involved in a near-collision with a formation of Indian Air Force Sukhoi-30s in the skies over Rajkot airport at around 8:30 AM (IST) today. The Jet Airways plane developed a technical snag as a result of the sudden climb it had to execute to avoid the fighter jets, which were participating in the Gagan Shakti air-exercise. The 737 was subsequently grounded at Rajkot.

Preliminary reports suggest that the narrowly-averted mishap may have been caused due to a lack of co-ordination between the Jet Airways crew and Rajkot air-traffic controllers. A Jet spokeman said

that flight 9W-345 from Mumbai CST to Rajkot was on a normal approach to the airport, when the ACAS (Aircraft Collision Avoidance System or Airborne Collision Avoidance System) instructed the pilots to climb from 22,500 ft to 23,000 ft. The 737 reportedly came within 500 feet of the IAF jets.

The Air Force statement issued in New Delhi, however, said "Prima facie reports available suggest that the fighter aircraft did not pose any threat to the civil airliner as they were under control of ground-based radar and in visual contact." An inquiry with the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation is underway to investigate the incident.

New Zealand songwriter Don McGlashan wins second Silver Scroll

Yesterday the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Helen Clark, presented song writer, Don McGlashan with his second Silver Scroll at an exclusive awards ceremony. The song that won him the prestigious APRA music award was the hit song *Bathe in the River*, which featured in the hit New Zealand movie *No. 2* sung by Wellington singer, Hollie Smith.

McGlashan won his first Silver Scroll in 1994 for his song *Anchor Me* when he was with the band *The Mutton Birds*.

Anthony Healey, APRA New Zealand Director, said: "*Bathe in the River* is a song that captures the hearts and emotions of everyone who hears it. All Don's music is emotive and powerful and this song is no exception. ...Absolute classic."

There were four other songs that were finalists in the award that is

based on songwriting, not record sales. One other song that was written by McGlashan was a finalist.

Other winners at the ceremony were:

Richard Bennett was presented with the Maioha Award at the Silver Scroll ceremony for his waiata *E Hine* (waiata is the Māori term for song and singing).

Ross Harris's song *Symphony No. 2* won the Sounz Contemporary award for the third time. Harris said: "[It] is intended to convey the terrible sadness of the man-made hell of war."

James Reid for the single *Stand Up* which was the most performed work in New Zealand.

Neil Finn took the award, once again, for the most performed work overseas.

Evermore were nominated this year after winning the award last year.

Space shuttle Atlantis cleared for landing

NASA has given the 'ok' for the Space Shuttle Atlantis to land on Thursday September 21. NASA also says that there was "no damage" to the shuttle when astronauts spotted a piece of debris floating next to the shuttle.

"We are cleared for entry. Nothing was found to be missing or damaged from the thermal protection system, the heat shield of the space shuttle Atlantis, or, in fact, any other part of the shuttle Atlantis," said N. Wayne Hale Jr., the shuttle's program director.

The debris is believed to be a piece of plastic from under the shuttle's heat tiles. A similar piece was seen by cameras falling from inbetween the heat shield tiles, but when the camera took another

look, there was nothing to be found. Hale says that the source of the debris is unknown and that "we [NASA] may never know" where it came from.

"This is most likely the culprit. It was there before, it's not there now. It was most likely shaken loose during the flight control system checkout. We probably will never know for sure," added Hale.

Astronauts used Atlantis's robotic arm to check the shuttle and its heat shield for any signs of damage.

Four fallen Canadian soldiers return home

On Monday four Canadian soldiers were killed in a suicide bomb attack. The soldiers were in Afghanistan since the end of July and in operations since the beginning of August. They are now returning home in Canada for a memorial service.

Pte. David Byers, 22, of Espanola, Ontario was identified after a suicide bomber attacked the soldiers in Kandahar. On Tuesday, the Department of National Defence said the attack also killed Cpl. Glen Arnold, based in CFB Petawawa, northwest of Ottawa; and Cpl. Shane Keating of Saskatoon and Cpl. Keith Morley, based at CFB Shilo in Manitoba were also killed.

"All three of these men were proud citizens and exceptional examples of the men and women who serve this country, both at home and abroad," said Maj. Stephen Joudrey, acting commanding officer for 2PPCLI at CFB Shilo, on Tuesday.

The Prime Minister also made a statement saying: "I wish to send my heartfelt condolences to the

loved ones of Corporal Glen Arnold, Corporal Shane Keating, Corporal Keith Morley, and Private David Byers, who were killed by a suicide bomber yesterday in the Panjwayi region of Afghanistan."

Thirty six Canadian soldiers have died in Afghanistan since 2002.

Study reveals mercury contamination throughout US food chain

A new report released by the National Wildlife Federation finds that, in the United States, the animals of many different species, including species eaten by humans, are contaminated with mercury at levels higher than previously thought. Mercury poisoning in humans, which can result from eating contaminated animals, leads to a wide range of conditions, including kidney and neurological damage, fatigue, vision problems, and tremors. Mercury poisoning in some animals is severe enough to result in death or reduced fecundity.

Chickens become contaminated with mercury from eating contaminated insects.

While many people are aware of mercury contamination of fish, more recent studies have found that insects, and animals that eat them, also have high levels of mercury. Felice Stadler, from the National Wildlife Federation, says that "the research shows birds that eat contaminated insects get contaminated themselves. Turkeys and chickens, which humans eat, eat those same contaminated insects, so this is the tip of the iceberg."

Confirming previous studies, the report also finds high mercury levels in animals that eat fish. Because of the high mercury

levels, 46 of the 50 states have issued advisories for pregnant women and children against eating certain types of fish, including tuna and swordfish. States have also issued other warnings because of mercury-contaminated foods. For example, Florida has issued a warning against eating alligator meat; Utah, against eating shoveler and goldeneye ducks.

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, the National Wildlife Federation is the largest American conservation organization. The report, released on Tuesday, is based on 65 different scientific studies conducted by more than 20 scientists. It highlights that, in the United States, mercury is accumulating in a diversity of species, including species of fish, mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, and in a diversity of environments, including freshwater, marine, and forest habitats. Some of the animals in which mercury is accumulating include songbirds, alligators, turtles, bats, otters, polar bears, mink, ducks, loons, and bald eagles.

Felice Stadler says that the report "underscored how pervasive mercury contamination has become. Nearly every aspect of our food web has been contaminated. It's difficult to find an ecosystem that's not contaminated, whether it's ocean or forest or coastal waters or wetlands."

According to Wikipedia, mercury exposure in humans can result in brain damage, birth defects, severe neurological consequences, mercurial ptyalism, Minamata disease, and possibly autistic behaviors.

In the United States alone, mercury pollution is about 100 tons per year. Primary sources of pollution include coal-burning power plants, waste water treatment plants, and waste incinerators.

Today in History

1776 - Captain Nathan Hale, an American Revolutionary spy from the Continental Army, was hanged by British forces.

1792 - France adopted the Republican Calendar.

1869 - Das Rheingold, the first of four operas in Der Ring des Nibelungen by German composer Richard Wagner, was first performed in Munich.

1980 - Iraq launched an invasion of Iran, starting the Iran-Iraq War. September 22 is Rosh Hashanah, 5767 begins at sunset (Judaism, 2006); Independence Day in Bulgaria (1908) and Mali (1960); Car Free Day in Europe & Canada.

Quote of the Day

"The world is a country which nobody ever yet knew by description; one must travel through it one's self to be acquainted with it."

~ Philip Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield

Word of the Day

expectorate; v

1. To cough up fluid from the lungs.
2. To spit.

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(toll-free in the U.S.)
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(outside the U.S.)
+44-871-218-6397
(U.K. / Europe)

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