



Top Stories

"Darfur a powder keg" says UN Head of Humanitarian Affairs

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator of the United Nations, said "this is the moment of truth. We are playing with a powder keg". This followed disagreement about the role that UN would play in providing a force to help deal with the crisis in Darfur.

Islamic Jihad considers halting rocket-fire into Israel

The Palestinian group Islamic Jihad may stop firing rockets into Israel, following a request to that effect by President Mahmoud Abbas. Mr. Abbas met leaders of the group and urged them to halt the violence.

Featured story

Kirby Chambliss wins 2006 Red Bull Air Race World Series

American Kirby Chambliss has won the 2006 Red Bull Air Race World Series despite a win from Hungarian team mate, Peter Besenyei in the final leg in Perth, Western Australia.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Gunmen abduct Iraq's Deputy Health Minister Ammar al-Saffar.
- Somali Civil War (2006-present): UN Secretary General Kofi Annan warns Somalia's neighbours to stay out, as UN experts paint an alarming picture of foreign and

Wikipedia Current Events

extremist intervention in a nation on the brink of all-out war that could engulf the Horn of Africa.

- A former Russian spy who defected to Britain six years ago is fighting for his life in a London hospital after being poisoned with thallium in a sushi bar.
- India test fires a Prithvi missile, a surface-to-surface missile, capable of carrying a nuclear weapon.
- Russia and the United States sign a key trade agreement paving the way for Russian membership of the World Trade Organization.
- A suicide bomb explodes in Hillah, Iraq, killing 17 and wounding 49.
- A leader of the Tongan pro-democracy movement, MP Akilisi Pohiva, criticises the intervention of Australian and New Zealand peacekeepers following riots.
- An attempted military coup d'état in Madagascar announced by Général Andrianafidisoa appears to have failed.
- The 2006 meeting of the G20 industrial nations in Melbourne ends, with discussions centering on the global economy and climate change. Protesters clash with police during the event.
- The annual APEC meeting in Hanoi concludes with a call for the resumption of World Trade Organization talks, but references to climate change were removed

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from the final statement.

- Nintendo released its new game system, the Wii.

New Zealand's exams start today

New Zealand's National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) external end of year exams started today. It is expected that "...136,000 people [will be] sitting exams at 405 exam centres..." Bali Haque, deputy chief executive of New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) said.

The exams will finish on December 9.

These exams are also being closely scrutinised because of the past problems with NCEA.

"...there will always be some anomalies and unforeseen events, such as the traffic jams and floods of 2005," he said. "We are confident that we are prepared for such eventualities," Mr Haque said.

Over 4,500 supervisors will, of course, supervise the 555 exams.

Principals in recent weeks have criticised the NCEA for allowing students to receive credits if the answers are written in "text (SMS) abbreviations".

Common Admission Test for colleges conducted across India

Over 1,90,000 students appeared

for the Common Admission Test (CAT) which was conducted in 23 cities in the country.

The test is taken by those seeking admission into the six prestigious Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and 80 other top management institutes in India. The test began at 10:30 AM (IST), and the results are expected in the first week of December.

IIM-Ahmedabad is the only institute which has already specified the minimum marks it will take for students to make the cut. There has been a 20% rise in the number of entrants over last year. Students who score over 33% in the written test will be invited to the interview and group discussion rounds of the exam. CAT-2006 also saw some changes being made to the format of the test :-

The age limit for candidates was scrapped.

No limit will be set on the number of attempts at the test.

Graduates need to have at least 50% aggregate to apply.

Students awaiting their results can sit for the CAT but would need to produce their passing certificates upon admission.

MIT researchers explore method of transferring electricity wirelessly

Wednesday at the American Institute of Physics Industrial Physics Forum meeting in San Francisco, a group of researchers proposed new research into an old way, invented by Nikola Tesla, to transfer power wirelessly. Marin Soljagic and his MIT colleagues revived an idea which involves a source that creates a short range oscillating field. Nearby circuits that resonate at the frequency of the source absorb some of the energy. The system would operate

in much the same way as the coils inside a transformer, except that the researchers believe they can develop sources that transfer energy over much longer distances than is typical in transformers. Technology based on this proposal could mean wireless gadgets such as cell phones and iPods never have to be plugged into a wall outlet. The researchers also propose that it could power micro-robots or other machines that are too small to carry their own batteries. Eventually it might enable electric transportation such as buses to recharge wirelessly through power sources near the roadway. One potential problem with the system could be its inefficiency. Soljagic's calculations show that it is at best 60% efficient.

Iraqi deputy health minister kidnapped

Deputy to the Iraq Health Minister, Ammar al-Saffar, who lives with his sister in Baghdad's Sunni neighbourhood of Adhamiya, was kidnapped today.

It is reported that six uniformed men and others wearing suits, arrived at Mr Saffer's home in police cars and pickup trucks and took him off.

As one of the deputies to the Health Minister, Mr Saffer called earlier this year for as much as \$8 Billion to restore Iraq's health services.

On August 9, 2006, Mr Saffar discussed the health situation in Iraq with the BBC. He said that the insurgents were killing doctors and trying to create a brain drain. 100 doctors had been killed "because they were trying to help people and because they were Shia". He said that there are about 18,000 doctors in Iraq but many have left,

while others practice at home rather than at hospitals where they could be better protected. Under Saddam they were not permitted to leave, now there is no restriction. But now there are cash incentives: under Saddam they earned \$2-3 a month, now they can earn up to \$500 a month. On security, he said that the people blamed the US for the violence because, although they were responsible for security, they left the borders poorly guarded.

Mr Saffer survived an assassination attempt in June, 2004 when he was fired upon as he left his home. He was uninjured.

ELF Cup kicks off in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

The ELF Cup (Equality, Liberty, Fraternity Cup) kicked off today at 18:30 (EET) today between Crimea and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in Atatürk Stadium, Lefkoşa, TRNC.

Eight teams are participating in the first edition of the ELF Cup, making it the largest New Federations Board tournament ever. NF-Board teams Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Greenland, Tibet, Zanzibar will be joined by FIFA's Asian Football Confederation sides Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and non-aligned sides Crimea and Gagäuzia.

The cup is conceived of two groups, with top two teams progressing to the semi-finals. Group A features Gagäuzia, Greenland, Kyrgyzstan, and Zanzibar; while Group B features Crimea, Tajikistan, Tibet and the hosts Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The event costed the hosts 340,000 YTL, whom expect the

turnout to cover half the cost. Head of Cyprus Turkish Football Federation (Kıbrıs Türk Futbol Federasyonu, KTFF) Niyazi Okutan called for Turkish Cypriots to come and support their national team.

"Civil defence" thwarts Israeli air strike on Gaza refugee camp

Led by Nizar Rayan, a senior Hamas fighter, hundreds of Palestinian refugees gathered to protect the house of the leader of a militant group in Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza and succeeded in thwarting an Israeli attack.

As part of their campaign against Palestinian fighters, Israeli forces had warned Mohammedweil Baroud, a commander in the Popular Resistance Committee, that his house would be attacked in 30 minutes time. He was told to take his family out of the house in order to avoid civilian casualties. Instead, he called for help from the local mosque and people swarmed round and over Mr Baroud's house in such numbers as to dissuade the Israelis from making the promised attack.

The Palestinians claimed this to have been the first successful defence of its kind. Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, visiting the house, said that people had been driven to this remedy because the UN had refused to defend them. On Friday, the Security Council vetoed a resolution condemning Israeli military action in Gaza. Nizar Rayan promised "We will pay with our lives to protect the houses of the fighters, so they can resist the enemy, assured their homes are being protected".

On November 8, an Israeli shell killed 19 civilians in Beit Hanoun,

due to, what the Israelis called, a "technical fault in targeting".

An Israeli spokesman said that Israeli forces differentiate between innocent people and "terrorists" and that they would continue the attacks.

A Palestinian rocket killed an Israeli woman and seriously wounded a man in the town of Sderot on November 15. Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president has called for a ceasefire by those launching rockets and suicide attacks against Israel and the Palestinian group Islamic Jihad is said to be considering this request carefully. Over 400 Palestinians, including many civilians, have been killed since June by attacks, which Israel says are aimed at Palestinian fighters.

Bush meets with coup appointed Thai PM

According to reports from Agence France-Press (AFP), and Thai newspaper, The Nation, US president George Bush has met with the recently appointed Prime Minister, Surayud Chulanont. The encounter took place at the ongoing Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Hanoi.

Surayud, appointed by the leaders of the bloodless September 19 coup, outlined the plans of the government to introduce constitutional reforms and political change. According to AFP there had been suggestions that Bush would not meet with Surayud, but the two shook hands cordially and Bush was said to have described the coup which ousted populist Thaksin Shinawatra as "military intervention".

The US President has been making further use of the opportunities for

dialogue at the APEC summit, today saw him catching up with Russian president Vladimir Putin. Discussion was said to include currently in-place sanctions against Russian arms and military aircraft manufacturers.

The Wii, Nintendo's new console, launches in North America

Nintendo has released its newest video game console in North America. Known as the Wii, the system has an MSRP of US\$249.99. The North American release is to be followed by the December 2nd launch in Japan and the December 8th launch in Europe.

Launched officially at midnight, more than a thousand people gathered in New York's Time Square to be among the first to buy one of the Wii. In contrast to the crowds that have challenged crowd control officials over the last two days in connection with the launch of Sony's Playstation 3, the Wii crowds have been much calmer. Many observers attribute this to the fact that Nintendo had more than ten times as many Wii consoles available on launching day than Sony did for their PS3 that had been hounded by part shortages in manufacturing right up to the day of launch.

Nintendo of America president Reggie Fils-Aime said that several tough choices had been made in the design of the Wii. The company decided to develop a new way of playing games with revolutionary controllers instead of following the PS3 and the Xbox down the road of stunning graphic and multimedia options. This produced a console with a much talked about sensor/controller design and the lowest price point of the three major consoles. While

not having a DVD player or high definition TV capabilities, the Wii retails for about \$250 while its competitors the Xbox and PS3 retail for about \$400 and \$600 respectively.

Across the country in Los Angeles about 500 people were waiting for the doors to open at Universal City Walk's Game Stop store. Fearing that the Wii introduction might be as contentious as the PS3 debut just a few days ago, the store handed out numbered wristbands to the throng. No problems were reported.

Fire crews race to contain Blue Mountains, NSW fires before Tuesday

Fire crews in the Australian state of New South Wales are racing to contain two fires burning out of control in the Blue Mountains West of Sydney before an expected worsening of conditions on Tuesday.

The fires which have been burning in the Mount Victoria and Blackheath since last Sunday have burnt around 2500 hectares of bushland. So far no homes have been under direct threat.

The Australian Bureau of Meteorology has forecast strong North-Westerly winds in the area on Tuesday. These winds could fan the fire directly into the towns of Mount Victoria and Blackheath.

In an attempt to contain the fires, fire personnel from the NSW Fire Brigade, Rural Fire Service and the National Parks and Wildlife Service have been undertaking backburning operations over the weekend. The backburning operations have been supported by fourteen aircraft, which have been carrying out waterbombing operations.

As a result of the fire crew's operations, the Bell's Line of Road has been closed, with traffic advised to use the Great Western Highway.

New storm approaches as Vancouver remains under boil water advisory

Almost one million people in Vancouver, Canada are still under a boil water advisory. Severe rainfall on the 16th of November led to a water quality warning for the Greater Vancouver area's two million residents. The restriction was partially lifted on Friday, but residents of Vancouver, Burnaby, and three North Shore municipalities are still advised to boil their drinking water due to high turbidity levels.

A new storm is predicted to hit the region on Sunday, although it is not expected to be as severe. Wednesday's storm triggered landslides in three area water reservoirs, creating sediment levels up to ninety times higher than permitted under federal health standards. Grocery stores, restaurants, and other commercial outlets were also affected by the advisory. Over 210,000 homes were left without electricity as power lines were knocked out. Some residents are still without power.

The advisory is the largest in Canadian history.

Kirby Chambliss wins 2006 Red Bull Air Race World Series

Perth, Western Australia – American Kirby Chambliss has won the 2006 Red Bull Air Race World Series despite a win from Hungarian team mate, Peter Besenyei in the final leg in Perth, Western Australia. Briton Paul Bonhomme came second in the Perth event while Chambliss came

in one back in third place.

More than 300,000 people turned up on the shores of Perth's Swan River to catch a glimpse of the 11 pilots. Despite coming third, Chambliss still won the 2006 series, coming into the event with 34 points. Besenyei was the closest behind Chambliss before Perth, with 29 championship points.

Blair, Brown promise an extra £540 million to Pakistan, Iraq

On Sunday, Prime Minister Blair is expected to pledge to double the UK's development aid for Pakistan to £480m (\$960m) during the next three years. Also this weekend, Chancellor Brown promised an extra £100m (\$188m) to Iraq to "help rebuild the economy".

Tony Blair expects to meet the President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz to discuss anti-terrorism measures and the radicalisation of youth.

Gordon Brown met some of the 7,000 British troops deployed in the theatre and said he hoped to see troop reduction in the next few months. He also met Iraqi deputy prime minister Barham Saleh and some senior Iraqi ministers and discussed the economy with them.

This is Brown's first visit to Iraq and it is seen as part of a programme to establish his credentials as Blair's successor.

Today in History

284 - Diocletian became Roman Emperor.

1700 - Great Northern War: Forces led by King Charles XII of Sweden defeated the Russian army of Tsar Peter the Great in the Battle of Narva.

1910 - Mexican Revolution: Francisco I. Madero promulgated the San Luis Plan, starting a revolt against President Porfirio Díaz.

1945 - The Nuremberg Trials against 24 leading Nazis involved in the Holocaust and various war crimes during World War II began in Nuremberg, Germany.

1998 - Zarya, the first module of the International Space Station, was launched on a Proton rocket from Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan.

November 20 is Zumbi Day in Brazil, Revolution Day in Mexico, Teacher's Day in Vietnam.

Quote of the Day

Art defies defeat by its very existence, representing the celebration of life, in spite of all attempts to degrade and destroy it. ~ Nadine Gordimer

Word of the Day

dactylology; n

1. The use of the fingers and hands to communicate ideas, especially by the deaf.

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