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US Senate advances health care reform bill

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became the first to approve gay marriage in Latin America yesterday, despite opposition from conservative groups and the Catholic Church.



Yemen rebels accuse Saudi forces of killing 54 people

The Yemeni rebels of the Shi'ite Zaidi group have accused Saudi armed forces of killing 54 people in air strikes on a town in northern Yemen.



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Scottish nurse loses appeal in murders of four patients in England

A man from Scotland who killed four elderly women and attempted to murder a fifth while working as a nurse in England has lost his appeal. Colin Norris, 33, from Glasgow, gave his victims overdoses of insulin which sent them into comas.

Norris, who was struck off the nursing register following his convictions, was convicted in March last year of murdering Doris Ludlam, 80, Bridget Bourke, 88, Irene Crookes, 79, and Ethel Hall, 86, as well as the attempted murder of 90-year-old Vera Wilby. Only Wilby ever awoke from her coma. He was convicted by a majority verdict at Newcastle Crown Court and

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sentenced to thirty years to life in prison.

William Clegg QC, defending, told the Court of Appeal in London that the deaths at the General Infirmary and St James's Hospital in Leeds could have been caused by "severe spontaneous hypoglycaemia" causing "naturally raised insulin levels" in the patients. He said this possibility had never been properly investigated.

Clegg also challenged Mr Justice Griffith Williams' summing up to the jury in the original trial. However, having also heard arguments from the prosecution, given by Robert Smith QC, the panel of judges did not agree. Lord Justice Aikens stated that the judges directions "cannot validly be criticised" and went on: "We reject both grounds of appeal. The case against the appellant was very strong indeed. We are quite satisfied that the convictions... on all five counts were safe. The appeal is dismissed."

Man appears in court case involving murder of woman in Glasgow, Scotland

A man has appeared in a court case regarding the murder of a woman from Glasgow, Scotland. Khalid Mamoun Sarwar, aged 28, appeared at Glasgow Sheriff Court on charges of theft and murder. The charges relate to the death of 54-year-old Nasim Jamil. She was an agony aunt who

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worked as a presenter on Awaz FM, an Asian community radio station. She was killed in her apartment on Byres Road in Glasgow. The radio host's body was discovered by her daughter on December 9. Sarwar, who is from the city, was not making any declarations or pleas during the court trial. The man was subsequently remanded in custody.

Man jailed for murder of ex-girlfriend in Lancashire, England

A man has been jailed for the murder of his ex-girlfriend in Lancashire, England, after a trial in Preston Crown Court. 52-year-old Alan Entwistle admitted the murder of his ex-girlfriend and mother of two Claire Atkinson, who came from Elm Street in the town of Fleetwood. The court heard how he had been planning the murder for several weeks since the relationship between him and Claire had broken down. A month before the killing he had been charged with kidnap and using a knife to threaten her but was released on bail. It was said that the former bouncer had been stalking Atkinson on the day of her murder and that he had managed to coax her into his blue Hyundai Getz. He then stabbed Claire 13 times, with her heart being infiltrated by seven of the wounds from the knife. After the murder, which occurred on April 17, 2009, Alan drove around with the body of the victim in the passenger seat of the car before deliberately crashing the vehicle into the back of a Land Rover. Alan Entwistle was sentenced to a minimum of 20 years in prison. Judge Anthony Russell QC described him with the words "manipulative man".

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Mexico City legalises gay marriages

Lawmakers in the municipality of Mexico City, the capital of Mexico, became the first to approve gay marriage in Latin America yesterday, despite opposition from conservative groups and the Catholic Church.

"It was approved overall by 39 votes in favor and twenty against, with five abstentions," said a spokesman for Ravi Razu, the bill's chief sponsor. Razu proposed the bill to allow same-sex couples to have the same access as heterosexual married couples to social security and other benefits.

Some cities in countries in Latin America, such as Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador permit homosexual civil unions, Uruguay permits civil unions throughout the country as well as adoption, and last month a court in Argentina blocked a bill proposing gay marriage; the country's Supreme Court has yet to make the final ruling.

Spokesman Oscar Oliver said that the next step for the capital's lawmakers was to use a measure in the bill intended to permit adoption for same-sex married couples.

Serbia to apply to join the EU

Serbia is to file a formal application today to join the European Union according to officials. President Boris Tadić is to fly to Stockholm to submit the application to Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt.

"President Boris Tadic will go to Stockholm on Tuesday to submit the application for EU membership," announced Serbian

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presidency spokeswoman Jasmina Stojanov.

Reinfeldt called the announcement "a historic step". In a statement he welcomed the bid, saying "I look forward to receiving President Boris Tadic in Stockholm on Tuesday, December 22, when he officially hands over the application."

Along with Montenegro and Macedonia, visa-free entry to the 27-country bloc came into affect for Serbia's citizens on Saturday, and a free trade agreement, frozen in April, was also reinstated this month, after the United Nations chief prosecutor accepted that the country was making serious attempts to arrest the two remaining people indicted for war crimes by The Hague's International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

According to diplomats, the bid for membership has some support, with Italy and Greece favourable, but the Netherlands and the United Kingdom more cautious.

US Senate advances health care reform bill

The US Senate has voted by 60 to 40 votes to close debate on landmark health care reform legislation backed by President Barack Obama but unanimously opposed by Republican lawmakers. Now, the divided chamber appears to be heading towards a vote to pass the bill on Thursday.

All 100 senators were gathered in the Capitol building for a key procedural vote on health care reform legislation. All 58 Democrats in the Senate, plus the two independents who normally

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vote with them, voted for cloture, which limits the length of debate. All forty Republicans unanimously opposed the cloture.

The bill would extend health insurance coverage to 30 million US residents who currently lack it, and forbid insurance companies from practices such as denying coverage due to pre-existing conditions. Most residents would be required to purchase health insurance for the first time, with subsidies provided to those who cannot afford it.

"We'll get this [bill] passed before Christmas and it will be one of the best Christmas presents this Congress has ever given the American people," said Democratic senator Tom Harkin.

"This country, the greatest and richest the world has ever seen, is the only advanced nation on earth where dying for a lack of health insurance is even possible," said Senate Majority leader Harry Reid.

Most Republicans, however, said they believed the bill is too expensive and would not correct the current problems with the US's health care.

If the bill passes in the Senate, that version will have to be merged with a more liberal version passed by the House of Representatives which includes a government-run alternative, not included in the Senate version.

China and Indonesia hail deal of Copenhagen summit

China and Indonesia, two of the giants of Asia, have welcomed the UN Climate Change Conference outcome.

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The Chinese foreign minister and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the 6th President of Indonesia, appreciated the result of the UN Climate Change Conference. Obama defended the Copenhagen Accord and was the medium between the main new powers. The consensus didn't adopt the accord in the Copenhagen summit.

The 193-nation conference ended last Friday in Denmark. Richard Black, who is a journalist of BBC environment says the tipping point is the 2 degrees Celsius. The UN scientists says to avert the climate crisis we have to stay under 3.6F (2C).

Yang Jiechi, who is the 10th Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China said: "Developing and developed countries are very different in their historical emissions responsibilities and current emissions levels, and in their basic national characteristics and development stages. [...] Therefore, they should shoulder different responsibilities and obligations in fighting climate."

Yang Jiechi thinks the summit was the beginning of a new chapter fight against of global warming. IPCC's leader, who shared a Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore Rajendra Pachauri said "We will have to make sure it moves quickly".

The UN Climate Change Conference will be organized in Bonn, Germany. There will be other Climate and Atmosphere conferences in the future, for example the Fortaleza conference in Brazil, which start 16 August 2010.

The Copenhagen Accord is based

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on a proposal tabled by US, China, India, Brazil and South Africa.

Clashes between herders and farmers in Nigeria kill thirty

According to reports, at least 30 people have been killed in fighting between farmers and cattle herders in the central Nasarawa State of Nigeria.

Member of parliament Mohammed Baba Ibaaku said that the incident began on Friday, when armed herders raided the farm village of Udeni Gida. He commented that scores of homes were set on fire during the attack, and added that the herders were from the neighboring Kogi and Taraba states. The violence had occurred after a few weeks of tension between the two, mainly due to competition for land, which is becoming scarcer because of desertification.

Some reporters in the village said that they had seen at least fifty bodies of people killed in the violence. The town has now been placed under police control.

A clash similar to this one erupted two weeks ago, after herders led their cattle into rice fields. One farmer was killed during that incident.

Nasarawa State police commissioner Shehu Babolola confirmed the farmers and herders clashed again on Friday, but declined to give casualty figures.

Commons Picture of the Day



An M-198 155mm Howitzer of the US Marines firing at Fallujah, Iraq, during the Second Battle of Fallujah (November 2004).

Wikipedia Featured Article

appears in the 12th century. Horses were worshipped in Norse mythology, a custom brought to Iceland by the country's earliest settlers. Selective breeding over the centuries has developed the breed into its current form. Natural selection has also played a role, as the harsh Icelandic climate eliminated many horses through cold and starvation. In the 1780s, much of the breed was wiped out in the aftermath of a volcanic eruption.

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The **Icelandic horse** is a breed of horse developed in Iceland. Although the horses are small, at times



pony-sized, most registries for the Icelandic refer to it as a horse. Icelandic horses are late-developers, but are also long-lived and hardy. In their native country they have few diseases; Icelandic law prevents horses from being imported into the country and exported animals are not allowed to return. The Icelandic displays two gaits in addition to the typical walk, trot, and canter/gallop commonly displayed by other breeds. The only breed of horse in Iceland, they are also popular internationally, and sizable populations exist in Europe and North America. The breed is still used for traditional farm work in its native country, as well as for leisure, showing, and racing. Developed from ponies taken to Iceland by Viking settlers in the 9th and 10th centuries, the breed is mentioned in literature and historical records throughout Icelandic history; the first reference to a named horse

Quote of the Day

That's the thing with magic. You've got to know it's still here, all around us, or it just stays invisible for you.

~ Charles de Lint ~

Word of the Day

altruistic adj

Regardful of others; beneficent; unselfish.

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This issue was compiled by Dendodge based articles written by Wikinews volunteers and published on en.wikinews.org on 22 December 2009

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