



Top Stories

China and Russia object to the Security Council statement on Iran

A draft U.N. Security Council statement calling for a report in two weeks on Iran's compliance with demands that it suspend uranium enrichment was rejected by China and Russia Tuesday. Russia and China prefer a six-week deadline and want the report to go to the International Atomic Energy Agency rather than to the Security Council.

2006 Commonwealth Games open in Melbourne

The XVIII Commonwealth Games, were opened officially by Queen Elizabeth II, in Melbourne, Australia; in a two-and-a-half hour spectacular Opening Ceremony. About 80,000 spectators were in attendance, with millions more watching on TV.



Featured story

Buffalo, N.Y. hotel proposal threatened by possible lawsuit

Pano Georgiadis, owner of Pano's Resturant on Elmwood, has threated to sue Savarino Construction Services Corp. if they attempt to obtain a variance on his property at 605 Forest Avenue. He also said he would sue the company if they "do the most rooms with a minimal amount of parking."

Wikipedia Current Events

- An attempted coup d'état against Chadian President Idriss Déby is foiled.
- War in Iraq: A raid by the United States military kills eleven, mostly civilian, Iraqis.
- The United Nations's General Assembly has approved Council on human rights to replace the Commission on Human Rights with only the USA, Israel, the Marshall Islands and Palau opposing.
- Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth opens the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Australia.
- Muhammad cartoons controversy: Five arrests are made over protests in London against the cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad

Hawaiian dam bursts

On March 14, 2006, the Kaloko Reservoir in Lihue, Hawaii on the Kauai island gave way around 5 a.m. after several days of tormenting rains and thunder. The resulting wave destroyed coastal highways, killed one person, and left seven others missing. The missing and dead count is expected to increase as searchers investigate the waters that flowed into the Pacific. Even though Kauai had received 5-6 inches of rain in the past day, most residents admitted that the island was not prepared for this situation. Although oil was spilled into the water, there has been no sighting

of significant damage.

This dam break has many concerned about the possibility of another reservoir break, especially since most of Hawaii's reservoirs are at least a century old and privately owned. Engineers have begun to drain both the Morita and Waita Reservoirs, also on Kauai, to prevent any possible breaks. Although the governor stated that most of the responsibility for privately owned reservoirs belongs to the owners, he did admit that the state was also failing in its monitoring responsibilities, noting that the department in charge of monitoring reservoirs only has two employees. Although the primary owner, the Mary N. Lucas Trust, has made no comment, a partial owner, Mr. Jimmy Pflueger, has admitted he was devastated by the damage done by the reservoir.

The dam, 40 feet high and 80 feet long, released 300-400 million gallons of water, about 1400 acre-ft. Many tourists, as well as native residents, have been stranded without transportation, as the destruction of the main Lihue highway, the Kuhio Highway, has closed down the airport. The Coast Guard has taken over the main part of the search, although Hawaii National Guards has also been activated. Kauai County's mayor has declared Kauai to be in a state of emergency.

Afghan opium plantings expected to be up 40% from 2005

In spite of the U.S. Government's

"five pillar counternarcotics strategy" for combating narcotics in Afghanistan, approximately 140,000 hectares of poppies were planted in Afghanistan this year, according to the Associated Press. This would be an increase of about 40 percent from 2005. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's Rapid Assessment Survey released last month indicates that poppy planting for 2006 increased in 13 provinces, decreased in only three and remained stable in 15.

Afghan government officials are asking the drug lords to invest their illegally earned profits in Afghanistan, according to Helmand Gov. Mohammed Daud, the governor of the biggest opium-growing region.

During a trip to the region by U.S. Ambassador Ronald Neumann, Daud said; "We as a government will provide them the opportunity to use their money for the national benefit."

The narcotics trade currently accounts for 35 per cent of Afghanistan's income. Doug Wankel, a former Drug Enforcement Administration official who is point man for the U.S. counternarcotics initiative at the American Embassy in Kabul, says the opium industry is "financing terrorism. It's financing subversive activities. It's financing warlordism. ... And if it's a threat to the government of Afghanistan, it's a direct threat to the national security interests of the United States."

The USA's "five pillar strategy" includes public information, alternative livelihoods, eradication, interdiction, and law enforcement/justice reform.

2006 Commonwealth Games open in Melbourne

The XVIIIth Commonwealth Games were opened officially by Queen Elizabeth II tonight, in Melbourne, Australia in a two-and-a-half hour spectacular Opening Ceremony held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. About 80,000 spectators were in attendance, and hundreds of thousands lined the riverbank of the nearby Yarra River, watching as the Queen's baton made its way to the stadium.

The Queen's Baton final runner was John Landy, the current Governor of Victoria, and a Bronze medalist in the 1956 Summer Olympics.

The ceremony began with the flags of Australia, England, (previous host) and India, (next host) being raised.

In a change from the traditional format, the teams did not enter in alphabetical order; instead, they entered in order of regions of the Commonwealth, starting with the European nations. Then Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean and finally Oceania entered the stadium.

Melbourne funk band The Cat Empire provided musical accompaniment as the athletes marched into the arena, playing music specifically written for each continent.

The Queen, dressed in gold and accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, received the baton, which has travelled to all 71 competing nations, where she read the message placed within the baton (366 days earlier on Commonwealth Day, March 14, 2005).

The Queen's said "I am glad to have this opportunity to offer my best wishes to every athlete and official taking part in these friendly Games It now gives me the greatest pleasure to declare the 18th Commonwealth Games open."

The queen, who is 80 next month (21 April), was taken aback when the audience joined in a tribute of Happy Birthday, ending with eight bars from God Save the Queen, led by New Zealand opera singer Dame Kiri Te Kanawa.

4,500 athletes representing 71 teams from 53 Commonwealth countries will be competing at the games this year. A potential global television audience of 1.5 billion is expected to tune in. The Commonwealth Games will run through to the 26th March.

Shin Corporation defamation suit fails

Shin Corporation, the multi-billion baht telecom and IT giant, has lost its defamation suit against Supinya Klangnarong for her comments in an interview with the Thai Post in July 2003.

In her interview Supinya, secretary general of the Campaign for Popular Media, had stated that Shin corporation gained revenue following the election of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the company's founder. As a result the corporation sued her and five of the Thai Post's executives for defamation.

The court's finding that Supinya has a right to express her opinion, and that it did not defame Shin Corp. followed a number of attempts by the company to settle out of court or otherwise avoid a judgement.

This judgement comes at an inopportune moment for the Prime Minister: his family's recent tax-free sale of their stake in Shin has acted as a catalyst for the protests calling for Thaksin to resign.

Car explodes in Paris, at least 1 person killed

A car bomb has exploded in northern Paris, killing at least 1 person. The french fire brigade received a call just before 10:00AM GMT to put out a fire on a car. The car exploded on a main road near the suburb of La Courneuve.

China and Russia object to the Security Council statement on Iran

A draft U.N. Security Council statement backed by the United States, Britain and France calling for a report in two weeks on Iran's compliance with demands that it suspend uranium enrichment was objected to by China and Russia on Tuesday. Russia and China prefer a six-week deadline and want the report to go to the International Atomic Energy Agency, rather than to the Security Council.

While the Security Council members agree that Iran should not be making nuclear weapons, they disagree on the course of action to take. Iran says that its nuclear program is for producing energy, but the IAEA has expressed a "lack of confidence" over Iran's intentions. Some nations in the west, including the U.S., believe that Iran's goal of nuclear energy production is a cover for nuclear bomb development. U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said, "Every day that goes by is a day that permits the Iranians to get closer to a nuclear weapons capability."

The draft Security Council proposals cite "the conviction that continued Iranian enrichment-related activity would intensify international concern." They reiterate that proliferation of weapons of mass destruction "constitutes a threat to international peace and security." Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, said the nuclear program is "irreversible," and any retreat would endanger the Islamic republic's independence. Russia and China, on the other hand, are not as skeptical of Iran. They believe that tough council action could cause Iran to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to ban inspectors sent from the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Following last month's IAEA board report to the Security Council, expressing lack of confidence, Iran ended its voluntary cooperation with the IAEA under the Additional Protocol and said it would start uranium enrichment and bar surprise inspections of the facilities.

Australian troops to provide front-line combat support in Iraq

Australian troops in southern Iraq will shift to an "overwatch" role, says Defence Minister Brendan Nelson. Australia has around 460 troops in southern Iraq engaged in training the Iraq military and guarding Japanese military engineers. Dr Nelson says the soldiers currently on rotation in Iraq as part of Operation Catalyst will soon provide "front-line combat support" for coalition troops.

"We will move some time over the next three to four months pending the movement of the Japanese to

supporting the overwatch program," he told ABC radio. "So what we will be doing is we will be supporting the Iraqi security forces, Iraqi police and Iraqi local government in administering and managing their own affairs. And we will respond to requests from the Iraqi government."

Overwatch was "a support program" that involved "providing covering fire to coalition allies in Iraq." The Australian deployment was expected to end around July this year, but Dr Nelson has said the mission would now continue into next year. His statement followed the British announcement that it would withdraw 800 troops from Iraq in the next few months.

"The British and the Americans are looking at significant draw downs in two to three years. We haven't set any such timeline... I think we will be there into 2007... We haven't committed to another two to three years unlike the Americans. We take it on a day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month basis," said the Minister.

Dr Nelson ruled out Australian troops being deployed to more dangerous areas, such as Basra, where the British troops have been based. But he declined to say whether the new mission will be more risky. He says "everything the troops do in Iraq is associated with danger."

On March 7th, Australian Greens Leader Bob Brown slammed the Howard government's determination to keep troops in Iraq, as American and British troops are withdrawn. "Australian troops are being subject to thoughtless bravado by John Howard and Brendan Nelson and they need to be brought home immediately," Senator Brown said.

Operation Catalyst is the Australian Defence Force (ADF) contribution to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Iraq. Operation Catalyst currently comprises approximately 1320 Australian Defence Force personnel.

New Zealand Commonwealth Games flag-bearer announced

It was announced last night at the New Zealand Commonwealth Games team function, that Olympic triathlon champion Hamish Carter will carry the New Zealand flag into the Opening Ceremony of the Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

Hamish Carter was a gold medallist at the 2004 Summer Olympics, and a bronze medallist at the last Commonwealth Games held in Manchester.

The XVIII Commonwealth Games will be held from March 15th through the 26th. The Opening Ceremony will be held tonight. The Games will be opened officially by Queen Elizabeth II.

Today in History

1815 - William I proclaimed himself King of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, the first constitutional monarch in the Netherlands.

1872 - Wanderers F.C. won the first FA Cup, the oldest football competition in the world, beating Royal Engineers A.F.C. 1-0 at The Oval in Kennington, London.

1935 - Conscriptioin was re-introduced in Nazi Germany, and the German military was renamed Wehrmacht.

1968 - Vietnam War: American soldiers killed 347 civilians in My Lai, Vietnam.

1978 - Former Prime Minister of Italy Aldo Moro was kidnapped in Rome by Mario Moretti and the Red Brigades.

Quote of the Day

"Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor. He talks as the man of his age talks, that is, with rude wit, a lively sense of the grotesque, a disgust for sham, and a contempt for pettiness."
~ Raymond Chandler

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