

Muslim leaders don't accept "pressured" apology



Islamic parties in Pakistan say the Newsweek apology is a transparent attempt to defuse Muslim anger. Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the head of an Islamic party alliance told the BBC that Newsweek's clarification held no weight. "There have been reports by the prisoners who have been released from Guantanamo Bay of desecration of the holy Koran, and different atrocities perpetrated on them. Therefore, the clarification of Newsweek has no meaning."

Protests spread in Afghanistan



Seven were killed and over 76 injured in the first three days of anti-US protests in Afghanistan. Protests were sparked by reports that US guards in Guantanamo Bay desecrated the Koran. According to the local population, four policemen and soldiers were killed in province Ghazni, south-west of Kabul.

Hundreds of people gather in support of Mikhail Khodorkovsky



As the court was announcing the final decision on the fate of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, hundreds of people gathered near the court house to voice their opinion on the matter. The total number of participants, according to officials is estimated at 700 people. The involved parties claim around 1000.

Weather:



Current Events

- The National Assembly of Kuwait passes new legislation for women's suffrage, allowing all women aged 21 and older, subject to Islamic law, to vote in elections in Kuwait in 2007.
- Uzbek troops kill over 400 people in Andijan during protests in eastern Uzbekistan over the trials of 23 accused Islamist extremists. President Islam Karimov defends the act.
- In Taiwan, political parties supporting new amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of China win with 249 of 300 seats in the National Assembly election.
- South Korea announces that bilateral talks with North Korea will resume after a hiatus of almost a year, with the North's nuclear weapons as a key issue.

Italian football: Roma and Lazio accused of fixing game

Fans of Italian football clubs Roma and Lazio are asking for ticket reimbursement, after the city rivals played 0:0 Sunday. After a good chance of Roma in the opening minutes of the match, the

entire game was played in the middle of the field and neither team seemed eager to score.

Accusations were taken further as the Italian Consumer Union, Codacons, called for fans to ask for their money back, since the game result was allegedly fixed. Both teams are close to the bottom of Serie A table, and a point each will almost secure that they do not drop out of the first league.

Italian media seems unified in opinion that this was the worst city derby ever played. Some of the headlines were "Derby of shame" and "Never again like this."

Consob, an institution monitoring the work of the regional Stock Market, announced they will take action against both teams as they have shares on market.

Galloway and Pasqua deny any wrongdoing in the oil-for-food program

Following from accusations issued by the United States Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (PSI), the two politicians named in the report, British MP George Galloway and senator Charles Pasqua of France, have vehemently denied any wrongdoing.

George Galloway declared:

I've now had a chance to read the report which was compiled without this Senate committee asking me a single question about these absurd allegations. I repeat once more. I have never traded or benefited from any oil deals with Iraq.

One of the companies named, with ostensible links to me-- Aredio Petroleum-- I have never heard of until today and I have certainly had no dealings

with. The other company, Middle East Advanced Semiconductors, was owned by Fawaz Zureikat, who was the chairman of the Mariam Appeal. It is well-known that Mr Zureikat traded with Iraq but he did not do so on my behalf. I have not received a penny piece or any oil voucher from Iraq, directly or indirectly.

You would have thought that natural justice would have demanded that these allegations would have-- must have been!-- put to me, but they haven't been. Senator Joseph McCarthy would have proud of this committee.

On May 17, Galloway appeared before the US senatorial panel and vehemently denied any wrongdoing in a tone seldom used in a senatorial hearing. He accused the US administration of creating a "smoke screen" to divert attention away from the situation in Iraq. He also declared, "The biggest sanctions busters were not me or Russian politicians or French politicians. The real sanctions busters were your own companies with the connivance of your own government." He denied receiving any money out of the scheme, saying, "What counts is, where's the money, senator? Who paid me hundreds of thousands of dollars? The answer to that is nobody," while glaring toward US senator Norm Coleman (Republican from Minnesota), according to a New York Times report.

Charles Pasqua also denies any personal wrongdoing in the case and indicated he was "serene" and that he hoped that the investigations by the US Senate would probe the matter to the bottom. He judged the situation detrimental to relationships between the United States and France, and declared having, for this reason, asked the president of the French Senate for the creation of an investigation commission, wishing that the French and US senatorial commissions should collaborate.

He declared himself convinced that misconducts took place in the oil-for-food program, and that it was probable that some French people were involved; he then wished that they should be sought

and prosecuted. "If one wants to find the origin of the financial streams, one can do so". Mr Pasqua mentioned the Swiss company Genmar, which the US report alleges to have served as an intermediary for Mr Pasqua.

He denied information presented as facts in the report; for instance, he denied having met Tariq Aziz, former Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq.

Pasqua pointed out that nothing in the senatorial evidence indicates that he had benefited from vouchers, only that one of his former advisors, Bernard Guillet, had received oil allocations in his name. From December 2000 onwards, allocations meant for Pasqua ceased and were replaced by allocations to Bernard Guillet, who was arrested by France in April in connection with abuses under the oil-for-food program. Mr Guillet has been put under formal investigation for allegedly participating in a system of occult kickbacks and fees involving major French companies between 1996 and 2001, including Total. He is suspected of having received amounts of money without good explanation from an intermediary specialized in the resale of Iraqi oil.

French Workers stay at home for Whit Monday

In France, workers by the millions stayed at home during the Whit Monday holiday despite the government's cancellation of traditional Pentecost public holiday; some in defiance of the government's decision; some took leave or were put on forced leave by their employers due to uncertainties of public transportation.

Following the 2003 heat wave, which caused the deaths of an estimated 13,000 elderly people in France, the administration of prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin has proposed the suppression of one day of public holiday in order to use the supplemental generated tax for a fund for the caring of the elderly. Whit Monday was selected because, in normal years, France has several public holidays in May;

furthermore, attendance of religious celebrations is low, so holidays of a religious origin are nowadays generally mere family reunions.

However, the reception of his new working day, which the administration says promotes solidarity with the elderly, was mixed. Trade unions and opposition groups argue that the measure is an ill-conceived stunt aimed at hiding the government's bad handling of the problems of the elderly. Many remember that, for instance, in 1956, the government created a tax (the vignette) on motor vehicles, allegedly for funding measures for the elderly; but in 1973, the products of this tax came, as any other tax, into the government's general fund.

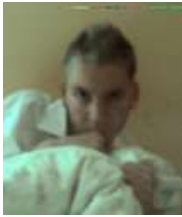
The government will raise 2 billion € with this measure, which will be donated to a new public establishment, the "national fund for solidarity for autonomy", chartered to deal with losses of self-sufficiency of elderly or handicapped people. 1.2 billion € are earmarked for elderly people, 0.8 for the handicapped.

Trade unions had called for strikes in urban public transportation and paralyzed traffic in 27 cities, including Clermont-Ferrand, Lille, Montpellier ou Strasbourg. However, SNCF (the national railway operator) did not strike and RATP (the Paris transportation authority) suffered only minor disturbances, though both are normally known for their frequent and disturbing strikes. SNCF considered the day as a holiday for payroll purposes and instead increased the work day by 1'52", a measure that majority leader Nicolas Sarkozy considered shocking and contrary to the objectives of the government.

The protests are also widely considered to be motivated by the unpopularity of the administration of president Jacques Chirac and prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin. Recent statistics show a five year-high for unemployment at 10.2%. This discontentment may result in a majority of "no" in the vote for the ratification of the Treaty establishing a

Constitution for Europe.

"Do you know this pianist?" asks helpline



On April 8, 2005, police picked up a man wandering the streets of Sheerness, United Kingdom soaking wet, as if having been in the sea, wearing a formal black suit and white shirt with all labels removed.

He has not spoken a word since he was found, but when given pencil and paper he drew the flag of Sweden and a piano. Seeing the picture of the piano, the medical staff at the Medway Maritime Hospital where he was admitted showed him the piano in the hospital chapel, whereupon to their amazement he sat at it and played classical music for several hours.

Many press reports have emphasized the piano playing, and the man has been labelled "The Piano Man" by many news services. However, the chaplain of the hospital, the Reverend Steve Spencer, said the man "is not the virtuoso that he has been portrayed in the press. He knows a small number of tunes and plays them over and over. I recognized some John Lennon and a snippet from Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake."

The National Missing Persons Helpline is appealing to anyone who recognizes the man to contact Teri on +44 20 8392 4509. All calls will be treated as confidential. The NMPH can also be reached at +44 500 700700. Emails can also be sent to id@missingpersons.org.

According to his social worker, a second lead as to the man's identity is being followed, a first lead, based upon the Swedish flag, having petered out.

Another lead is from a Polish man who claims that the man is a French street

musician he worked with in Nice named Steven Villa Masson.

A Wikinews contributor believes that the person referenced is an acquaintance of his named Geoffrey Betts. He is an actor who is a citizen of the UK. He has lived much of his life in the Dallas, Texas area and has spent some time recently in Louisville, Kentucky. A visual comparison of the person in the various news articles can be compared to Geoff's website (listed in External links below). The source reported his findings to the UK authorities several hours before this posting.

At this time, no leads have been verified.

Sony unveils Playstation 3



On Monday, President and CEO of Sony Ken Kutaragi unveiled the next generation of the Playstation game console. The console is based on IBM's Cell processor, containing nine separate processing cores, eight of which will run at 3.2 Ghz. The Playstation 3 will contain six USB 2.0 ports and be compatible with a maximum of seven controllers through Bluetooth technology. The console will use Blue-ray DVD technology, with which a single disc can hold as much as 50 gigabytes. The console will also be able to play MP3s and display digital photographs.

Last week, there was a leak of details regarding Microsoft's next console, the Xbox 360, and Nintendo is expected to show off the Nintendo Revolution as part of the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) next week. The Xbox 360 contains the same processor as the Playstation 3, with three cores, also running at 3.2 Ghz.

The Playstation 3 will be available in white, black, or silver and will be available in the spring of 2006.

BBC begins trial program allowing legal TV and radio downloads



The BBC announced yesterday (16 May 2005) a trial of their new Interactive Media Player (iMP). Five thousand participants from across the UK were selected for this trial. Participants in the trial will be able to download selected BBC television and radio programmes. Approximately 190 hours of TV shows and 310 hours of radio programmes will be available for download. Some feature films and local programming will also be available.

Ashley Highfield, BBC director of new media and technology has said this program "Could just be the iTunes for the broadcast industry, enabling our audience to access our TV and radio programmes on their terms - anytime, any place, any how."

The BBC is funded by a mandatory licence fee on all televisions in the UK. The fee is £126.50 a year for colour TV and £42 a year for monochrome TV.

Pop starlette Kylie Minogue has early-stage breast cancer

Pop starlette Kylie Minogue has announced through her management that she has early stage of breast cancer. The 36-year-old has said she will be going through the treatment in her native Australia. Due to early diagnosis the singer stands a good chance of making a full recovery.

Kylie, who had spent the past week in Melbourne, has revealed that due to the cancer the rest of her Showgirl tour of Australia will be postponed and her appearance at this year's Glastonbury festival will be cancelled.

The Showgirl tour was due to hit Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth in June. However despite the cancellation, ticket holders are advised to hang on to tickets as new dates may be announced.

Microsoft develops anti-virus product



Microsoft Corporation announced plans later this year to launch a new security product, named Windows OneCare. Product features include anti-virus software capabilities, a new firewall and PC tune ups. The PC tune ups include utilities for improved backup and restore capabilities, and easy access to Windows PC maintenance tools for file repair and hard drive clean up.

The major elements of product are:
 A firewall, that (unlike Windows Firewall but like third party personal firewall products for Windows), prevents unauthorized programs from making outgoing connections
 Anti-spyware, based upon Microsoft Anti-spyware
 Virus protection, based upon technology bought by Microsoft from the Romanian firm GeCAD
 Scheduled disc cleanup and defragmentation.
 Automatic backup to writable CD or DVD.

An early beta version of product, not including the anti-spyware capability, has already been released to Microsoft employees, and a public beta is scheduled for later in 2005.

Windows OneCare will be available to customers for a yearly subscription fee.

Star Wars III premieres at Cannes



The final Star Wars film, Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith premiered at the Cannes Festival on May 15, 2005, with George Lucas and the stars of the movie in attendance at the Grand Theatre Lumiere.

At the subsequent United Kingdom premiere on May 16, 2005, fans turned out in costume. Outside London's Odeon cinema in Leicester Square, dozens of fans dressed as storm troopers, Jedi knights, and other characters for the film.

The movie is about the temptation of a Jedi knight to the Dark Side of the force, and his fiery transformation into the arch-villain Darth Vader.

Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith is scheduled for general release in the United States on May 19, 2005, and is rated PG-13.

Reactions from film critics
 Peter Bradshaw from The Guardian described the climax of the film as following "what seems like seven hours of CGI action as dramatically weightless as the movement of tropical fish in an aquarium", where the leading characters "gaze out over massive futuristic cityscapes resembling the photorealistic artwork once used for 1970s sci-fi paperbacks: pointy buildings with swarms of pointy aircraft criss-crossing overhead, often bathed in crimson sunsets". He described Ewan McGregor's accent as "a simpering lifeless Rada-English accent, a muddled and misconceived backdating of the Guinness original", and said of Hayden Christensen that "If Princess Diana had gone to the Dark Side, she would have looked a lot like this". Describing Jimmy Smits, and Samuel L. Jackson as "acting

as if on some kind of medication", Natalie Portman as "incorrigibly clunky", he concluded that the film was "a product of George Lucas's overweening production giant Industrial Light and Magic. No magic, little light, but an awful lot of heavy industry."

Wendy Ide from The Times commented that "any spark of humour or irreverence that might have been present in the earlier films has been all but extinguished", accused the film of being carpeted by "a bombastic and overbearing" musical score, and concluded that the film was "a textbook example of style over substance and, more importantly, soul".

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Mikhail Khodorkovsky speaking at an Open Russia forum.

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As the court was announcing the final decision on the fate of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, hundreds of people gathered near the court house to voice their opinion on the matter. A rally was supported by several Russian political parties and groups, including Union of Right Forces, Yabloko, Oborona, Pora!, Smena and others. Among the people who attended the meeting were Garry Kasparov and Irina Khakamada. The total number of participants, according to officials is estimated at 700 people. The involved parties claim around 1000.

The crowd was standing in front of the court house, waving flags of political groups mentioned above and chanting political slogans aimed at the allegedly unfair trial and at the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. Among the chants were:

"Svobodu!" (Freedom [to Khodorkovsky]) - listen
"Misha go home" (Misha being the short form of Mikhail)
"One, two, three, Putin go away"
"Doloi vlast chekistov" (Down with the chekists' authority, referring to Putin's KGB past) - listen

Some passing by cars expressed their solidarity with the crowds by sound signalling, which crowd appreciated with louder chanting. Some activists rode passing by trams and trolleybuses, waving "Freedom to MBKh" tees and flags from the windows.

The meeting lasted for two hours, until police ordered the crowds to go away. Many refused, and militsia had to resort to force. 30 people were arrested, including some organizers, and some of them severely beaten.

Today in History provided by Wikipedia:

1268 - Baibars and his Mamluk forces captured Antioch, capital of the crusader state, the Principality of Antioch.
1896 - The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the landmark case Plessy v. Ferguson, upholding the legality of racial segregation in public transportation.
1944 - World War II: The Battle of Monte Cassino ended with a German evacuation of Monte Cassino.
1958 - A supersonic interceptor aircraft, F-104 Starfighter, set a world speed record of 1,404.19 mph.
1980 - Mount St. Helens erupted in Washington, killing 57 people and causing US\$3 billion in damages.

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