



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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ECONOMY SKIDS TO NEAR HALT

February 28, 2008 The Associated Press reported: "The economy skidded to a near halt in the final quarter of last year, clobbered by dual slumps in housing and credit that caused people and businesses to spend and invest more sparingly.

The Commerce Department reported Thursday that the gross domestic product increased at a scant 0.6 percent pace in the October-to-December quarter. The reading -- unchanged from an initial estimate a month ago -- underscored just how much momentum the economy has lost. In the prior quarter, the economy clocked in at a brisk 4.9 percent pace.

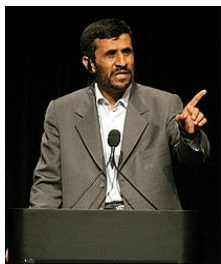
Gross domestic product measures the value of all goods and services produced in the United States and is the best barometer of the country's economic health.

"The economy just kept its head above water," said Nigel Gault, economist at Global Insight. Economists had thought the newly released fourth-quarter GDP would have been bumped up to a 0.8 percent growth rate. But the housing picture looked even more bleak in the new report. Builders slashed spending on housing projects by a whopping 25.2 percent on an annualized basis in the fourth quarter, the biggest cut in 26 years.

And even though economic growth slowed, inflation picked up -- an ominous mix that could spell further trouble for the economy. As if the newly confirmed fourth-quarter GDP figure of 0.6 percent wasn't chilling enough, the Labor Department reported Thursday that new applications for unemployment insurance benefits rose by 19,000 to 373,000 last week, more evidence that the general economic sluggishness is spilling over into the job market."..."

IRAN 'NUMBER ONE WORLD POWER': AHMADINEJAD

February 28, 2008 SpaceWar.com reported: "President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared on Thursday that Iran was the world's "number one" power, as he launched a bitter new assault on domestic critics he accused of siding with the enemy.



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

"Everybody has understood that Iran is the number one power in the world," Ahmadinejad said in a speech to families who lost loved ones in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

"Today the name of Iran means a firm punch in the teeth of the powerful and it puts them in their place," added Ahmadinejad, who on Sunday will become the first president of the Islamic republic to visit neighbouring Iraq.

Ahmadinejad's comments come amid renewed Western efforts on the UN Security Council to agree a third package of sanctions against Tehran over its refusal to suspend sensitive nuclear activities.

They also came a day after former top nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani launched an unprecedented attack on Ahmadinejad's foreign policy, accusing him of using "coarse slogans and grandstanding".

"You can see how some people here... try to materialise the plans of the enemies and by showing that Iran is small and the enemy is big," seethed Ahmadinejad. "These are the people who put the enemies of humanity in the place of God," said the deeply religious president.

Ahmadinejad once again insisted that Iran was winning the standoff over its atomic programme, which the West fears could be used to make nuclear weapons but Iran says is peaceful.

"The Iranian nation is on the verge of the final nuclear victory and no power can stop this nation."...

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who this week congratulated Ahmadinejad for his role in Iran's nuclear case, said that Islamic countries do not need US approval to achieve great works."..."



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

DRUG-RESISTANT TB AT ALL-TIME HIGH: WHO

February 28, 2008 CBC News reported: "Drug-resistant tuberculosis is on the increase, with highest-ever rates being reported around the world, according to a report published by the World Health Organization.

"TB drug resistance needs a frontal assault," said Dr. Mario Raviglione, director of the WHO's Stop TB Department, in a release. "If countries fail to address it aggressively now we will lose this battle."

The report, released Tuesday, is based on data from 81 countries and 90,000 TB patients, and was collected between 2002 and 2006.

Forty-five of those countries were found to have extensively drug-resistant TB, which is a form of tuberculosis that is almost completely untreatable. The WHO estimates that there are nearly half a million new cases of multi drug-resistant TB a year worldwide — which account for five per cent of nine million new TB cases of all varieties.

Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, has the highest rate of multi drug-resistant TB, accounting for 22.3 per cent of all TB cases.

Canada has experienced low levels of drug-resistant TB and relatively steady trends in resistance among both new and previously-treated

cases of TB, according to the report. In 2005, 23 multi drug-resistant TB cases were identified, the study finds.

The study also found a correlation between HIV and multi drug-resistant TB, with HIV patients in Latvia and the Ukraine having nearly twice the level of drug-resistant TB as those without HIV.”...”

KILLER MILITARY ROBOTS POSE LATEST THREAT TO HUMANITY

February 27, 2008 SpaceWar.com reported: “A robotics expert at the University of Sheffield issued stark warnings over the threat posed to humanity by new robot weapons being developed by powers worldwide.

In a keynote address to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Professor Noel Sharkey, from the University's Department of Computer Science, expressed his concerns that we are beginning to see the first steps towards an international robot arms race. He warned that it may not be long before robots become a standard terrorist weapon to replace the suicide bomber.

Many nations are now involved in developing the technology for robot weapons, with the US Department of Defence (DoD) being the most significant player. According to the Unmanned Systems Roadmap 2007-2013 (published in December 2007), the US propose to spend an estimated \$4 billion by 2010 on unmanned systems technology. The total spending is expected to rise above \$24 billion.

Over 4,000 robots are currently deployed on the ground in Iraq and by October 2006 unmanned aircraft had flown 400,000 flight hours. Currently there is always a human in the loop to decide on the use of lethal force. However, this is set to change with the US giving priority to autonomous weapons - robots that will decide on where, when and who to kill.

Others are now embarking on robot weapons programmes in Europe and other allied countries such as Canada, South Korea, South Africa, Singapore and Israel. China, Russia and India are also embarking on the development of unmanned aerial combat vehicle. The US DoD report is unsure about the activity in China but admits that they have strong infrastructure capability for parallel developments in robot weapons.

Professor Sharkey, who is famously known for his roles as chief judge on the TV series Robot Wars and as onscreen expert for the BBC's TechnoGames, said: "The trouble is that we can't really put the genie back in the bottle. Once the new weapons are out there, they will be fairly easy to copy. How long is it going to be before the terrorists get in on the act"

"With the current prices of robot construction falling dramatically and the availability of ready-made components for the amateur market, it wouldn't require a lot of skill to make autonomous robot weapons."

Professor Sharkey is reluctant to explain how such robots could be made but he points out that a small GPS guided drone with autopilot could be made for around 250 pounds.

The robotics expert is also concerned with a number of ethical issues that arise from the use of autonomous weapons. He added: "Current robots are dumb machines with very limited sensing capability. What this means is that it is not possible to guarantee discrimination between combatants and innocents or a proportional use of force as required by the current Laws of War.”...”

INDIA UNDERSEA MISSILE TEST SUCCESSFUL

February 26, 2008 The Times of India reported: “India has successfully test fired its first-ever undersea nuclear capable ballistic missile off the eastern coast of Vishakhapatnam, catapulting it to the select band of five countries equipped with the technology. The missile K-15, with a range of 700 kms, was test fired from a pontoon immersed in the sea at 1258 hours.

"The test firing was successful," sources said, as DRDO awaited the final evaluations from warships in the sea. The test was done from a submerged pontoon as India does not have a submarine capable of firing such missiles, official sources said.

Chief Controller of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) S Prahlada had said recently that it would need just one test to ratify the missile, which would form the main armament of the country's indigenously made nuclear submarine.”

RECORD-HIGH RATIO OF AMERICANS IN PRISON

February 28, 2008 MyWay.com reported: “For the first time in U.S. history, more than one of every 100 adults is in jail or prison, according to a new report documenting America's rank as the world's No. 1 incarcerator. It urges states to curtail corrections spending by placing fewer low-risk offenders behind bars.

Using state-by-state data, the report says 2,319,258 Americans were in jail or prison at the start of 2008 - one out of every 99.1 adults. Whether per capita or in raw numbers, it's more than any other nation.

The report, released Thursday by the Pew Center on the States, said the 50 states spent more than \$49 billion on corrections last year, up from less than \$11 billion 20 years earlier. The rate of increase for prison costs was six times greater than for higher education spending, the report said.”...”

*Compiled by L. Jim Tuck, Pastor
UCGIA Oakland, San Jose, and Santa Rosa
ljt5053@sbcglobal.net*