

Current Events #11—

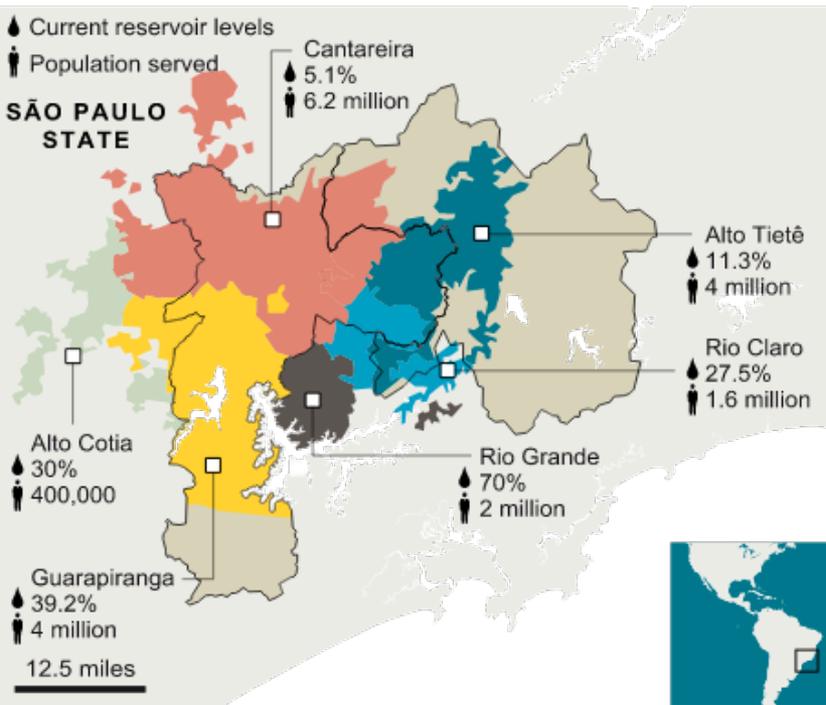
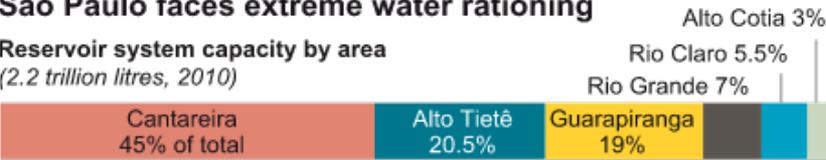


South America

The Tap is Empty

Sao Paulo faces extreme water rationing

Reservoir system capacity by area
(2.2 trillion litres, 2010)



Sources: Graphic News, Sabesp state water utility, Folha de Sao Paulo, Stratfor

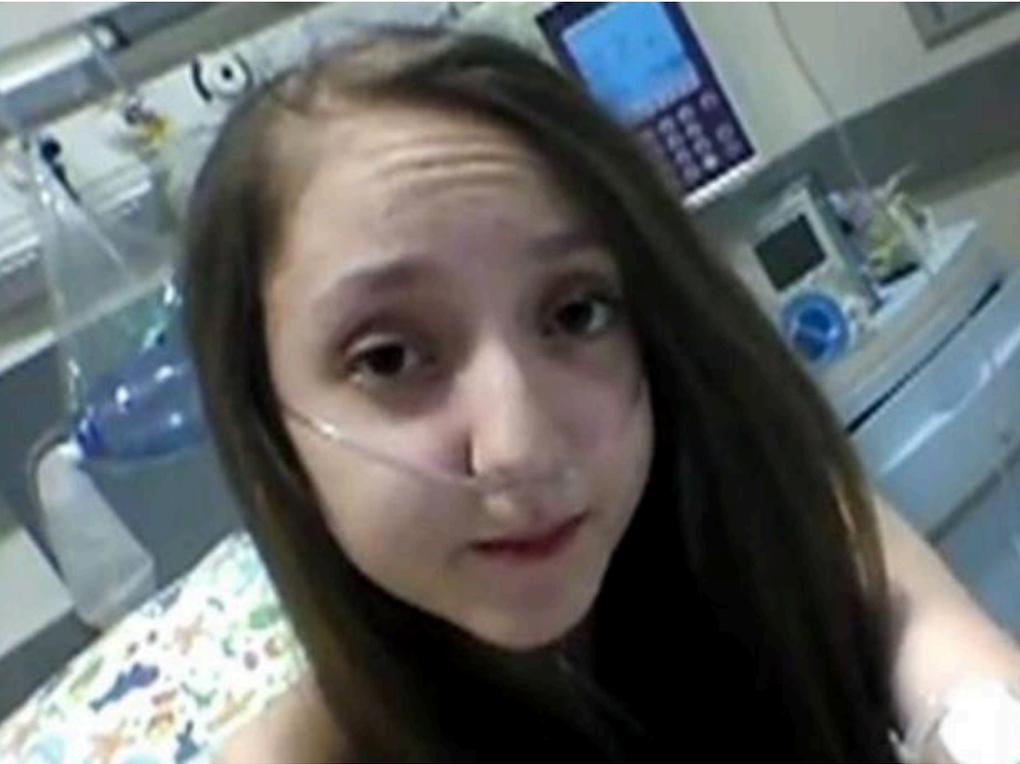
Brazil may have the world's biggest water supply and the seventh biggest economy, but that's not enough to keep water running during the country's worst dry stretch since the 1930s.

Despite Brazil having the largest water supply in the world, one of the main reservoir networks in São Paulo, the Cantareira system, is at just 10 per cent including deep reserves known as the "dead volume".

Families and businesses began reporting reduced pressure and empty taps last year but water restrictions have tightened since the turn of the year failed to bring rain.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/brazil/11428718/Taps-run-dry-in-Brazils-biggest-city-as-drought-bites.html>

Fatal Request



A video of a 14-year-old Chilean girl with cystic fibrosis asking to be allowed to die has captured attention across the Spanish-speaking world and launched a debate about the right-to-die movement in a region with strong Catholic influence.

“I am asking to speak urgently to the president because I am tired of living with this disease, and she can authorize the injection to put me to sleep forever,” said a teary-eyed Valentina Maureira, addressing Chilean President Michelle Bachelet.

Cystic fibrosis—a genetic disorder that causes problems in the respiratory, digestive and reproductive systems—is a terminal illness that typically results in death in a person’s 30s. In Chile, one in 8,000 newborns has been diagnosed with the disease in recent years, the BBC reported.

<http://time.com/3724216/cystic-fibrosis-chile/>

Natural Costs



IOC President Thomas Bach came to Rio de Janeiro to laud the city's progress in getting ready for the 2016 Olympics. On Saturday, he came up against another side of the games — activists bursting into his hotel lobby to protest what they call environmental destruction brought on by the games.

As Bach and his executive board were wrapping up a 2 ½-day meeting in Rio, a small group of protesters gathered outside the luxury hotel at Copacabana Beach holding signs that read "Thomas Bach is a nature killer" and "The city is not for sale."

The protesters were seeking to call attention to the numerous ecological issues associated with the games, including the construction of a golf course in what had been a nature reserve, and the severe water pollution in Guanabara Bay, the venue for Olympic sailing.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/olympics/2015/02/28/rio-ruckus-ioc-olympics-targeted-by-environmental-protest/24176619/>

Shepard Found



Victor Arden Barnard, an American pastor wanted for 59 counts of sexual assaults in Minnesota, was arrested by Brazilian authorities on Friday, the office of the governor for the State of Rio Grande do Norte said Saturday.

The 53-year-old suspect was wanted by the Pine County, Minnesota, Sheriff's Office for allegedly sexually abusing two young girls who were members of his church, the U.S Marshals Service said.

Barnard -- who was featured on CNN's "The Hunt With John Walsh" in 2014 and again earlier this week -- was last seen in the United States in Raymond, Washington, in 2014.

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/28/us/victor-barnard-brazil-caught/index.html>

Non-Lethal?



The killing of a 14-year-old boy by a policeman during an anti-government protest is raising already high tensions in Venezuela amid a crackdown on the opposition and crippling economic problems.

The student, identified as Kluiverth Roa, was shot in the head and killed Tuesday during a confrontation between police and protesters in San Cristobal, the capital of a restive western state.

What started as a small demonstration against the socialist government grew into a larger protest as night fell in San Cristobal, with shops closing their doors and public transportation stopping routes in anticipation of unrest

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/venezuela/11433654/Venezuelan-14-year-old-killed-during-anti-government-protest.html>

Thar She Blows



One of South America's most active volcanoes erupted early Tuesday in southern Chile, spewing heavy smoke into the air as lava surged down its slopes, prompting authorities to evacuate thousands of people.

The 9,000 foot (2,847-meter) volcano in Chile's central valley, 400 miles (670 kilometers) south of Santiago, sits above the small city of Pucon, which has a population of about 22,000 people.

<http://news.yahoo.com/volcano-southern-chile-erupts-thousands-evacuated-112232682.html>

Tweet! Time-Out



The recently appointed U.S. special envoy to Colombian peace talks met with government and rebel negotiators for the first time on Sunday, holding separate sessions with each side, a Colombian government official said.

Cuba is also hosting the peace talks, in which the Colombian government and leftist FARC guerrillas are trying to end Latin America's longest war, which has killed more than 200,000 people since 1964.

Aronson, who was previously involved in peace efforts in Nicaragua and El Salvador, met first with Colombian government negotiator Humberto de la Calle and later with rebel leaders of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.

<http://news.yahoo.com/u-special-envoy-meets-colombian-peace-teams-first-015458416.html>

Cannot Wipe with Crude



Trinidad and Tobago has offered its Venezuelan neighbour a deal: Toilet paper in exchange for oil.

It sounds a little too good to be true for the Caribbean country of 1.2 million people, with some labelling the deal “humiliating” for Venezuela.

First milk, butter, coffee and cornmeal ran short but now the country lacks sufficient supplies of many basic products.

Venezuela has the world’s second largest oil reserves behind Saudi Arabia and relies heavily on the natural resource. It makes up 95 per cent of the nation’s exports revenue and close to a quarter of gross domestic product.

So it’s no surprise it has been impacted by the global downturn in the price of oil. Amid a growing rate of inflation and a contracting economy, Venezuelans have been faced with widespread shortages of necessities.

<http://www.news.com.au/finance/economy/commodity-swap-for-venezuelan-oil-offered-by-trinidad-and-tobago/story-e6frflo9-1227242972132>

Covered Up?



More than 400,000 people demanding justice marched in symbolic silence Wednesday in soaking Buenos Aires to mark a month since the suspicious death of a prosecutor who was ready to accuse the Argentine president of a massive cover-up.

Nisman was found in his Buenos Aires apartment with a bullet through his head on January 18, the day before he was to go before a congressional hearing to air his finding that Kirchner and her foreign minister plotted to shield Iranian officials implicated in the bombing of the AMIA Jewish-Argentine charity federation.

Eighty-five people were killed and more than 300 injured in the attack, the deadliest in Argentina's history - and one that has yet to be solved 21 years later.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/argentina/11421818/More-than-400000-rally-in-Buenos-Aires-over-prosecutors-death.html>

Latin China?



Latin America is China's latest business buddy. Chinese banks increased investments in Latin America by 71% last year, and the country plans to double its trade volume with the Central and South American region over the next decade.

This comes as U.S. power in the Americas is starting to erode. U.S. cash is actually fleeing the region as investors see better deals at home or elsewhere.

Outside of economic ties, Berman points out that China has helped fund Argentina's nuclear power plant, launched Bolivia's first satellite and is rumored to be helping Venezuela start its own drone program.

<http://money.cnn.com/2015/03/04/news/economy/china-latin-america-relations-united-states/>

No Soup for You



Venezuela is due to begin installing about 20,000 fingerprint scanners at supermarkets across the country, as part of its introduction of rationing.

President Nicolas Maduro said the system would reduce food hoarding and panic buying.

Over the last year there have been long queues at supermarkets because of widespread shortages of basic goods.

Mr Maduro said the shortages were due to manipulation of the food supply and prices.

The president announced that seven major retailers have agreed to install the scanners in stores.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-31791878>

Where's the Beef?



In the 1930s, Argentina was the world's top exporter of beef. It lost that crown in the 1950s, but until 10 years ago it still ranked third. Today it has fallen to 13th, largely as a result of government meddling in the industry.

Argentina's shrunken beef industry speaks to a wider malaise in a country that has for decades squandered much of its natural advantages through shortsighted policies. At the turn of the last century, Argentina appeared destined for success. It was one of the wealthiest countries in the world, blessed with natural resources and a well-educated population. Instead it became a byword for economic mismanagement and political crises. In 2001, it defaulted on \$82 billion in bonds, the biggest sovereign default in history, and then stiffed foreign bondholders again in 2014. From the expropriation of pension funds to runaway inflation, the nation continually belies the potential it once seemed to have.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/2015/0308/Where-s-the-beef-How-Argentina-humbled-a-once-mighty-economy>

Disappearing Act



Charles Darwin was a wet-behind-the-ears divinity school graduate when he was tapped to keep the company of a depressed sea captain named FitzRoy on a ship called the Beagle.

He noticed that the giant land tortoises of the Galapagos were being hunted to the brink but it didn't stop him from eating several on the voyage back to England.

In recent years, multimillion-dollar efforts to save the giant tortoise have included snipers in helicopters, gunning down a quarter-million invasive goats. To save an endangered mockingbird, there are plans to carpet-bomb an entire island with rat poison. And Galapagos National Park is wrestling to balance a demand for more tourism with a mission to leave these precious ecosystems alone.

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/01/travel/galapagos-bill-weir-twl/>

Irony of a Show's Title



A group of French sports stars participating in a reality TV show were among 10 people killed Monday when their helicopters collided in mid-air while filming in northwestern Argentina.

Olympic swimming gold medalist Camille Muffat, 25, Olympic boxer Alexis Vastine, 28, and champion sailor Florence Arthaud, 57, were among those killed when two helicopters filming the survival series Dropped crashed into each other in the rugged mountains of La Rioja province.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/argentina/11460541/French-Olympians-filming-reality-TV-survival-show-killed-in-helicopter-crash-in-Arentina.html>

The Next Revolution



Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff has signed a new law which sets tough new penalties for the killing of women and girls.

Murders linked to domestic violence will carry sentences of between 12 and 30 years.

In other cases - such as the killing of a pregnant woman, a woman who's just given birth, girls under 14, or women over 60 - the new law provides for even longer jail terms.

The new legislation alters the criminal code to describe femicide as any crime that involves domestic violence, contempt or discrimination against women.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-31810284>