



### Top Stories

#### World's biggest polluters won't cut back on fossil fuel

Six of the world's biggest polluting nations have pledged a multi-million dollar fund to develop cleaner energy, but stressed a heavy reliance on fossil-fuels for generations to come. Green groups, labelling this weeks "AP6" talks a sham, have condemned the summit as a "coal and nuclear pact" between big polluters and fossil-fuel firms.

#### Hundreds dead in Hajj stampede

According to the Saudi Interior Ministry over 345 Muslim pilgrims have been killed in a stampede during the final day of the annual Hajj pilgrimage near Mecca.

### Featured story

#### Chinese block of Wikimedia enters tenth week

China's block of the Wikimedia project, which includes Wikipedia, has entered into its tenth week. Beginning October 19, this is the third such block, upsetting students and researchers who state that it is having a significant impact on their ability to conduct research, and even pass civil service exams.

### Wikipedia Current Events

- Ayman Al-Zawahiri may have been killed in a U.S. airstrike today in Pakistan. About 17 people are thought to have been killed.

### Wikipedia Current Events

- Augustine Volcano in Alaska erupted for the first time in almost two decades.

#### John Kitzhaber Oregon 2006 Gubernatorial Race Decision

Former Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber announced today that he will not enter the 2006 Gubernatorial Race. The Democrat stated that he felt he could do more by pushing for reforms in the United States health care system through a grass roots campaign.

Kitzhaber served two terms as governor of Oregon from 1995 through 2003 and was succeeded by Governor Ted Kulongoski. Kulongoski, who is also a Democrat, has received mixed reviews during his first term as governor. Some had been urging Kitzhaber to enter the race to reenergize Democrats who have become unsatisfied with the current administration.

During a speech at a homeless shelter, Kitzhaber said, ""At least at this point in time, I can make the greatest entrance not by entering a campaign for Governor but by launching a campaign to change the American health care system and by offering people an opportunity to engage around an idea, not just a candidate."

#### Thai civil rights lawyer Somchai Neelapaichit presumed dead

Prominent Thai civil rights lawyer, Somchai Neelapaichit, is now

presumed dead, according to an admission by the country's Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra.

Somchai rose to prominence as a lawyer defending Muslim people accused of involvement in the troubles in the predominantly Muslim provinces of southern Thailand. According to the information provided by the PM, evidence has been provided to the Department of Special Investigations that leads them to believe the lawyer is now dead. This is not considered news by the journalist's family, according to his wife the country's Prime Minister admitted to her last year that her husband was dead, and gave assurances that action would be taken against those responsible.

Thailand's DSI became involved with the disappearance of Somchai in July 2005 when allegations were made that police were involved with the lawyer vanishing. His involvement in cases related to the southern insurgency was suspected to have been behind his disappearance. Somchai had lodged appeals with the Bangkok Criminal Court on behalf of five suspects accused of being involved in a raid on a Narathiwat armoury where weapons were siezed and soldiers killed, alleging that they had not been given fair treatment during their prosecution.

The admission follows on from the conviction of Police Major, Nguen Thongsuk, who was prosecuted for illegally detaining the lawyer in 2004. Following that he was last

seen in public in March 2004. In the case against the police four other officers were acquitted.

### **German intelligence participated in U.S. bombing of Iraq, media alleges**

The Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) helped the U.S. military during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, ARD's *Panorama* magazine and the *Los Angeles Times* concordantly reported on Thursday.

According to their information, two agents of the BND stayed in Baghdad during the war even after the German embassy was evacuated on March 17, 2003. A former "high-ranking official" in the U.S. Department of Defense told *Panorama* that the agents helped to track down targets throughout the Iraqi capital for the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) as they didn't have enough reliable sources in Baghdad. A BND official, also speaking on condition of anonymity, told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that there was "no dumbness between the BND and DIA" during that time and that it was part of the BND's "job" in Iraq to identify "non targets" like hospitals or embassies. He said this was authorized by the chancellor's office.

The Pentagon informant of *Panorama* however said that the German agents were much more involved. A common saying during the war was supposedly: "Do we have anything from the Germans?". According to him, they drove to a restaurant in Mansur district of Baghdad on April 6th where Saddam Hussein was assumed to be dining. The BND agents reported back to the DIA that many Mercedes cars were parking there. As those cars were

presumed to be of Saddam Hussein, the U.S. military conducted an air strike on the location. Hussein escaped, but twelve civilians were killed.

The BND confirmed that two of its agents operated in Iraq during the war but denied all other reports. A spokesperson told *Panorama* that it's agency "did not provide target information or target coordinates to the warfaring parties." The intelligence committee of the Bundestag exculpated the BND. Its chair Norbert Röttgen said that the in secret sitting committee, controlled by government parties, concluded with two-third majority that there are no indications that the agents aided the U.S. in selecting targets.

German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier called the accusations "schizophrenic" while opposition parties are demanding an parliamentary investigation committee. And during a visit of German chancellor Merkel to the White House, U.S. president Bush said in a response to a reporter's question whether he knew anything about the allegations: "The truth of the matter is, the Chancellor brought this up this morning. I had no idea what she was talking about. The first I heard of it was this morning, truthfully".

### **Homeland Security helps secure open-source code**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has dedicated \$1.24 million in funding in its effort to protect open-source software. Stanford University, Coverity and Symantec have all taken up the challenge to perform daily scans of code, hunting for security bugs. An automated system to achieve this search will be in place by March '06.

### **"Genius" award recipient and other luminaries campaigning for worldwide renunciation of war**

In a recent ZNet Commentary, Howard Zinn wrote that a group of people, including Gino Strada, Paul Farmer, Kurt Vonnegut, Nadine Gordimer, and Eduardo Galeano, are promoting the creation of world-wide gatherings to renounce war. Their intention, according to Zinn, is to make world-wide renunciation of war so popular that halting existing wars and preventing the beginning of new wars is politically irresistible.

In his article, *After This War*, Zinn asks, "should we not think beyond this war? Should we begin to think, even before this shameful war is over, about ending our addiction to massive violence, and using the enormous wealth of our country for human needs?" He goes on to talk of ending not just "this war or that war but war itself. Perhaps the time has come to bring an end to war, and turn the human race onto a path of health and healing."

The five people have been actively involved in global issues for many years and have a solid track record of accomplishments on the world stage.

Dr. Gino Strada is a war surgeon and the founder of Emergency, a nonprofit, humanitarian organization dedicated to providing assistance to civilian victims of war. His recent book *Green Parrots: A War Surgeon's Diary* helped persuade Italy to abandon the use and manufacture of a flying anti-personnel mine.

Dr. Paul Farmer is a Harvard professor and practicing physician. In 1987, he helped found the world-wide health organization

Partners in Health, which treats some of the poorest people on earth. Dr. Paul Farmer has received a "genius" award from the MacArthur Foundation.

Kurt Vonnegut is an American writer and humanist, currently serving as Honorary President of the American Humanist Association. As a WWII prisoner of war in Dresden, Germany, Kurt witnessed the fire bombing of Dresden. This event formed the core of his book, *Slaughterhouse-Five*. In a column for *In These Times*, he began "... our leaders are power-drunk chimpanzees ... the morale of our soldiers fighting and dying in the Middle East ... like so many bodies, is already shot to pieces. They are being treated, as I never was, like toys a rich kid got for Christmas."

Nadine Gordimer from South Africa received the 1991 Nobel Prize in literature and 1974 Booker Prize. She received worldwide praise for her leadership for South Africa to re-examine and replace its long held racist policy of apartheid.

Eduardo Galeano's books combine history, political analysis, journalism and fiction. "I'm a writer obsessed with remembering, with remembering the past of America ... condemned to amnesia. *The Open Veins of Latin America* is one of Galeano's works covering the exploitation of Latin America by foreign powers from the 15th century onwards.

Both Nadine and Eduardo's books are recognized by the Great Books Foundation as among the top 40 books in *Citizens of the World: Readings in Human Rights*. *We Say No* by Eduardo Galeano and *Comrades* by Nadine Gordimer are listed there along with the

*Emancipation Proclamation of Abraham Lincoln, Independence by Mahatma Gandhi, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Letter from Birmingham Jail by Martin Luther King Jr.*

Howard Zinn is a U.S. historian, political scientist and author of fifteen books. Howard writes, "In a world of clashing interests—war against peace, nationalism against internationalism, equality against greed, and democracy against elitism— it seems to me both impossible and undesirable to be neutral in those conflicts. I do not claim to be neutral, nor do I want to be... I will try to be fair to opposing ideas by accurately representing them."

**Iran nuclear talks have stalled**  
Senior Iranian diplomats still hope for a diplomatic solution to the current stand off between the United Nations and the resumption of its nuclear development program to enrich uranium. The National Security Council spokesman for Iran, Hossein Entezami, said Thursday on a national broadcast that "Iran still believes diplomacy could be productive."

The UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan said after a Thursday telephone conversation with Ali Larijani, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, that they "are interested in serious and constructive negotiation but within a time frame."

The United States of America and Europe have grown increasingly concerned over Iran and its decision to resume full nuclear research.

Talks between Europe and Iran stalled late yesterday to a near standstill and the E.U. joined with

the U.S. in its decision to refer Iran to the UN for possible sanctions.

"Our talks with Iran have reached a dead end," the German foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, said at a news conference in Berlin Germany. "From our point of view, the time has come for the UN Security Council to become involved."

Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. Secretary of State, said that "Iran's actions have shattered the basis for negotiation."

When asked if military force was an option (in Iran) Rice said "The president of the United States never takes any of his options off the table and nobody would want the president to do that... We are on a diplomatic track and it's not on the agenda at this point to move from that diplomatic track."

Rice's comments have raised speculation that if all diplomatic negotiations with Iran fail, that military action might be a possibility.

Despite the criticism from America, Europe, and quite possibly Russia and China, to get Iran to reverse its current course, some diplomats and experts say that the process of getting Iran near that step may take a long time, and may never even work.

Iran's government continues to insist that its nuclear path is for "peaceful purposes." In a noted turn from Iran's use of aggressive language in defining their position on politically sensitive issue, Entezami said, "Iran pursues its nuclear research activities in the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency regulations and under the supervision of the

agency. So there is no reason for challenging Iran's rights in the field of nuclear fuel."

### **Turkish teens died of mutated strain of bird flu**

Scientists have confirmed that the H5N1 virus found in the DNA taken from one of two Turkish victims, who died from the disease, has mutated and they now believe that Turkey is now a locale for endemic bird flu.

However, the WHO, stressed that it is too early to tell if the mutation is important.

"We assume this could be one small step in the virus' attempt to adapt to humans," said Mike Perdue, a WHO virologist. "But it's only seen in one isolate and it's difficult to make sweeping conclusions. We just have to wait and see what the rest of the viruses from Turkey look like."

Health officials had raised the number of deaths from the H5N1 virus from 15 to 18 after after it turned up in preliminary tests on two people hospitalised in south-eastern Turkey, and in a girl's lungs after she died in the same area. It also has confirmed 147 human cases of the H5N1 virus worldwide and 78 deaths, though this includes only four infections and two deaths in Turkey.

All victims are thought to have had close contact with poultry.

Health officials suggest the virus can now attach itself more easily to human cells than before.

The mutation has been found in a mutated version of a key protein, haemagglutinin, which controls the way it binds to cells. This, scientists theorize, may be the key in making it more dangerous

to people. The mutation makes the virus more capable of attaching itself to human cells before infecting them. But experts said the mutation had been seen before without severe consequences.

Maria Cheng, a spokeswoman for the World Health Organisation, says, "It doesn't look as if it has significance regarding transmissibility or pathogenicity because it is not borne out by epidemiological evidence we have so far."

### **Distributed computing to get "interstellar project"**

NASA is awaiting the arrival of very precious cargo from space.

The Stardust Spacecraft is scheduled to land at around 5:12am (eastern time) on Sunday January 15, 2006. Onboard are dust particles that have been collected from the comet Wild 2.

When the capsule gets to Earth and enters the atmosphere, at about 5am (eastern time), it is expected to put on quite a light show for folks in Northern California, Oregon, Nevada, and Utah. The capsule will look much like a shooting star going across the sky. The capsule will be traveling at about 12.8 kilometers or 8 miles per second, fast enough to go from San Francisco to Los Angeles in one minute. Stardust will set a new all-time record for being the fastest spacecraft to return to Earth, breaking the previous record set in May of 1969 during the return of the Apollo X command module. "It will move over the west coast of northern California and will light the sky from California through central Oregon and on through Nevada and Idaho and into Utah," Tom Duxbury, Stardust's project

manager said. The capsule will then release a parachute approximately 32 kilometers (105,000 feet) and descend into the Salt Flats of Utah. If weather is permitting, it will be recovered by helicopter teams and taken to a cleanroom at the Michael Army Air Field, Dugway Proving Ground, for initial processing.

The capsule itself, only weighs 45.7 kilograms (101 pounds) and resembles a mini Apollo capsule.

Not only will it break the record for the fastest spacecraft to return to earth, Stardust Principal Investigator Don Brownlee of the University of Washington, Seattle, says "We are nearing the end of quite a fantastic voyage – our spacecraft has traveled further than anything from Earth ever has – and come back. He also added that "We went half-way to Jupiter to meet the comet and collect samples from it. But the comet actually came in from the outer edge of the solar system, out beyond the orbit of Neptune, out by Pluto."

If the capsule makes it safely back to earth, scientists hope to unlock many secrets about the formation of our universe.

"Locked within the cometary particles is unique chemical and physical information that could be the record of the formation of the planets and the materials from which they were made," said Dr. Don Brownlee, Stardust principal investigator at the University of Washington, Seattle.

"Comets are some of the most informative occupants of the solar system. The more we can learn from science exploration missions

like Stardust, the more we can prepare for human exploration to the moon, Mars and beyond," said Dr. Mary Cleave, associate administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate.

Stardust is bringing back the first samples of contemporary interstellar dust ever collected, and is also the first mission to return samples from a comet, as well as the first sample return mission from the Galaxy. Not one grain of contemporary interstellar dust grain has ever been examined in a laboratory before.

"We think a significant fraction of comets will be stardust particles actually older than Earth and older than the Sun, and for drama the stars, and the way you identify those is by their isotopic ratios," Stardust Principal Investigator Don Brownlee said. "There are fabulous tools now to analyze these and a very anxious group of scientists waiting for these samples."

Stardust's main mission was to capture dust particles from comet Wild 2, but it is also believed to have captured dust from distant stars, perhaps created in supernova explosions less than 10 million years ago.

The dust can only be found using using a high-magnification microscope with a field of view smaller than a grain of salt.

But now they have the difficult task of trying to find all these millions of particles, which takes more time and man power that NASA has. Thats where NASA decided to try Distributed Computing.

Distributed computing has been a huge success. Most of the credit of the success of distributed

computing, can be given to the scientists at the University of California, Berkeley. Scientists there have had and continue to have huge success with a program they created called SETI@home, which now uses the distributing platform BOINC.

With the success of BOINC and other distributed computing platforms, NASA hopes to achieve its goal in half the time with the public's help by creating the project Stardust@home

"Like SETI@home, which is the world's largest computer, we hope Stardust@home will also be a large computer, though more of a neural network, using brains together to find these grains," said Bryan Mendez of the Center for Science Education at the Space Sciences Laboratory.

But, the project is not for everyone. First, you will go through a web-based training session and then you must pass a test to qualify to register and participate. In the test, the volunteer is asked to find the track in a few test samples. To judge the reliability of the user, they also plan to throw in some ringers with and without tracks.

If at least two of the four volunteers viewing each image report a track, that image will be fed to 100 more volunteers for verification. If at least 20 of these report a track, UC Berkeley undergraduates who are expert at spotting dust grain tracks will confirm the identification.

After passing the test and registering, you will be able to download a virtual microscope (VM). The VM will automatically connect to their server and download so-called "focus movies"

-- stacks of images that we will collect from the Stardust Interstellar Dust Collector using an automated microscope at the Cosmic Dust Lab at Johnson Space Center. The VM will work on your computer, under your control. You will search each field for interstellar dust impacts by focusing up and down with a focus control.

The other neat thing is that there are no limitations and the more images you examine, the better chance you have at finding an interstellar dust grain.

Any interstellar dust paricles that you find, then you will appear as a co-author on any scientific paper by the Stardust@home collaboration announcing the discovery of the particle.

Currently the project is only accepting pre-registration and will be available to the public in mid-March, even before all the scans have been completed in a cleanroom at Houston's Johnson Space Center. In all the project is expected to need at least 30,000 person hours, to go through all the images, at least 4 times by 4 different participants.

Berkeley will host and maintain the project, but it is unclear as to whether or not the project will use the BOINC platform.

The virtual microscope was developed by computer scientist David Anderson, director of the SETI@home project, along with physics graduate student Joshua Von Korff.

The Stardust spacecraft was launched on February 7, 1999, from Cape Canaveral Air Station, Florida, aboard a Delta II rocket.

The Stardust project is expected to cost \$170-million-dollars with a journey that will have lasted over 7 years and actually went around the Sun three times, and "back in time to 4.5 billion years in time to gather these primitive samples that just were released from a comet's nucleus," Duxbury later added.

### **Australia accused of bullying East Timor over oil field treaty**

The Australian Federal Government has been accused of bullying and short-changing the tiny nation of East Timor (Timor-Leste). Australia and East Timor have signed a treaty to share revenue from the Greater Sunrise energy field located in the Timor Sea. The treaty means each country gets half the revenue from the area - but any further negotiations on maritime boundaries will be postponed for up to 50 years.

The treaty, signed in Sydney on January 12th was attended by Australian Prime Minister John Howard and his East Timorese counterpart Mari Alkatiri. The treaty is the culmination of long-running negotiations and bitter disputes between the two countries on how to split the \$40 billion resource.

East Timorese Prime Minister Dr Mari Alkatiri said the landmark agreement would provide a major boost to the nation's revenues - while protecting its territorial sovereignty. "I am confident this is for the benefit of the people," he said. Dr Alkatiri anticipated production may be up to 10 years away.

However, an Australian lobby group has vehemently attacked the failure to address, what they say, the bigger and more

important issue of permanent maritime boundaries. Timor Sea Justice Campaign (TSJC) spokesman Tom Clarke says the Australia government did not respect conventional maritime boundaries. He says the postponed decision on maritime boundaries means East Timor will not be able to gain control of their territory.

"The Australian Government has basically bullied the poorest country in Asia into postponing its claim to sovereignty," said Mr Clarke. "So a permanent maritime boundary will not be established under this deal - they're basically leaving that issue for future generations to negotiate."

Other non-government organisations (NGO's) have protested about Australia's exploitation in the disputed area. A communiqué signed by 12 East Timor NGO's stated that the maritime frontier with Australia should have been established first, before the exploration of resources began.

Australian energy giant Woodside Petroleum, operator of the Greater Sunrise project, has given no indication as to when the development might go ahead.

Company spokesman Roger Martin said there were still a few steps to go before the Greater Sunrise joint venture partners would be making any decisions on how to proceed.

Prime Minister John Howard believes the deal is a fair and just outcome and will strengthen relations between the two countries. "It means that the very close relationship between our two countries can not only continue but become even closer," he said.

But Tom Clarke (TSJC) has described the deal as a "stop gap, band-aid solution" - because nothing had been settled on the issue of maritime boundaries. "It simply postpones the real issues of sovereignty for half a century," he said. Mr Clarke said East Timor clearly had more claim over the energy field than Australia.

"The Australian Government has continually and blatantly refused to abide by International Law. Instead, it has bullied the poorest country in Asia into a series of dodgy resource sharing deals, to take billions of dollars that simply do not belong to us," he said.

The campaigners claim the deal marks another sad chapter of Australian foreign policy betrayal, saying the Howard Government is determined to increase Australia's reputation as a bully in the region. "This really should have been a very simple matter of just drawing a line half way between two coastlines, but once again the greed and self-interest of our, the Australian Government, has brought shame to all Australians who believe in a fair go," Mr Clarke said.

### **Turkish government accused of being too slow to respond to bird flu**

The Turkish government has come under fire from officials in Dogubayazit, where three siblings died from the H5N1 strain of Bird Flu, for not sending enough resources and not responding quickly enough in the region.

The mayor of Dogubayazit, Mikkades Kubilay, claims that the Turkish government sent only three doctors and that there were not enough workers to destroy poultry.

The government has been accused

of doing too little, too late. H5N1 was discovered in Turkish poultry in December, 2005.

Agriculture Minister Mehdi Eker dismissed the claim, saying that culling of infected poultry began immediately following the discovery of H5N1 on December 15, 2005.

Questions about whether the government acted aggressively enough early in the outbreak emerged as officials tried to contain the disease, which Eker said had been confirmed in 11 of Turkey's 81 provinces and was suspected in 14 others.

The number of confirmed human cases of H5N1 in Turkey is 18. Three of those have died from the virus.

Several others with the virus have shown few symptoms or are in a stable condition. Authorities suggest that the strain may not be as deadly as first thought. Of those who contracted the virus in Asia, half died.

An eight-year-old child who became infected after playing with dying chickens has been released from hospital.

Nationwide, 355,000 birds have been slaughtered in an attempt to slow the outbreak.

The Agricultural ministry is complaining that it has only 24 workers in Dogubayazit, a city of 56,000, and culling could take up to a month to complete.

Experts are still warning of a possible pandemic, prompting the world bank to release US\$500 million in aid to assist countries combat H5N1.

### Reggie Bush to go pro

USC Trojans running back Reggie Bush has decided to enter the NFL draft and forfeit his final year of college football eligibility. The Heisman Trophy winner is the favorite to be the top pick in the draft, in which case he would play for the Houston Texans.

Bush rushed for 1,740 yards during his final college season, and led the Trojans to the Rose Bowl. Quarterbacks Marcus Vick of the Virginia Tech Hokies and Vince Young of the Texas Longhorns are also likely to among the top draft picks this year.

### Today in History

- 1301 - The Árpád dynasty in Hungary ended.
  - 1639 - The Fundamental Orders, the first written constitution that created a government, was adopted in Connecticut.
  - 1954 - Joe DiMaggio married Marilyn Monroe.
  - 1972 - Queen Margrethe II, the current monarch of Denmark, ascended to the throne under a new act of succession.
  - 2004 - The national flag of Georgia, the so-called Five Cross Flag, was restored to official use after a hiatus of some 500 years.
- January 15 is Pongal (Tamil Nadu)

### Quote of the Day

"Not one of us knows what effect his life produces, and what he gives to others; that is hidden from us and must remain so, though we are often allowed to see some little fraction of it, so that we may not lose courage." ~ Albert Schweitzer

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