



Top Stories

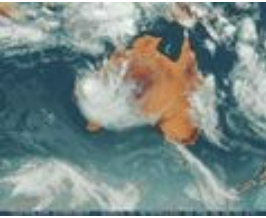
India and U.S.A. work toward nuclear fuel agreement



U.S. President Bush flies to meet with India's Prime Minister Singh, and they are expected to sign a last-minute

deal regarding nuclear fuel trade to India.

Cyclone Emma crosses West Australian coast



Emma was west of Karratha and northeast of Onslow, and

weakened below tropical cyclone strength after making land at 3:00 UTC. Widespread storms with heavy rains and flooding are expected as Emma continues south.

Featured story

Eva Hassett, VP of Savarino Construction Services Corp. answers questions on Buffalo, N.Y. hotel redesign



Eva Hassett VP of Savarino Construction confirms the Elmwood Village Hotel redesign

and talks about the changes and what happens next.

Wikipedia Current Events

•Sixty-eight people have been killed so far today in Baghdad, Iraq. Car bombs and mortar barrages rocked Baghdad streets, as news pundits speculate about the possibility of Iraq becoming embroiled in a full fledged civil war.

•Baghdad's primary morgue says that the death toll resulting from violence after the Al Askari Mosque bombing has surpassed 1,300, contrary to earlier information from most news media and the United States military.

•The London High Court grants the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, an order that delays a four-week suspension from his post ordered by an administrative tribunal last week.

•For the first time in Europe, a domesticated cat is found infected with the H5N1 bird flu virus. The dead cat was found on the island of Rügen in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Germany.

"Aggressive" Bird Flu found in Sweden

An "aggressive" strain of Avian Flu has been detected in two tufted ducks in Oskarshamn, Southeast Sweden.

This makes Sweden the ninth country in the EU to confirm Avian Flu on their soil.

Some 35-40 wild birds were found dead. The birds were brought to

Uppsala, where an analysis confirmed the presence of an "aggressive" form of Avian Flu. Tests at a laboratory in the UK will later eventually confirm whether the birds died of the lethal H5N1.

Sweden's minister of agriculture, Ann-Christin Nykvist, said the discovery was "serious but not unexpected" at a press conference. Sweden have been on high alert since the virus was found on the German island Hügen in the Baltic Sea.

Two security zones are being established around the location where the birds were found. Dead birds will be taken care of and destroyed and domestic stocks will be monitored in the affected area.

India and U.S.A. work toward nuclear fuel agreement

With U.S. President George W Bush preparing for a March 2 visit to India, the two countries' diplomatic teams are pressing hard to reach agreement on a landmark nuclear fuel agreement.

India's booming economy, with 8% annual growth, has led to large expenditures to both its civilian and military infrastructure but few of those contracts have fallen to U.S. firms. The U.S. trade deficit with India nearly doubled between 2001 and 2005, to \$10 billion.

A trade agreement between India and the United States regarding nuclear fuel, a key for India's rapidly expanding economy and for

U.S. corporations - the deal would pave the way for expanded high-tech trade - appears to be stalled over agreement as to which of India's reactors are civilian and which are military.

"We are doing very hard bargaining," U.S. Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran told reporters on Monday.

The agreement aims to reassure the U.S. Congress that nuclear technology sharing will not be used to produce nuclear weapons. The two parties have been working to separate India's civilian and military nuclear programs.

"The decision of what facilities may be identified as civilian will be made by India alone and not by anyone else," Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told lawmakers Monday.

DNA India reports a late-night call between India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice Monday night may have carried information the Indian administration was waiting for; their government sources indicate a declaration of intent will be signed by Mr. Singh and Mr. Bush during his visit.

Indian-U.S. relations have been poor throughout the cold war period and up to present. When India detonated a nuclear device in 1998, effectively announcing it was a nuclear power, the U.S. applied economic sanctions, further complicating the relationship.

Lifting the sanctions in 2001 when searching for partnerships following the 9/11 attacks helped begin dialogues between New Delhi and Washington D.C. An

agreement signed in July 2005 on nuclear technology sharing laid the groundwork for the accord being worked on currently.

Da Vinci Code in court

Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, who jointly wrote together with a third author, a 1982 Non-Fiction book *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* have taken *The Da Vinci Code* publisher Random House, to court claiming that *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* storyline has been stolen by Dan Brown.

The third author of *Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* Henry Lincoln, is not involved in the case.

Random House is the of publisher of both *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail*.

The central theme of the two books is that the bloodline from a marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalene survives today.

Random House has denied the claim and, Random House chief executive Gail Rebeck says in a statement that she believed the lawsuit was without merit.

"As publisher of both *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail*, we are genuinely saddened that two of the three authors of HBHG have chosen to bring this litigation against us...Random House takes no pleasure in defending a legal action that it believes is without merit and we are confident that we will prevail."

If this case is successful it could threaten the film; starring Tom Hanks and Sir Ian McKellen from opening.

The Da Vinci Code is a fiction book and has over 36 million copies in

print worldwide.

Brown's next book, *The Solomon Key*, is rumoured to be about President George Bush and Senator John Kerry's society. The dust jacket of *The Da Vinci Code* apparently includes longitude and latitude coordinates which lead to the CIA headquarters in Virginia.

Cyclone Emma crosses West Australian coast

The Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) say ex-tropical cyclone "Emma" has weakened below tropical cyclone intensity, after crossing the coast at 11am WST near Mardie in Western Australia today.

Widespread squally thunderstorms with heavy rain and flooding are expected as the system moves further south. Approximately 280 millimetres of rain was recorded at Karratha in 36 hours.

The cyclone bore down on Australia's Pilbara region, bringing with it winds of up to 105kph. Dampier's port was closed, some flights to the region were cancelled and communities in the storm's path were battering down.

Cyclone Emma was west of Karratha and northeast of Onslow at 8am (WST) today, and travelling south at 23kph. The weather bureau said by the time the category one storm crosses the coast between Dampier and Onslow the worst of the weather will have passed.

"Most of the weather is travelling ahead of the system", weather forecaster Andrew Burton said. "They've probably had the worst weather by now, and by the time the system crosses the coast it will all be over really."

People near the communities of

Onslow, Karratha, Dampier, Mardie, Point Sampson, Roebourne and Wickham were warned the storm could cause gales with gusts of up to 105kph. At Karratha, torrential rain has left parts of the town awash. Roebourne shire airport spokesman Alan Wright said there was flooding on the road to Karratha airport.

Six people were rescued after two cars were swept away by flood water dumped by the cyclone, oil and mining operations were shut down, Karratha, Tom Price and Pannawonica suffered localised flooding and three Pilbara schools had minor classroom and roof damage.

Fire and Emergency Services (FESA) issued an "all clear with caution" alert an hour after Emma crossed the coast and began breaking up as it moved inland. A spokesperson said: "With a category one cyclone you are not looking at destructive winds and in this case the rain that preceded the cyclone was the biggest issue. But residents should only proceed outside with caution as there may be downed powerlines, fallen trees, broken water and sewage lines, loose roof sheeting and debris."

Cyclone Emma's approach sparked a series of precautionary shutdowns of mining, oil and shipping operations. Open cut mining operations around Tom Price were shut. Guests at the Fortescue River Roadhouse, 1425km north of Perth, were stranded because of flooding.

The weather also forced Woodside Mining to cease production at two of its operations in the Pilbara region. The company said it expected no major impact from the production interruption at the

North West Shelf with operations to start producing again when the weather improves.

Cyclone Emma is the third cyclone of WA's cyclone season, which runs between November and April, with most activity in the latter half of the period. The Bureau of Meteorology say they are watching another developing tropical low that could impact WA over the weekend.

The first major tropical storm this year was category three cyclone Clare which battered Dampier and brought flooding rains to mining regions and much of the wheatbelt in early January. A week later category two cyclone Daryl threatened North West WA but moved off the coast.

Former AWB chairman paid almost \$1,000,000 by AusAID

It has been revealed at the Cole inquiry that former AWB chairman Trevor Flugge was paid almost \$1,000,000 by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) to provide "agricultural assistance" to Iraq for less than one year. The Prime Minister today defended the payment, saying that Mr Flugge's background and experience justified the sum.

The Opposition attacked the government over the issue, suggesting that the money was wasted and could have been better spent helping children.

"AusAid is now tied up in the wheat for weapons scandal, [having] spent almost \$700,000 sending Trevor Flugge off to Iraq to take photos of himself with guns," said Bob Sercombe, Labor spokesman on overseas aid and Pacific Island affairs.

"Every dollar spent on Trevor Flugge is one less dollar for spending on children in developing countries."

During an interview today Prime Minister John Howard defended the payment of money to Mr Flugge, arguing that he had the appropriate skills.

"Well you have to look at the availability of people, you have to look at the fact that we wanted to have somebody in that position who knew a lot about the wheat industry generally, about agriculture and certainly somebody who on his track record to them was somebody who would look to the interests of the Australian wheat industry. When you know and appreciate and acknowledge the value of wheat exports to this country, having somebody with the background that Flugge had in the wheat industry able to look after Australia's interests," Mr Howard said.

It was also revealed at a recent Senate estimates hearing that ninety percent of Australia's foreign aid budget goes to Australian companies. The revelation was made by an AusAID official, Dereck Rooker-Smith.

According to Tim O'ConnerAID/WATCH, the news comes as no surprise. "For ten years now the Howard government has focused on advancing business and strategic interests through the aid program," he said.

Thinktank recommends changes to Australian student fees

The Centre for Independent Studies has released a paper calling for reform of university student fees system. The paper,

authored by Andrew Norton, argues that the cap on loans to full fee paying students is too low. The current cap allows for loans during a lifetime of \$50,950.

"Setting the FEE-HELP limit at this amount biases the market against courses that are long or have high per year costs, or both," argues Norton in the paper. "The loan cap is a crude way of controlling lending, taking no account of course costs or capacity to repay."

According to Norton, this undermines student choice and competition. He argues that the system should function more like commercial lending.

"A truly radical reform would make student loans mimic commercial loans: students with good earning prospects could borrow large sums, other students could borrow less, and some could not borrow at all," he said. "Instead of denying or limiting loans to people doing high cost courses, as now occurs, the government could deny loans to people who are unlikely to repay."

The paper was criticised by Senator Kerry Nettle, Education Spokesperson for the Australian Greens. She argued that the changes would mean an increase in costs to students already struggling to pay, and called on Education Minister Julie Bishop to rule out the changes.

"To consider refusing loans to those deemed less able to repay would further cut off higher education for Australians from low socio-economic backgrounds," she said. "Julie Bishop should use her address to the National Press Club tomorrow to rule out any moves to further deregulate the HECS system."

"Student fees have spiralled upward under the Howard government and any further deregulation would just make a bad system worse," she added.

Australian student fees system
The Australian government has a system of subsidising student tuition fees. This system has undergone many changes during the Howard government. There are currently three strands: HECS-HELP for students receiving federal government tuition subsidies
FEE-HELP for full-fee students
OS-HELP for study overseas

The Centre for Independent Studies

On its website, The Centre for Independent Studies describes itself as "the leading independent public policy 'think tank' within Australasia. The CIS is actively engaged in support of a free enterprise economy and a free society under limited government where individuals can prosper and fully develop their talents. By critical recommendations to public policy and encouraging debate amongst leading academics, politicians and journalists, the CIS aims to build a better society." It claims to be funded by "private sector donations-from individuals, companies and charitable trusts-as well as subscriptions and books sales."

In a press release the Greens described the think-tank as "rightwing".

English Wikipedia has over 1 Million Registered Users

At 2:02 UTC on February 28, 2006, the millionth user account for the English Wikipedia project was created. The user is known as Romulus32, though little else is

known about this person. Jfingers88 first identified this account as the one millionth, and this fact was confirmed by Jacoplane and Titoxd.

Recently, there has been increasing excitement concerning the still impending millionth article for the English Wikipedia. However, little attention has been called to the number of users, which has just passed a million, and continues to grow much faster than the number of articles.

Wikimedia founder Jimbo Wales has yet to comment on this milestone for Wikipedia and Wikimedia.

Two zoo bears euthanized after biting four-year-old boy

The Maymont Zoo in Richmond, Virginia euthanized two black bears for their involvement in the biting of a 4-year-old boy. The boy sustained minor injuries after reaching his hands through the fence.

Citizens expressed outrage when it was reported the bears were destroyed and their carcasses disposed of by the zoo at a city landfill. The furor caused an investigation by Mayor Wilder into the decision by the zoo. A report issued by WTVR during the Monday evening news said that a "bear monument" would be erected in memory.

When informed on Monday of the zoo's decision to destroy the bears, the mother of the boy said she wept for the bears. The bite wounds will require the boy to under-go treatment for rabies.

Residents and business owners attend "private" meeting on Buffalo, N.Y. hotel proposal

6 Teenagers die in car accident in Victoria, several others injured

Six teenagers were killed in a horrific road accident near Mildura in north-western Victoria, late at night on February 18.

Cassandra Manners, aged 16, Stevie-Lee Weight, 15, Cory Dowling, 16, Shane Hirst, 16, and his sister, Abby Hirst, 17, died at the scene. Josephine Calvi, 16, was flown to the Royal Adelaide Hospital, where she later died of head injuries. Seven other teenagers were injured, including 15-year-old Marco Medici who is now in a stable but critical condition in The Alfred Hospital in Melbourne.

The accident occurred after the teenagers left a 16th birthday party and walked along Myall Road, Cardross, south-east of Mildura. A car allegedly came speeding around a bend, hit the gravel on the side of the road, lost control and struck the group. The alleged driver, later identified as 34-year-old Thomas Graham Towle, fled the scene on foot, leaving his 10-year-old daughter and four-year-old son in the car. Towle was later arrested by police in Redcliffs. He was taken to Mildura police station for questioning.

Towle has been charged with six charges of culpable driving causing death, four charges of negligently causing serious injury, one charge of failing to stop and one charge of failing to render assistance after an accident. Towle faced Mildura Magistrates' Court on February 20. Magistrate John Dugdale remanded him into custody to reappear before the court on June 26.

Meanwhile, the town of Mildura and surrounding areas is in deep mourning. Premier Steve Bracks said the State Government will provide \$AU40,000 for counselling and support services.

Around 3,000 people attended the funeral for Josephine Calvi today. Funeral services for the other five teenagers were held last week.

Today in History

1872 - Yellowstone National Park, the first national park in the world, was established.

1896 - Ethiopia won the decisive Battle of Adowa over Italy, ending the First Italo-Abyssinian War.

1919 - Korea under Japanese rule: The Samil Movement began with numerous peaceful protests in Korea, but was brutally suppressed by the Japanese police and army.

1947 - The International Monetary Fund began its financial operations.

1954 - The 15-megaton hydrogen bomb Castle Bravo was detonated on Bikini Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, resulting in one of the worst radioactive contamination ever caused by nuclear testing.

March 01 is Ash Wednesday in Western Christianity (2006); Saint David's Day in Wales, Mărțișor in Romania and Moldova, Martenitsa in Bulgaria.

Quote of the Day

"If you want to have good ideas you must have many ideas. Most of them will be wrong, and what you have to learn is which ones to throw away." ~ Linus Pauling

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