



Top Stories

Earthquake strikes Melbourne, no reports of injuries

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NASA successfully launches Kepler Telescope

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US unemployment rate reaches 8.1%

The unemployment rate in the United States increased to 8.1%, the highest level for over 25 years, after the US Labor Department reported that 651,000 jobs were lost in February.

Wikipedia Current Events

The United Kingdom's government increases its stake in Lloyds Banking Group from 43% to at least 60%.

•The United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration launches its Kepler spacecraft from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida.

•A car bomb in Peshawar, Pakistan, kills at least eight people.

Wikipedia Current Events

•Malaysia's Royal Police quell demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur against the use of the English language in schools.

•More than 1,000 people participate in a pro-Tibet protest in London.

•Anti-Israel protestors and Sweden's Police Service clash in Malmö, where the two countries were playing a Davis Cup tennis match.

•Palestinian National Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad resigns.

•United States President Barack Obama will visit Turkey in April.

•Zimbabwean Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai flies to Botswana for medical treatment following a car accident in Harare in which his wife was killed.

•Colombia's government will release two ex-Revolutionary Armed Forces members.

•Afghan President Hamid Karzai accepts the Electoral Commission's decision to hold a presidential election on August 20.

NASA successfully launches Kepler Telescope

NASA's Kepler Telescope, which will search for planets orbiting other stars, was successfully launched by a Delta II rocket from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station at approximately 10:51 p.m. (EST).

NASA regained the rocket's signal at 12:11 a.m. EDT Saturday, shortly after confirming the satellite's separation from the rocket.

According to the Kepler Mission page on NASA's website, the telescope "is specifically designed to survey our region of the Milky Way galaxy to discover hundreds of Earth-size and smaller planets in or near the habitable zone and determine how many of the billions of stars in our galaxy have such planets." The telescope is named after Johannes Kepler, an astronomer, astrologist and mathematician from Germany in the late 1500 and early 1600s.

The Kepler Telescope will use the 'Transit Method' of detecting planets. When planets pass in front of their parent star, a small black dot is cast over the star, called a transit. Transits by terrestrial planets produce a small change in a star's brightness of about one part in ten thousand (.01%), lasting for 2 to 16 hours.

Kepler's view is 105 square degrees and will be focused on one area all the time. It will orbit around our Sun, maintaining a constant distance from Earth of 950 miles. It will continuously and simultaneously monitor the brightnesses of more than 100,000 stars for the life of the mission, which is expected to be three and a half years.

"Even if we find no planets like Earth, that by itself would be

profound. It would indicate that we are probably alone in the galaxy," said William Borucki, the mission's science principal investigator.

Although planets orbiting stars other than the Sun had been theorized for centuries, it was only in 1988 that a team of Canadian astronomers made the first detection of extrasolar planets orbiting the star Gamma Cephei. Now over 300 extrasolar planets are said to have been discovered.

The launch comes just weeks after NASA's failed launch of the Orbiting Carbon Observatory, which crashed into the ocean off Antarctica's coast. It would have been the first spacecraft dedicated to studying atmospheric carbon dioxide, the most significant human-produced greenhouse gas and the principal human-produced driver of climate change. The cost of the project was US\$273 million.

California man convicted of murdering five firefighters by starting wildfire

Raymond Lee Oyler of California, United States has been convicted of the murders of five US Forest Service firefighters killed while attempting to control a wildfire he had lit.

Oyler, 38, set the Esperanza Fire out of anger his dog had been impounded, according to prosecutors. The October 2006 blaze destroyed 34 houses and 20 outbuildings, scorching over 17,400 hectares. Prosecutors said he was "bent on destruction".

Prosecutors also alleged Oyler started the fire at night specifically to leave firefighters "on their own" without aerial support. He was identified as the arsonist behind the fire after a security camera saw his car several times and

samples taken from the scene matched those found in his girlfriend's house. Oyler, an unemployed car mechanic, was also identified by the owner of a local petrol station as having stood in a car park and watched the fire's spread.

The five firefighters killed died when their truck was overrun by the flames. Oyler was convicted of murdering them on Friday March 6 after a six-week trial in Riverside California. The twelve-member jury took nearly a week of deliberation before returning the guilty verdict, and will meet to hear arguments regarding Oyler's sentence on Tuesday. He may face the death penalty.

His defense had admitted Oyler likely started several fires in the Riverside County area, but denied he had started the one that killed the firefighters.

NASA sets launch date for Space Shuttle Discovery

After almost two months of delay, NASA has set March 11 as the launch date for Space Shuttle Discovery. On February 22, NASA had stated that they indefinitely delayed the launch of Space Shuttle Discovery, which was originally scheduled for takeoff on February 12. Launch was then further delayed until February 25 before being delayed indefinitely on February 22. NASA cited the need for additional time to evaluate the shuttle's hydrogen fuel flow control valves.

Liftoff is set for nighttime on Wednesday, March 11, at approximately 9:20 p.m. (EST) from Launch Complex 39A in Cape Canaveral, Florida. The official countdown to launch will commence Sunday, March 8.

"The team came through, worked hard and was efficient. It's time now to step back and think of everything else we need to watch before launch on the 11th. There's no better team than this one and I thank them for putting the right analysis together," said Bill Gerstenmaier, associate administrator for Space Operations at NASA.

NASA wanted to perform additional tests on the valves which control the amount of hydrogen fuel pumped into the external tank when the shuttle is taking off before making a decision to launch. When Space Shuttle Endeavour went into space in November 2008, one of the valves broke. NASA fears that if one breaks off on this mission, then it could damage the outside of the shuttle.

The current scheduled mission, STS-119, is set to fly the Integrated Truss Structure segment ("S" for starboard, the right side of the station, and "6" for its place at the very end of the starboard truss) and install the final set of power-generating solar arrays to the International Space Station. The arrays consist of two 115-foot-long arrays, for a total wing span of 240 feet, including the equipment that connects the two halves and allows them to twist as they track the sun. Altogether, the four sets of arrays can generate 84 to 120 kilowatts of electricity – enough to provide power for more than 40 average homes.

Commander Lee Archambault will lead Discovery's crew of seven, along with Pilot Tony Antonelli, and Mission Specialists Joseph Acaba, John Phillips, Steve Swanson, Richard Arnold, and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency

astronaut Koichi Wakata.

Six vehicle pileup disrupts traffic on highway in British Columbia

A six vehicle pile up occurred on the John Hart Highway (British Columbia Highway 97), north of the John Hart Bridge in Prince George, British Columbia, Canada which disrupted traffic during the morning rush hour of March 5, 2009.

No serious injuries arose as a result of the accident, however traffic was reduced to a single lane. Traffic control was conducted by a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer who was at the scene at the time of the accident (7:45 a.m.). The RCMP cruiser was not one of the vehicles involved in the pile up. The crash was put under investigation by a traffic analyst.

The John Hart Highway connects Prince George, a city of 70,981 according to the 2006 census, with Dawson Creek over a length of approximately 250 miles (400 km). The Northwest Corridor Association saw a \$C\$30 million twinning upgrade to the John Hart bridge which spans the Nechako River, a tributary of the Fraser River. The bridge is located 5.4 kilometres (3.4 miles) north of Prince George. In March there is a traffic volume of between 11,000 to 12,000 vehicles per day at the north end of the John Hart bridge according to the the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation Average Annual Daily Traffic AADT reports between 1994 and 2000.

Earthquake strikes Melbourne, no reports of injuries

An earthquake with a magnitude 4.6 shook the Australian city of Melbourne late Friday night, spanning more than two hundred

kilometres.

The epicenter of the quake was located just north of Korumburra, located in Southern Gippsland, but the earthquake was strong enough to be felt as far as Melbourne.

No injuries were reported, although some homes around the area of the epicenter lost power for about ten minutes. Only minor damage was reported.

"There's [sic] no reports of injury to the SES, however we have received approximately 30 calls for assistance across the state this evening," stated Allan Grigs, from the State Emergency Service. "Most of the calls have come from the Melbourne metropolitan area ... crews are now out just assessing the damage to these properties. It is reported as minor damage at this stage."

According to Geoscience Australia's John Scheider, "the last earthquake of any significant size in that area was the magnitude 5.0 earthquake at Thomson Reservoir [area] in 1996."

Today in History

1702 – Princess Anne of Denmark and Norway became the Queen of England, Scotland and Ireland, succeeding William III.

1782 – American Revolutionary War: Almost 100 Native Americans in Gnadenhutten, Ohio died at the hands of Pennsylvanian militiamen in a mass murder known as the Gnadenhutten massacre.

1844 – Oscar I acceded to the throne of Sweden-Norway.

1966 – Nelson's Pillar, a large granite pillar with a statue of Lord Nelson on top in Dublin, Ireland, was destroyed by a bomb.

1978 – BBC Radio 4 transmitted the first episode of English author and dramatist Douglas Adams' The

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, a science fiction radio series that was later adapted into novels, a television series, and other media formats.

1983 – The Cold War: During a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, U.S. President Ronald Reagan described the Soviet Union as an "evil empire".

March 08 is International Women's Day; Mother's Day in various European countries

Quote of the Day

We no longer have a coherent conception of ourselves, and our universe, and our relation to one another and our world. We no longer know, as the Middle Ages did, where we come from, and where we are going, or why. That is, we don't know what information is relevant, and what information is irrelevant to our lives.

~ Neil Postman

Word of the Day

pulsate v

1. To expand and contract rhythmically; to throb or to beat.
2. To quiver, vibrate, thrill.
3. To produce a recurring increase and decrease of some quantity.

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