



Top Stories

NYC Transit on strike

Transit Workers Union Local 100 (TWU) President Roger Toussaint officially declared that its union members are now on strike, bringing the subways and buses of New York City to a halt..

Opposition claims Australian Treasurer misled parliament



Australian Treasurer Peter Costello is facing controversy for the second time in three weeks following the release of a treasury document, claiming that the government's Work Choices Act could suppress labour productivity in the short-term.

Featured story

Black vulture population targeted for reduction at Virginia boat launch



A Virginia recreation and fishing boat launch on the James River near the Dominion

Virginia Power plant at Dutch Gap is the scene of too many Black Vultures, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Virginia Department of Inland Game and Fisheries.

Wikipedia Current Events

• A Chalk's Ocean Airways airplane flying from Miami,

Wikipedia Current Events

Florida to Bimini, Bahamas, crashes in Miami Beach, killing 18 passengers and two crew members.

•In the *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* case, Judge John E. Jones III rules that it is unconstitutional to teach intelligent design as an alternative to evolution in a public school science classroom in the United States.

•At least 20 people die as a bus in Pakistani-controlled Kashmir skids from the road, tumbles down a hill and lands in the river Jhelum.

•In the Likud primary elections, Benjamin Netanyahu wins, becoming the new Likud leader, he was followed by Silvan Shalom. Moshe Feiglin came third and Yisrael Katz was fourth.

•Ariel Sharon, the prime minister of Israel, is released from Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital after being treated for a mild stroke.

•Midwest Airlines Flight 210 landed safely at Logan International with a landing gear problem late Tuesday after circling the airport for approximately two hours.

40 alleged drunken Santas accused of running amok

The conduct by a group of 'Santas' making an unclear statement last Saturday is not appreciated in the business district of Auckland, New

Zealand. The event, organized in the discussion forum of an online skateboard magazine, caused big media publicity.



photo credit: Mark Barber

Alex Dyer, spokesman for the group, stated that Santarchy in Auckland is part of a worldwide phenomenon. It is disputed if Santarchy is a protest against the commercialization of Christmas or not.

Auckland Central Police spokesperson Noreen Hegarty said to the press that the rampage began in the early part of the afternoon when men wearing ill-fitting Santa costumes threw beer bottles and urinated on cars from an overpass, then rushed through a central city park, overturning garbage bins, throwing bottles at passing cars and spraying graffiti on office buildings.

"They came in, said 'Merry Christmas' and then helped themselves," said a convenience store staff member Changa

Manakynda, according to local newspapers.

One writer using the pseudonym 'Le_SigNagE' on the Santarchy! (or also known as the Santacon) website commented, "... after all, this is what Christmas is really about... mindless vandalism and petty theft."

Another writer who posted under the pseudonym Santy Claus said of the media coverage, "There was some major misreporting and chinese whispers. Breaking bottles and urinating under a bridge, became throwing rocks at buses and urinating on cars from an overpass. The 'organisers' as they were, saw little in the way of crime other than one santa attempting to board a foreign vessel by scaling 20 metres along a rope 60 feet in the air. The difficulty and motor skills involved in this task alone should be a defense in itself of being 'drunk' and 'disorderly'."

Due to Santa's reputation for integrity and his strict media policy, his sparse communication is mostly one-way: receiving lists from children with wishes for Christmas. It is difficult to get his comment about New Zealand's skateboard interested 'Santas'.

In 1994, the Cacophony Society staged the world's very first SantaCon in San Francisco. Influenced by the surrealist movement, Discordianism, and other subversive art currents.

Truth comes out about Suprnova closure

Exactly one year to the day since the popular Suprnova BitTorrent link site went offline, Andre Preston (Sloneck to the internet community) speaks out about what happened on his website.

After twelve months of speculation amongst former users and many sites popping up to try and take it's place, Preston says "it is time for everybody to know the truth and that it is time for me to stop pretending like nothing ever happened".

According to Preston his nightmare began in November, 2004 when he received a phonecall from his ISP stating that Preston's servers had just been raided. Preston claims that at this time he had no communication from the police.

After reading about himself in various Slovenian newspapers in early December, Preston decided to take his suprnova.org site offline. At the same time another project Preston was involved in eXeem was touted as being the biggest thing to happen to file sharing.

Preston claims that a month or so after his site went offline his home was raided by the police at 6:30AM in the morning. Police seized two computers and documents. Preston was then called into the local police unit another month later for a hearing. Preston, on the advice of his lawyer decided he would not answer anything during the interview with the police. At the conclusion of the interview Preston was told that the matter would be handed over to the prosecutor.

Preston recalls that on October 18, 2005 he received a notice to go to the post office and pick up another letter which he must sign for. Upon receiving the notice Preston says that he "became completely depressed and sad". Preston however was greeted with good news at the post office when he opened the letter and discovered

that his matter had been dropped. He also received his computers and CDs back.

The BitTorrent protocol uses .torrent metadata files that tells a client application which tracker to contact to find peers (users sharing the file) and verification data for the files to be downloaded. It was thought to be "safer" than traditional file sharing systems from a legal perspective as the files (possibly copyrighted material) were not hosted on a centralised server but were instead located completely on user's computers.

Due to the nature of BitTorrent a server is required to "track" (assist in locating other peers). These trackers can be a legal target because they "assist" in distributing the data. It is also quite easy for the administrator of a BitTorrent tracker to remove torrents and stop users from downloading them.

eXeem on the other hand was to be completely decentralised, there was no need for centralised trackers, instead each peer on the network acted as a tracker - assisting other clients in finding peers. eXeem had a rather difficult time becoming accepted within the internet community following the discovery of Cydoor adware in the software. Development on eXeem has since ceased.

Suprnova itself was not a BitTorrent tracker nor did it host the actual files being downloaded by the user. Suprnova made available the .torrent meta data files needed to locate a tracker and peers.

Work Choices Fair Pay Chief heavily criticised

Professor Ian Harper the government appointed Fair Pay Chief has come under heavy criticism this week from the Labour groups and the federal opposition.

Professor Harper was a non-executive director of the Australian Derivatives Exchange (ADX) when it was put under administration in March 28, 2001. The company went broke owing workers more than \$700,000. In the process ADX breached the corporations law by failing to maintain required cash reserves, although the company eventually gave workers their w:entitlements.

Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews appointed Professor Harper in October, Mr Andrews spokesman Defended the appointment saying the government was aware of the economist's history with the company and said in relation Professor Harper role in ADX 's demise: "There has been absolutely no wrongdoing," "The government was made aware by Prof Harper, and also by doing a check ourselves, of the company going into administration." "We believe that Prof Harper is an eminently qualified person to head up the Australian Fair Pay Commission."

Wayne Swan the Oppositions treasury, who has attacked the government over the Robert Gerards appointment to the reserve bank affair, spokesman has said there were serious questions to answer about Prof Harper's appointment. "There is a pattern of behaviour here and a stench that surrounds the Howard government,". "This is a government whose actions and appointments are blinded by extreme ideology." Mr Swan said

commenting on the recent history of important government appointments.

Sharan Burrow the president of the ACTU has told ABC radio that the government must better scrutinize Mr Harper's business behaviour. "How on earth can they expect Australians to have any faith in their so-called Fair Pay Commission if the very head they've appointed, another government mate, is under a cloud,"

Travel warnings issued for Sydney

Following the racial violence which occurred in Sydney last week Britain, Canada and Indonesia have issued travel warnings for their nationals in or wishing to travel to Sydney. The British warning cites recent "sporadic outbreaks of racially motivated violence in Cronulla, Maroubra, Brighton-le-Sands" and "areas of south-west Sydney". British nationals are advised to "monitor the situation and exercise caution".

Australia to continue burning Indonesian boats

Indonesian Fisheries Minister Freddy Numberi has asked the Australian government to stop burning Indonesian boats found fishing illegally in Australian waters. His Australian counterpart, Senator Ian Macdonald, has said that the practice will continue. "The law is that we are required to offer the boats back on payment of a bond somewhere between \$4,000 and \$10,000, and if the owners don't pay that in 28 days then the boat's forfeited to the Australian Government," he said. "We have no use for them and we destroy them and we'll continue to

do that."

Runaway foster child found living with pedophile

A 17 year old girl who ran away from foster carers has been found living with her aunt, uncle, and a convicted child sex offender, Denis Ferguson. The girl was removed from the home immediately by Queensland's Department of Child Safety. A spokesman for Child safety group Bravehearts said that monitoring of sex offenders was inadequate. "The big problem here really is Denis Ferguson was supposed to have been closely monitored and yet he managed to live with a young person for two weeks without anybody knowing," she said.

Child Safety Department director-general Robin Sullivan defended his department's actions. "As soon as the department became aware of the situation involving Dennis Ferguson, it acted immediately, and as soon as it located the girl, she was removed," he said.

Posted deadlines for Christmas delivery

December 21, 2005

In the United States of America and other parts of the world, as Christmas and the holidays draw near, shippers have released information on shipping deadlines. Remember to always clearly label and address your holiday packages.

Australian on death row in Vietnam

An Australian man, Trinh Huu, has been sentenced to death by a Vietnamese People's Court for

smuggling 2kg of heroin. He was arrested on the Cambodian border. Amnesty International has urged the Federal Government to do everything it can to help the man. The Department of Foreign Affairs has said that Trinh was receiving consular assistance. The government has reiterated its long standing opposition to the death penalty.

Business Brief for December 21, 2005
US wholesale prices fall by .7%

The Producer Price Index for Finished Goods declined .7% in November. The Index rose .7% in November and rose 1.9% in September. The drop in price for finished goods is due to energy prices, which fell by 4% percent. The Index is seasonally adjusted.

US Patent office may back Blackberry

The five patents in the lawsuit between NTP and Research In Motion, the seller of Blackberry may be struck down. Both companies said that the US Patent office will reject the five patents held by NTP. The final rulings are expected to come by mid-February.

China is now the sixth largest economy

China has raised its GDP estimate after a year long survey. China has outplacd Italy becoming taking sixth largest economy in the world. World economists now calculate that China's economy will be larger than the economy of the United States, the current largest economy. Economists also predict that China will pass France and the UK by the end of 2006. Service industries such as telecommunications, retailing, and real estate accounted for 93% of the revision. Economists also say

that this means that China's growth is more sustanable than previously thought which means pressure will mount on China on other issues including its currency valuation and trade negotiations.

Today in History

69 - Vespasian became the fourth Roman Emperor in the Year of the Four Emperors.

1913 - Arthur Wynne published the first crossword puzzle in the New York World.

1937 - The animated feature film Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, based on the fairy tale Snow White by the Brothers Grimm, premiered to a widely receptive audience.

1979 - The Lancaster House Agreement was signed, effectively ending the white rule in Rhodesia under Ian Smith.

1988 - Pan Am Flight 103: A terrorist bomb exploded and destroyed a Boeing 747 over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270, including 11 on the ground. December 21 is Winter solstice in the Northern Hemisphere, Summer solstice in the Southern Hemisphere, Yule.

Quote of the Day

"I don't measure a man's success by how high he climbs but how high he bounces when he hits bottom." ~ George S. Patton

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