



### Top Stories



**US lawmakers and rights advocates question CIA tape destruction**

**Forest preservation plan debated at climate talks**



Delegates at the United Nations Climate Change Conference consider a proposal that would allow developing nations to earn billions of dollars through carbon trading by leaving idle forests such as those in Borneo, the Amazon and Congo basins.

### Wikipedia Current Events

Tim Tebow of the Florida Gators becomes the first sophomore/underclassman in history to win the Heisman Trophy.

- The United States Department of Justice and the Central Intelligence Agency launch a joint inquiry into the destruction of two CIA tapes of the interrogation of two suspected terrorists.
- A second human case of bird flu is confirmed in eastern China.
- Gunmen attack a party office of former Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto in Naseerabad in southwestern Pakistan, killing three supporters.

### Africa-Europe summit opens with pledges of equal partnership

The summit of more than 70 African and European Union nations has opened in Portugal with an acknowledgement that conflicts, human rights violations and poverty continue to pose challenges. Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates opened the summit on today, calling it a meeting of equals in a community of nations that shares a historic duty.

The Portuguese leader promised a frank and open discussion with no taboos. This was seen as a reference to issues such as conflicts and human rights violations in Africa as well as historical injustices in Euro-African

relations.

The chairman of the African Union, Ghana's President John Kuofor, said the relationship between Africa and Europe during the past 500 years has been unhappy, characterized by the slave trade, colonialism and apartheid. He said a new relationship is needed to correct what he called a historic inhumanity.

"The real significance of the Africa-EU summit must therefore be to lay the foundations of a new partnership based on mutual respect and a genuine commitment to pursue the mutual interests of our two continents," he said.

The leaders are to establish a new strategic partnership with eight priority areas. These include peace and security, governance and human rights, economic development, environmental degradation, migration and trade.

The President of the African Union Commission, Alpha Oumar Konare, said the relationship must avoid charity, paternalism and false promises.

He says no one will solve Africa's ills for it. Africa must play the game of globalization but not unilateral globalization based solely on market forces. Konare said the new partnership must develop ways to address this issue.

Efforts to hold the Africa-EU

### Featured story

**Former 'Top Model' contestant Whitney Cunningham defends plus size models, celebrates the "regular woman"**

Former America's Next Top Model contestant Whitney Cunningham spoke to Wikinews about her experiences on the show, her hopes and dreams, and why she doesn't consider herself "plus size."



summit have been thwarted for the past five years by a dispute over Zimbabwe's human rights record. President Robert Mugabe's invitation this year prompted a boycott by Prime Minister Gordon Brown of Britain, Zimbabwe's former colonial ruler.

Human rights activists have protested that summit leaders are ignoring suffering and oppression on the continent. And opponents of globalization said the summit's approach to boosting trade would aggravate poverty.

European leaders have been intent on holding the meeting because of competition for Africa's markets coming from China, India and other emerging nations.

### **Sean Penn endorses Kucinich for US President**

Academy Award winning actor and political activist Sean Penn has just thrown his support in the 2008 US Presidential election behind Dennis Kucinich.

In a San Francisco speech described by his PR people as "a blistering indictment of political leaders and an impassioned endorsement of Presidential proportions," Penn threw his support behind the lesser known Democratic candidate.

The Kucinich campaign did not vet the speech.

"Dennis Kucinich, who with the minimal time allotted him, once again rose up beyond the sound bite and put principal ahead of party; argued policy rather than politeness. He has been the dominant voice of integrity on issues of trade, labor, education, environment, health, civil liberties, and the one endlessly determined voice of peace.

But is he too short? Does his haircut not appeal? Is he not loyal enough to a cowardly democratic platform? Does he not appeal to the cult of personality?

And what if the answer is yes?

What if Dennis Kucinich, the most deserving and noble of candidates, the most experienced in issues of policy and the least willing to play into the politics of personal power? What if we can't elect a man simply on the basis of the best ideas, the most courage, and the most selfless service? What does it say about our country when we can't rally the voices of the common good to support a man, like our troops, who would die for us, who would die for our constitution?"

Other recent celebrity endorsements in the race include Oprah Winfrey for Barack Obama, Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling for John McCain, Harry Belafonte endorsed John Edwards, and both 50 Cent and Barbra Streisand behind Hillary Clinton. Chuck Norris has backed Mike Huckabee in a high profile, comedic endorsement ad.

Penn first became politically active in October 2002, when he spent \$56,000 on a full-page ad in the Washington Post, asking President George W. Bush to end "a cycle of violence". He visited Iraq briefly in December of that year, Iran in 2005 as a journalist, and met with Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez for two hours in 2007.

Penn went to New Orleans to "aid rescue workers" after Hurricane Katrina; many questioned how of a liability an untrained worker, especially when his boat sprang a leak, would be. One website commented "just showed up with

his entourage and a personal photographer with the apparent intent of just wandering around looking for a good photo op."

### **Forest preservation plan debated at climate talks**

Delegates at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Indonesia are wrestling with a proposal that would allow developing nations to earn billions of dollars through carbon trading by leaving idle forests such as those in Borneo, the Amazon and Congo basins.

The news comes on the same day that it was announced that forest clearance in the Amazon Rainforest was falling compared to previous years.

Delegates from about 190 countries are negotiating a plan for private companies and wealthy nations to pay poorer nations to keep their forest intact. It is called the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries, or REDD proposal.

Environmental scientists say tree cutting in tropical areas accounts for about 20 percent of all man-made carbon dioxide emissions blamed for global warming. Tropical forests soak up vast amounts of carbon dioxide; burning timber to clear land releases it.

Marcelo Furtado with Greenpeace in Brazil says the REDD plan is needed to fill gaps in the current Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement to limit emissions of greenhouse gases which does not include ways to preserve forests.

"We would like to see, at the very least, a REDD mechanism moving forward, because we want to see countries taking action now. We

don't want to wait to 2013 to start seeing this action taking place. And this is something this convention, this group of countries could deliver," said Furtado.

Frances Seymour, Director General for the Indonesia-based Center for International Forest Research, is concerned a premature REDD agreement could do more harm than good.

"Because in many forested countries, land tenure rights to forest lands and resources are either unclear or contested or both. And you can imagine that if a potential new income stream is available for those who can present themselves as owners of the forest, this could create conflict and create conditions under which some of the world's poorest people, who are people who live in forests, could be pushed aside," said Seymour.

Financial analysts are also cautious about the proposal.

Charlotte Streck, the director of Climate Focus, a Rotterdam-based consultancy, said investors are worried about how governments would monitor their forests and ensure the carbon stored in them remains intact.

"This is what makes the private sector nervous, because these are risks that they cannot hedge properly, and that they cannot evaluate in the same manner as the project related risks," she said.

Conference delegates are still debating how to monitor the world's remaining tropical forests, how to stop logging in one place without shifting the problem to another area, and how to estimate the amount of carbon in a piece of land.

Yvo de Boer, the U.N.'s climate change chief, said a REDD agreement is unlikely during this conference, but a group working on the details is making significant progress.

### **5 reporters hurt in the conflict of ex-President's monument in Taiwan**

Before the Ministry of Education removed the title the "Gate of Great Centrality and Perfect Uprightness" along the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, members of the public and politicians from Pan-Greens and Pan-Blues battled and demonstrated there, but 5 reporters were hit by a truck near the National Central Library when they made a SNG live report.

According to witnesses and Chien-chiang Wang from Formosa Television, they witnessed the driver deliberately stepping on the accelerator after he hit a reporter and braked. Even though the suspect, Sheng-lou Peng was under arrested by the police, he caused the public indignations and was punched by a protester.

Due to the incident, politicians from Pan-Greens and Pan-Blues argued for the responsibilities again. Eventually, a legislative candidate named Feng Mei maliciously said: "It's a show, SO WHAT?!" This behavior without respects on hurt reporters caused outrages from voters from Pan-Greens and Pan-Blues and Mei's neighborhoods.

Politicians from two coalitions like Premier of the Republic of China Chun-hsiung Chang, KMT 2008 Presidential Candidate Ying-jeou Ma, Magistrate of Taipei County Hsi-wei Chou, Minister of the Government Information Office Chih-wei Hsieh, and current President of the Republic of China

Shui-bian Chen all criticized on this incident and hoped 5 hurt reporters can recover soon.

### **US lawmakers and rights advocates question CIA tape destruction**

U.S. Congressional Democrats are asking the Justice Department to investigate whether the CIA's destruction of videotapes documenting the interrogation of terrorism suspects amounts to obstruction of justice.

The acknowledgement by Central Intelligence Agency Director Michael Hayden that his agency destroyed the interrogation videotapes in 2005 sparked a firestorm of criticism among Congressional Democrats. They suggested the tapes could have provided key evidence in ongoing trials brought by terrorism suspects who are alleging they were tortured.

Senator Ted Kennedy, a Massachusetts Democrat, said, "What would cause the CIA to take this action? The answer is obvious - cover up. The agency was desperate to cover up damning evidence of their practices."

Human Rights Watch's Senior Counterterrorism Counsel commented to Google new saying, "The CIA was well aware that its interrogations crossed a line considered by many to be torture. Now some in the CIA may also be guilty of obstruction of justice as well - a serious felony that carries a possible 20 year sentence. There needs to be a serious criminal investigation, and those who have committed crimes should be prosecuted and convicted."

The Democratic chairmen of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees are vowing to

investigate, and other Democrats are calling on the Justice Department to do the same.

"You cannot destroy material if there is an ongoing investigation. There is a law against it," said Senator Carl Levin of Michigan, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

At the White House, spokeswoman Dana Perino said President Bush only learned of the matter two days ago, after he was briefed by CIA Director Hayden.

"He has no recollection of being made aware of the tapes or their destruction before yesterday," said Perino.

Perino defended the CIA interrogation program as legal and critical to national security. She said President Bush supports General Hayden's explanation that the tapes were destroyed to protect the identities of the interrogators.

But the Senate's number two Democrat, Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois, rejected that argument:

"The defence of the CIA is that they wanted to protect the identity of those CIA employees who were engaged in the interrogation," said Durbin. "Mr. [Senate] President, that is not a credible defence. We know that it is possible, in fact, easy, to cover the identity and faces of those who were involved in any videotape. Something more was involved here."

The tapes, which documented the use of tough interrogation techniques against key terror suspects in 2002, were destroyed three years later, at a time when there was increasing pressure from defence lawyers to obtain

videotapes of detainee interrogations and as Congress had been probing allegations of torture.

The Bush administration has maintained it does not use torture, but refuses to say what techniques are used by intelligence agencies in interrogations of terror suspects.

### **Massive oil spill reported off coast of South Korea**

A 146,000 ton oil tanker carrying a crane has collided with a barge named the Hebei Spirit off the coast of South Korea spilling more than 10,000 metric tons of oil (1.8 million barrels) into the sea in what is being called the country's worst oil spill. There are no reports of any injuries.

The tanker has suffered at least three large gashes on its hull and the spill has since began to wash ashore south of Seoul. Residents described the water as all black. Nearly 60 miles (100 kilometers) of shoreline are at risk of being destroyed.

"We are worried about an ecological disaster. We have set up a boom, trying to stop oil from spreading along the coast, but oil sometimes overflows it depending on the currents. If we fail to contain the spread, it is feared (it will) inflict serious damage to the coast," said spokesman for the ministry of maritime affairs and fisheries for S. Korea, Kim Jong-Sik.

He also stressed that the spill has not yet caused any damage which "will depend on how the sea currents move in coming hours. We have 40 vessels out there fighting the oil spill."

Emergency workers in the region

of Tae'an are fighting to stop the oil slick, which is over 20km (12 miles) long.

### **UK firemen cut metal ring from man's penis**

Fire fighters in the United Kingdom used a hand grinder to remove a metal ring from a man's penis 2 days ago. They had been summoned after doctors at the Royal Wigan Infirmary in Greater Manchester became worried that the man may have required amputation of the penis as the ring was cutting off the blood flow.

The man had been taken to the infirmary's Accident and Emergency department, where attempts were made to cut through the ring. However, this failed as hospital cutting equipment was not strong enough to sever the hard metal the ring was made of.

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service responded to the call made at around 12.10 GMT Thursday, after the penis started swelling up. Two fire fighters spent twenty minutes cutting the ring off the then anaesthetised man, who is in his 40s. The mini hand grinder used for the job is more regularly used for tasks such as cutting through padlocks.

A thin sheet of metal was placed around the man's penis to protect it during the operation. It is thought that the ring had originally been cut off the end of a pipe.

### **Today in History**

1856 – Anglo-Persian War: Bushehr, a city on the southwestern coast of the Persian Gulf in present-day Iran, surrendered to occupying British forces.

1905 – Legislation on the separation of church and state in

France was adopted, triggering civil disobedience by French Catholics.

1946 – The Doctors' Trial, the trial for crimes committed in Nazi human experimentation during World War II, began in Nuremberg, Germany.

1961 – Tanganyika gained independence from Britain (Tanganyika would become part of Tanzania three years later).

1979 – A World Health Organization commission of eminent scientists certified the global eradication of smallpox, making it the only human infectious disease to have been completely eradicated from nature.

December 09 is Independence Day in Tanzania (1961); Army Day in Peru.

**Quote of the Day**

Man is appealed to to be guided in his acts, not merely by love, which is always personal, or at the best tribal, but by the perception of his oneness with each human being.

In the practice of mutual aid, which we can retrace to the earliest beginnings of evolution, we thus find the positive and undoubted origin of our ethical conceptions; and we can affirm that in the ethical progress of man, mutual support — not mutual struggle — has had the leading part. ~ Peter Kropotkin

**Word of the Day**

resoundingly; adv

1. With a loud, resonant sound.
2. (by extension) Emphatically, so as to be celebrated

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