



Top Stories

United Nations Report: Deserts threatened by global warming

The United Nations Environment Programme have released the "Global Deserts Outlook" report which suggests that the world's deserts face dramatic changes as a result of global climate change, high water demands, tourism and salt contamination of irrigated soils.

Alan Garcia wins Peruvian presidential election

Former president Alan Garcia regained his presidency with a stunning defeat over Ollanta Humala.

Wikipedia Current Events

the capital of Somalia, after battles with the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism, a group of secular US-backed warlords.

- Alan García of the APRA is re-elected President of Peru after winning a runoff with the Union for Peru's Ollanta Humala on Thursday.
- Serbia confirms the dissolution of Serbia and Montenegro and declares independence.
- Australia calls for more South East Asian troops and police to help quell civil unrest in East Timor.

according to the Government, are expected to lose their benefit for infringements of job search rules. Those with dependants, and those deemed "exceptionally vulnerable," will be eligible for case management by a charity on the government register.

But the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the St Vincent de Paul Society have refused to register. The moral dilemma of whether to become an agent for a policy some believe is "unjust" may be contemplated by the Salvation Army, and others.

Charities will be paid \$650 to manage each eligible unemployed person it assigns them, the Government has said. It wants charities to assess a person's "essential" expenses and notify Centrelink, which would then decide whether or not to pay the bills.

Director of UnitingCare Australia Lin Hatfield Dodds said she did not expect many of the 400 agencies in her network to sign up to be case managers. Mission Australia has also not registered. Sue Leppert, executive director of Anglicare Australia, said many of her member agencies would definitely not register and others were grappling with the issue.

Many Australian charities strongly oppose the policy of stripping all income from unemployed people for infringements. There is much concern that sole parents and many disabled people will be

Featured story

Researchers discover giant asteroid impact crater in Antarctica

Researchers have found a giant asteroid impact crater under the Wilkes Land ice sheet of Antarctica and it may have been responsible for the creation of the dinosaurs, but may also have been the cause of a mass extinction.

Australian charities slam new welfare rules

Australia's biggest charity organisations are refusing to cooperate with the Howard government's welfare reform rules. The federal government expects about 18,000 people a year will lose their payments for eight weeks when the new welfare-to-work regime comes into force on July 1.

Only 23 organisations have signed up to a government registry to "financially case manage" the most vulnerable unemployed, who will be left without income under tougher rules. The Brotherhood of St Laurence has told Fairfax newspapers it will not participate because it believes the welfare shake-up is unjust.

About 18,000 people a year,

Wikipedia Current Events

- Javier Solana, foreign policy chief of the European Union, arrives in Tehran to talk with the Iranian Government about its plans to develop uranium enrichment facilities.
- The Islamic Court Union announces that it has Mogadishu,

diverted from specific pensions to the Newstart Allowance. They will then be subject to stringent job search rules, potential infringements and harsh penalties.

Charities also have been alarmed that under the new policy, people can immediately lose their payment for eight weeks if they refuse a job offer, are dismissed for misconduct, or are voluntarily unemployed.

The executive director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence Tony Nicholson said the policy was unjust. "First they suffer an eight-week suspension of payment, and to add insult to injury they have to justify to some case manager their expenditure on their meagre income."

Sole parents whose youngest child has turned six, and disabled people who are assessed as capable of working 15 hours per week, will no longer be granted a pension under the Welfare to Work plan.

At the launch of a nation-wide advertising campaign for the government reform, Minister for Human Services, Joe Hockey said: "the advertising campaign is part of an education process designed to encourage more people on income support to move into work." "The Howard Government is investing \$3.7 billion to deliver greater employment services and other assistance, including rehabilitation, to those people required to look for work," said Minister Hockey.

A spokesman for the Minister said the Government was trying to ensure "rents will be paid and kids won't get tossed out of home" if parents failed to meet their job search obligations.

Alan Garcia wins Peruvian presidential election

Alan Garcia, the former president of Peru in 1985-1990, has once again won the presidential election of Peru in a runoff against candidate Ollanta Humala. Garcia received the majority of the votes in Lima and most of Peru's urban areas, while Humala received most of the votes from the rural areas.

Alan Garcia's first presidential term ended in economic disaster and hyper-inflation and resulted in the popular support for the election of President Fujimori. After his disastrous first term, very few would have considered Garcia's comeback to be possible.

Many in Peru did not like Ollanta Humala's relationship with Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez whom they felt was interfering with Peruvian affairs. Garcia and Chavez have had a clash of words many times before this election and many saw a vote for Garcia as a vote against Humala and Chavez.

Humala accepted his defeat and saluted Garcia and his party. This statement was, however, rejected by Humala's spokeswoman.

White House urges patience on Iran

Bush administration officials say Iran should be given time to consider a package of incentives aimed at halting the country's nuclear enrichment and reprocessing activities.

Tehran will need some time to mull over the offer, and the first response may not be the last word, says White House spokesman Tony Snow.

"I would caution against leaping to conclusions, until the leadership in

Iran has actually had an opportunity to look over the packages of incentives and disincentives offered by the EU-3 with the support of the United States," he said.

The plan was drafted by the three European nations that have been negotiating the nuclear issue with Iran - Britain, France and Germany - with the backing of the United States, Russia and China. Details of the package have not been formally released.

During a session with reporters, Snow downplayed comments made over the weekend by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iran's supreme leader said the flow of Iranian oil will be disrupted if the United States makes - what he called - a wrong move.

The White House spokesman predicted there will be a number of statements coming out of Iran before Tehran gives its final answer. He said, at the moment, the White House is neither optimistic nor pessimistic, but hopeful.

"It is easy to make comments into a vacuum, and my sense is that, again, the Iranians are going to realize this is a serious offer, and it is an offer that offers great promise for them," Snow said.

European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana is to formally present the package to the Iranian government in Tehran, perhaps as early as Tuesday.

Last week, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged Iran to give careful consideration to the plan, but indicated Tehran would not have an indefinite amount of time to respond.

Iranian officials have indicated they plan to study the document. But, they stress, have no plans to suspend uranium enrichment which is a key condition that has been attached to the deal.

Tehran says uranium will be processed for use in power plants. But the United States and Europe say they are concerned Iran's civilian nuclear power program is really a cover for the development of nuclear weapons.

Islamic group claims control over Somali capital

NAIROBI- A top official with the city's Islamic Courts Union declared on local radio stations that his group had defeated forces from the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism.

Mohamed Afrah Qanyare, a founding member of the warlord alliance, until Sunday was the national security minister in Somalia's transitional government. He is said to have fled the city with his fighters to nearby Jowhar, 90 kilometers north of the capital.

The capital was relatively calm Monday as the Islamic courts claimed their victory, tells Ali Musa Abdi, a reporter with French news agency VOA, who is in Mogadishu.

"Generally, they have taken most parts of Mogadishu," he said. "The remaining parts are very little and in the hands of their rivals and their rivals are not in a position to fight. The roadblocks and checkpoints [of Qanyare] have been dismantled. They are not really in full control at this stage, but they are in control of the vast majority of Mogadishu, and the other parts are also coming slowly in their favor."

Recent fighting has seen Islamic militia take Dayniile, a neighbourhood in Mogadishu. This led Mogadishu resident Mohamed Asser to say "This morning Mogadishu is under only one hand, the Islamic courts." Indeed; "The era of warlords in Somalia is over."

Farah Abdulle, a militia chief from the Anti-Terrorism Alliance, told Reuters they were asked by residents not to fight: "After the elders intervened, we had no option but to give in." The alliance are thought to have left behind many machine-guns mounted on pick-up trucks.

The walkover in Dayniile follows a victory on Sun. June 4 when the warlord Muse Sudi Yalahow was removed from the town of Balad. Balad, 30 km (20 miles) from Mogadishu, is important to the Alliance supply route. 18 people were killed in the fighting.

As the Islamist advance seemed imminent on Saturday United Nations aid workers had evacuated the town of Jowhar, 90km north of Mogadishu. Jowhar is said to be next on the Islamist force's Alliance check-list.

Somali Islamists have said a meeting will be held to discuss the surrender terms of some fighters belonging to the defeated warlords. Interim Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Ghedi also plans to open talks between the government and the Islamists.

Ghedi's government on Sunday removed four warlord ministers from their posts for breaking the ceasefire rules signed in Kenya during the formation of the government. In addition to this measure, some members of the Somali parliament want war crimes trials.

Abdirahman Dinari, the interim government spokesman, said: "The four ministers were fired last night because they broke the interim charter and ceasefire agreements by shelling civilians, causing so many deaths".

More than 300 people were killed and more than a thousand wounded during fierce fighting that took place over the past few months between militias loyal to the Islamic Court Union and the warlord alliance.

Somali political leaders had accused the United States of backing the warlords, a charge U.S. officials have refused to confirm or deny.

The Islamic Court Union is said to want to maintain law and order in the volatile capital.

Reporter Abdi says the Islamic courts Sunday described to journalists how they intend to govern the capital.

"They said they want to administer the city not only by themselves, [but] by talking to the intellectuals and other Somali people, and they invited the people to join them," he said. "They are planning their own administration, while the transitional national government already has appointed a governor and city mayor who should be running that city."

There have been more than a dozen attempts to form a central government in Somalia since civil war broke out in 1991.

A transitional Somali parliament was formed in Kenya more than a year ago, following a two-year peace process.

On Sunday, Somali Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi fired national security minister Qanyare and three other ministers - Musa Sudi Yalahow, Issa Botan Alin, and Omar Muhamoud Finnish - for their involvement in the Mogadishu fighting.

President Bush pushes for gay marriage ban

US President George W. Bush is pushing for a national ban on gay marriage, as the US Senate opened a debate on a constitutional amendment to prohibit same-sex weddings. "Changing the definition of marriage would undermine the structure of the family," said Bush, who raised the issue at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

"The Defense of Marriage Act declares that no state is required to accept another state's definition of marriage. If that act is overturned by the courts, then marriage recognized in one city or state may have to be recognized as marriages everywhere else," said the President.

Bush criticized judges who overturned state laws. State legislatures "are being thwarted by activist judges who are overturning the expressed will of their people... Marriage is the most fundamental institution of civilization, and it should not be redefined by activist judges," he said. The "cornerstone of a healthy society" is traditional marriage, Bush declared, and the issue should be returned - "back where it belongs: in the hands of the American people."

At the White House, Bush told supporters of the amendment that he's "proud to stand" with them. His comments come as the U.S.

Senate starts three days of debate on the measure. All Senate Democrats, except Ben Nelson of Nebraska, oppose the ban.

Whilst many in the Senate do support Bush's amendments, in the final throes of an election cycle, few are prepared to support the bill. "A vote for this amendment is a vote for bigotry pure and simple," said Democratic Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, where the state Supreme Court legalized gay marriages in 2003.

"Marriage between one man and one woman does a better job protecting children better than any other institution humankind has devised," said Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. "As such, marriage as an institution should be protected, not redefined."

Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, who says he believes marriage is the union of a man and a woman, said he nonetheless will vote against the amendment on a test vote Wednesday.

"The reason for this debate is to divide our society, to pit one against another," Reid said in remarks prepared for delivery on the Senate floor. "This is another one of the president's efforts to frighten, to distort, to distract, and to confuse America. It is this administration's way of avoiding the tough, real problems that American citizens are confronted with each and every day."

NSW Government walks away from Cross City Motorway negotiations

New South Wales Premier, Morris Iemma announced on Sunday that his government would be reversing 13 controversial road

changes and alterations which were carried out to force traffic into the Cross City Tunnel.

The road changes were initially approved by the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority and formed part of the contract with the Cross City Motorway (who operate the tunnel).

The government wished also for the company to lower the toll from AUD\$3.37 to the \$2.90 discounted toll which will expire at midnight Mon. Jan 5.

Cross City Motorway wanted AUD\$96 Million as compensation but the government's highest offer was only \$30 Million. Cross City Motorway were being "greedy" said NSW Roads minister, Eric Roozendaal.

NSW Premier Morris Iemma said that his government had tried to negotiate a suitable compensation package. "We've negotiated over the last three months in good faith. We've done our best ... to reach an arrangement satisfactory to all -- to taxpayers to motorists and one which the company could live with" he said.

Despite the government walking away from negotiations the company could still come to the government with an offer, Mr Iemma said.

"Obviously, the ball's in the company's court in relation to their response" he said.

The Premier said it would be wise for the company to continue the reduced toll. "It is in their commercial interest to ensure that motorists have got incentives to use this road."

The NRMA, the peak motoring

organisation in NSW, also believes that the toll should remain at its discounted rate. "It's now up to the Cross City Tunnel operators to also make sure motorists get a fair deal by only charging a fair toll and not raising the toll back up to that exorbitant level it was before" said NRMA president Alan Evans.

Mr Iemma said he expected there may be a lawsuit made by Cross City Motorway against his government but believes his government is in a good position to defend any claims for damages.

Cross City Motorway is expected to respond on the issue today.

U.K. doctors successfully transplant a beating heart

British doctors have successfully transplanted a beating heart into the chest of a 58-year old man, the first operation of its kind in the United Kingdom.

The "trial" surgery was performed at Papworth Hospital just outside of London, England in Cambridge. The operation could be "equivalent if not superior" to the current transplanting methods, doctors said. The method has only been performed two other times, in Germany.

Usually hearts would be injected with potassium which stopped the heart from beating, after which it would be covered with ice. This put the heart in "suspended animation" but gave doctors only a six hour window to examine and transplant, doctors said.

"Normally the heart is in suspended animation but they still start to deteriorate," said Professor Bruce Rosengard, head of the team of doctors who operated on the man.

The new method involves hooking up the heart to a machine which pumps warm, oxygen enriched blood through the heart. The heart is able to keep beating with this method. The new process allows surgeons to look more closely and longer at the heart for any signs of damage. It also allows them to find a match for whoever may need it.

"Once hearts are hooked up to the device, which takes about 20 minutes, any deterioration is fully reversed. If we look at resuscitating hearts that are currently unusable the number of transplants could be tripled or quadrupled," added Rosengard. "The goal of this trial is to demonstrate that this is at least equivalent if not superior," he added.

The director of transplants in the United Kingdom Chris Rudge also says that doctors are working on using the same new method with different human organs.

"In the longer term it is not just hearts that can be handled by such systems but other organs too, particularly the liver," said Rudge.

The 58-year old man is doing "extremely well. At his exam one week after the operation, all his functions were absolutely normal," Rosengard said.

At least 19 more operations are planned in the U.K. and in Germany.

United Nations Report: Deserts threatened by global warming

A new report, entitled "Global Deserts Outlook," has been released on World Environment Day by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The report suggests that the world's deserts face dramatic changes as a result of global climate change: high water demands, tourism and salt contamination of irrigated soils. Desert margins and mountainous areas within deserts that have been important for people, wildlife and water supplies for millennia, are under particular threat, say UNEP.

2006 is the United Nations' International Year of Deserts and Desertification. Yet deserts could become the "carbon-free power houses of the 21st century," some experts believe. They argue an area 800 by 800 km of desert, such as the Sahara, could capture the solar energy to generate all the world's electricity needs - and more.

The report, prepared by experts from across the globe, flags options that may help governments and relevant bodies deliver a more sustainable future for the Earth's desert regions.

"There are many popular and sometimes misplaced views of deserts which this report either confirms or overturns. Far from being barren wastelands, they emerge as biologically, economically and culturally dynamic while being increasingly subject to the impacts and pressures of the modern world," said Shafqat Kakakhel, UNEP's Officer in Charge and Deputy Executive Director.

"If the huge, solar-power potential of deserts can be economically harnessed the world has a future free from fossil fuels. And tourism based around desert nature can, if sensitively managed, deliver new prospects and perspectives for people in some of the poorest

parts of the world," said Mr Kakakhel.

Almost one-quarter of the earth's land surface - some 33.7 million square kilometres - has been defined as "desert" in some sense. These deserts are inhabited by over 500 million people, significantly more than previously thought. In many parts of the world desert cores remain pristine, representing some of the planet's "last remaining areas of total wilderness," stated the UNEP in a news release.

Desert species are on the brink of extinction the Global Deserts Outlook reports. At risk animals include various species of Gazelle, Oryx, Addax, Arabian Tahr and the Barbary sheep as well as one of the falconers favourite prey, the Houbara. "At greatest risk are the few patches of dry woodlands associated with desert mountain habitats which may decline by up to 3.5 per cent per year," said the study.

As a result of their valuable water supplies being diverted to domestic or agricultural use, desert wetlands, fed by the large rivers crossing deserts, are probably the most threatened ecosystem. Probable impacts include those created by roads, settlement expansion and other infrastructure developments around areas of desert montane. By 2050 the report estimates that desert wilderness - those areas where there are no nearby roads - will decline from just under 60 per cent of the current total desert area to just over 30 per cent.

The pharmaceutical potential of desert plants has yet to be tapped, suggests the report. Scientists across the globe are analysing many desert plants for potential

medicinal compounds - including anti-cancer and anti-malarial substances, antioxidants, as well as appetite suppressants.

Impact of climate change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), who advise governments and the United Nations, have reported that temperatures in deserts could rise by an average of as much as five to seven degrees by 2100. The problem, UNEP say, will almost certainly be compounded by the melting of glaciers - whose waters sustain many deserts.

The impacts of climate change include the transformation of semi-arid rangelands into deserts, UNEP reports. They say water supplies are under threat from salinization and pollution by pesticides and herbicides, and that rising water-tables beneath irrigated soils has led to more salinization of soils.

In some coastal areas ground-water supplies have been contaminated as seawater invades subsurface waters, the report shows. Large rivers that run through deserts have supported desert people for millennia, but many have been dammed, with water loss downstream having led to serious impacts on flood plains and river ecology.

Handbag used in Hurricanes assault reached \$22,750, New Zealand

The handbag used to hit Super 14 Hurricanes player, Chris Masoe by Tana Umanga after Masoe had punched a patron has just been sold on the New Zealand auction site, Trade Me. The brawl happened in a Christchurch pub called The Jolly Poacher. Masoe was fined \$3,000 for his actions, Umanga received no punishment.

The confirmed winning bid was \$22,750 (NZD) from Sue Langmaid, a.k.a. susie45, Wanganui, on behalf of an anonymous friend. There were numerous fake bids placed, one reaching one hundred million dollars.

The original owner of the bag, 22-year-old Nichole Davis, Christchurch said to the Sunday Star Times "At the moment I'm thinking it's pretty crazy. It's right up there. I thought I would get \$600. I'm thinking it's an insane amount of money. I'll worry about it if it actually comes through. Right now I just want to relax. I've definitely been lucky and it's quite like winning Lotto."

The auction page got over one million page views which, for ten minutes, made the site trademe.co.nz unusable.

Australian nuclear power plants rejected by states

Australian media reports that Prime Minister John Howard is expected to push a nuclear energy inquiry through federal cabinet this week. Meanwhile, a list of possible sites for nuclear reactors has been leaked by the Opposition to media. The locations, listed in 1997, include Adelaide, Darwin, Perth, Lucas Heights, Goulburn, Holsworthy, and Broken Hill in New South Wales and other sites.

West Australian (WA) premier Alan Carpenter says the list of fourteen potential sites were a "facade to soften up Western Australians into accepting a nuclear waste dump." The WA Premier said people would not only be surprised but "stunned to learn that the federal cabinet considered possible sites... without disclosing them to any state government."

Mr Carpenter said in a media release that the document mentions a site near Perth airport. "People should wake up to what's happening around Australia, particularly in WA," said Mr. Carpenter. "Only a few weeks ago, we had three prominent WA Liberal MPs supporting a nuclear waste dump in WA," he said. "This is all a facade in the Howard Government's push to soften up West Australians for a nuclear waste dump."

Premier Carpenter, whose Labor government stridently opposes uranium mining in WA, stated his opposition to a nuclear waste dump: "I vehemently oppose the prospect of our State becoming the dumping ground for the world's nuclear waste and that is what will happen if we allow uranium mining in WA. The evidence is mounting and indisputable."

The South Australian Government has ruled out any possible nuclear power plant in SA. "A nuclear power plant would bankrupt our state," SA Premier Mike Rann said. "It would not be commercially viable and would not, in my view, be acceptable to the public. Nuclear power plants need giant populations to sustain them, there is no-one coming to me from the commercial sector or the mining industry or anywhere else, suggesting a nuclear power plant."

Earlier, Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer said South Australia should build a nuclear power station to run a desalination plant. Premier Rann dismissed the idea as ridiculous and said comments by Mr Downer highlight divisions within Federal Cabinet. He said Mr Downer is at odds with the Federal Finance Minister Nick Minchin, who says the high costs

of nuclear power would rule it out.

Mr Rann says South Australia will not allow nuclear power. "For once I'm agreeing with Nick Minchin," he said. "I think Nick Minchin is right that a nuclear power plant isn't necessary and won't happen and I think that Alexander Downer is having a bit of a lend of him."

Victoria's Energy Minister Theo Theophanous said nuclear energy in Australia did not make sense when the cost and problems of waste disposal were considered. Mr Theophanous has rejected a report that found nuclear power could be competitive with conventional energy generation if it was subsidised with help from a taxpayer subsidy.

A recent report, found nuclear power could compete with gas or coal-fired electricity if taxpayers helped to pay for it or shouldered the risk of its production. The ANSTO report found nuclear plants could be built in the next 10 to 15 years and an Australian version would cost about \$2.5 billion to establish. To make it viable, taxpayers would pay hundreds of million towards start-up costs, said the report.

But Mr Theophanous said Victoria had already had concluded the nuclear proposal did not add up. "I had my department look at this and provide a report to me more than a year ago in relation to the prospect of nuclear power," he said. "The problem is a commercial one as much as anything else. It costs roughly double the price to produce power out of nuclear energy. If you're going to pay double the price, why not put in wind farms? Why not use renewable energy, which is even cheaper than nuclear energy?" said Mr Theophanous .

The Victoria Government urges householders to reduce greenhouse emissions by reducing daily energy consumption. A new campaign identifies simple measures residents can adopt to cut power bills and greenhouse emissions, including turning the heating thermostat to no more than 20C, washing clothes in cold water and turning appliances off at the switch when they are not being used.

New South Wales Premier Morris Iemma has also declared his opposition to nuclear power. He said no nuclear power stations would be built in NSW as long as he is premier. Mr Iemma urged state opposition leader Peter Debnam to join him in opposing the construction of nuclear power plants in NSW. "While ever I'm premier of NSW there won't be any nuclear power plants in NSW," he told reporters.

Queensland Premier Peter Beattie says he "would not jeopardize the state's coal industry by supporting a nuclear power plant." Mr. Beattie has ruled out uranium mining in Queensland to protect the state's huge coal industry. He said he would not support a nuclear power plant. "The State Government would not support it," Mr. Beattie said.

"We have the power to block them and we would block them, we would not support nuclear power. Why would we have a nuclear reactor in competition with the coal industry?" Mr. Beattie told media.

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) chairman Don Henry says a nuclear debate must consider climate change. "If the inquiry is just about nuclear power it will be a waste of taxpayers

money because nuclear power is too dangerous, too dirty, and too slow to tackle climate change," he said. "If the inquiry is going to be fairdinkum, it needs to look at that issue: what can we do right now to tackle climate change in Australia?"

Australian Greens climate change and energy spokesperson Senator Christine Milne said in a media release: "Instead of turning to nuclear power, Australia should ratify the Kyoto Protocol, invest in renewable energy, adopt a national energy efficiency target and improve public transport. "Several studies examining options to achieve deep cuts in Australian greenhouse emissions all show this goal can be achieved, cost effectively, without resorting to nuclear power."

Greens Senator Rachel Siewert says: "The nuclear industry is engaged in a concerted effort to be given one last chance for redemption... yet every step of the nuclear fuel chain, from mining, milling, enrichment and operating reactors to waste storage, is subject to the same human error, material breakdowns, complexity and incompetence as any other area of human endeavour." said Senator Siewert. "The current inventory of nuclear waste will already present our descendents with a monstrous intergenerational headache. Allowing so much as a kilogram more of this material to be produced is simply immoral."

The ACF say "nuclear energy is not a solution to climate change." ACF President Professor Ian Lowe says "Nuclear is too slow to provide any legitimate answer to climate change or to energy security for the developing world." The ACF report that, as an energy source globally, uranium provides less

power than renewables do. "Uranium is inextricably linked to very serious environmental and health problems via nuclear weapons and radioactive waste. There is nothing ideological about opposing its use..."

The Australian Newspaper reports that Prime Minister Howard is preparing to appoint chief scientist Jim Peacock, a supporter of nuclear power, and other high-level nuclear industry experts to the team. The public inquiry, to be undertaken by three or four selected experts is expected to "examine the economics of nuclear energy, health, safety, environmental and proliferation issues as well as waste and storage." The taskforce will take submissions and is expected to prepare a report to Government within four or five months, with the Government's response early in 2007.

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO), Ian Smith, says "at least three" power plants would be required. Mr Howard said the ANSTO report challenged the view that the cost of nuclear power was prohibitive. Dr Smith told a Senate estimates hearing that Australia would require "multiple power stations to make the industry viable".

Federal Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane said the nuclear energy inquiry would also include consideration of nuclear enrichment plants in Australia. Mr Macfarlane said he would consider a nuclear power plant in his own Toowoomba electorate.

Prime Minister John Howard insisted he would not be deterred by the unpopularity of nuclear power.

Portuguese military land in East Timor

120 soldiers of the Portuguese Republican National Guard (GNR) landed this Sunday morning in Baucau, the second-largest city in East Timor, after their departure to East Timor had been delayed twice due to difficulties in arranging adequate air transportation. The soldiers were received by the Portuguese ambassador to East Timor, local representatives and hundreds of locals.

After the landing, at approximately 7 a.m. local time (2200 Saturday, UTC), of the aircraft that transported the Portuguese soldiers, hundreds of people started to enter the runway with flags of East Timor and Portugal. In addition to the hundreds of locals that were expecting the GNR soldiers, the Portuguese ambassador, João Ramos Pinto, and other local authorities received the soldiers.

Both the population and the authorities believe that the presence of the GNR troops, many of whom have also served in Iraq, may be essential to allow the inhabitants of Dili to return to their homes.

A Portuguese military column then left at the beginning of the afternoon, from Baucau to Dili, transporting the 120 soldiers and an medical team of Portugal's National Medical Emergency Institute, INEM. Now in Dili, the Portuguese contingent's main objectives will be to provide security in the city and its suburbs, and to train Dili's police force.

The destruction of many public buildings in the last days forced a move of the Portuguese

headquarters from a Dili police station to the Dili Hotel 2001, a touristy complex just outside the East Timor's capital. The hotel's gymnasium will be converted to a command post. Some of the other hotel divisions have already a infirmary, set by a INEM team, and a communications center, set by a Portugal Telecom technical team, working.

An Antonov An-124 airplane is expected to leave Lisbon next Tuesday with the rest of equipment for the Portuguese force, mainly vehicles, six vans of public order, five jeeps, three pickup trucks, and six armoured vehicles, like those used in Iraq by the Republican National Guard.

Unlike the troops from New Zealand and Malaysia, who are under the direct command of the Australians, Portugal refused to put its troops under Australian command. This decision was announced by Portugal's Foreign Minister, Diogo Freitas do Amaral, during a news conference in Lisbon this Friday. Freitas do Amaral added that early that day a meeting was held between him, an Australian General, and a second unidentified person.

The Australian mission "was expressly sent from London to Lisbon to ask for clarifications" to a agreement that was signed last Thursday (June 1) in Dili, between Portugal and East Timor, reaffirming that the GNR group has its own operational command.

José Ramos Horta told Lusa News Agency that the soldiers of the GNR "have to start acting with autonomy and hardness" in all the city, Dili, to reestablish the law and order. The Foreign Minister also told the Agency that he "respects" the decision of the

Portuguese government to put the GNR force out of the Australian command of the international force, affirming that is essential to reach an agreement this Monday, so that the Portuguese Republican National Guard "can be operational."

Ramos Horta added that this will be the position that he will defend in a meeting this Thursday morning with the diplomats of Australia, Portugal, New Zealand and Malaysia. This meeting will define the way that the forces of the four countries will work on the country, having the troops of Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia working under a single Australian command, and the Portuguese force working in an "autonomous" way and reporting directly to President Xanana Gusmão.

The East Timorese Minister, guarded by Australian elite soldiers, and travelling in a civilian car, heard complaints about the lack of protection given by the 1.300 Australian soldiers already at the city, while saying "that is obvious that there's a arousing frustration of the population before the apparent impunity with those groups that continue to destroy".

The Portuguese military are in East Timor in response to a request of help made by the East Timor authorities to Australia, Portugal, New Zealand, and Malaysia. This is the second time that the special operations team of the GNR has been to this former Portuguese colony, after being in East Timor between February, 2000 and June, 2002.

Today in History

1654 - Charles X Gustav succeeded his cousin Christina to the Swedish throne.

1925 - The Chrysler Corporation was founded by Walter Chrysler.

1944 - The Battle of Normandy began with 155,000 Allied troops landing on the beaches of Normandy in the largest amphibious military operation in history.

1971 - The Ed Sullivan Show, a top rated variety show that introduced the United States to Elvis Presley and The Beatles, went off the air after twenty-three years.

1982 - A war in Lebanon began when Israeli forces invaded southern Lebanon to root out PLO militants.

June 06 is National holiday of Sweden observed.

Quote of the Day

Nobody knows you. No. But I sing of you.

For posterity I sing of your profile and grace.

Of the signal maturity of your understanding.

Of your appetite for death and the taste of its mouth.

Of the sadness of your once valiant gaiety.

~ Federico García Lorca ~

Word of the Day

sesquicentennial; *adj*

Definition

1. Occurring every 150 years.
2. Of, or relating to a 150 year anniversary.

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