



Top Stories

Australian Guantanamo detainee David Hicks gets British citizenship



Australian Guantanamo Bay detainee David Hicks has won British citizenship, opening the door for a possible bid to have him freed from the US detention facility in Cuba. The British High Court overturned the Blair Government's refusal of citizenship to Hicks. Hicks' lawyer said the decision was a breakthrough.

Violence cuts short visit of Dominican Republic president

Protests against the president of the Dominican Republic turned violent on Monday in Haiti, where tires were burned and thrown at the presidential palace in the capitol city of Port-au-Prince.



Leonel Fernandez, leader of the neighboring Dominican Republic, was staying as a guest at the palace.

Featured story

Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney not seeking second term



Commonwealth of Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney has stated that he will not seek re-election to the office of governor.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Former United States presidential candidate Al Sharpton agrees to pay \$100,000 to the Federal Election Commission in a settlement over alleged corrupt practices during his 2004 electoral bid.
- South Korean biomedical researcher Hwang Woo-Suk admits that he faked nine of eleven stem cell colonies used in what had been hailed as a medical breakthrough in the journal Science.
- Thousands of Iraqi Shia protest against Al Jazeera after a guest on a talk show on the network suggested that the Ayatollah Ali Sistani, Shia Islam's most senior cleric, should stay out of politics.
- The European Council meets to discuss the next 7-year budget for the European Union.
- Voting starts in Iraq to elect the first permanent 275-member Iraqi National Assembly under the new Constitution of Iraq.
- A Nepalese soldier shoots dead 11 people at a temple in Nagarkot, near Kathmandu.
- Marwan Barghouti launches a new party called al-Mustaqbal (The Future), splitting from the Fatah movement in the Palestinian National Authority.
- Bradley John Murdoch, convicted murderer of British backpacker Peter Falconio, is sentenced to a non-parole period of 28 years in prison in Australia.

Mozilla, Internet Explorer adopt universal RSS symbol

Jane Kim, the program manager for RSS in Microsoft's Internet Explorer 7, announced recently that her team had chosen a graphical representation of RSS feeds — one popularized by its competitor. Microsoft employees have been posting variations of conceptual designs since earlier this year, but have now announced that they chose an icon used by the rival browser, Mozilla Firefox. The Microsoft team collaborated with Mozilla staff during the selection process.

"I'm excited to announce that we're adopting the icon used in Firefox," wrote Kim. "We'll be using the icon in the IE7 command bar whenever a page has a feed associated with it, and we'll also use it in other places in the browser whenever we need a visual to represent RSS and feeds."

Microsoft is poised to release IE7 with many of the new features popularized in Firefox, such as browser tabs, RSS support, full PNG and CSS support, and other improvements.

NYC Transit Strike Looming

Around 8.1 million inner-city residents could be affected by a transit system strike in New York City.

NYC mayor Michael Bloomberg said in a press conference that there

would be "no winners" if a transit system strike became a reality. Contract talks have not begun with the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and the Transit Workers Union Local 100.

Bloomberg also said that the city could lose \$400 million a day from its economy during a strike, and City government could lose \$22 million per day.

CNN reports that Bloomberg has planned to close several key streets in Manhattan will be closed to general traffic: Fifth and Madison avenues from 23rd to 96th streets; 26th, 29th, 49th and 50th streets from First to 12th avenues; and part of Church Street in the event of a complete transit system closure.

A strike, if it occurred, would begin at 12:01 tomorrow when the Transit Workers' contract expires.

White supremacism crosses the Tasman Sea

Posters calling for "white power" have appeared at Wellington railway stations in New Zealand. The posters have been attributed to a group called "The White Crusaders of the Racial Holy War".

Unlike the usenet postings in Australia being made by an unknown organisation "Action for Australia", the White Crusaders of the Racial Holy War are well known. According to their website, they are "crusaders", and believe in the CREATIVITY religion - created for the "Survival, Expansion, and Advancement of the White Race."

The posters say "If Sydney can do it so can we... let's take back our land".

Leaders of the New Zealand National Party and United Future Party have condemned the posters. Don Brash leader of the New Zealand National Party said that the White Crusaders of the Racial Holy War are "a small, fascist underbelly, hell-bent on causing division and destroying New Zealand's egalitarian ethos ... they are thugs and bigots"

Violence cuts short visit of Dominican Republic president

Protests against the president of the Dominican Republic turned violent on Monday in Haiti, where tires were burned and thrown at the presidential palace in the capitol city of Port-au-Prince. Leonel Fernandez, leader of the neighboring Dominican Republic, was staying as a guest at the palace.

The police reacted violently, resulting in 3 people being shot and wounded. Protestors had tried to block the motorcade of the Dominican president, which resulted in Haitian police firing shots into the air. UN representative David Wimhurst said UN peacekeepers were at the protests, but only Haitian police and bodyguards of the Dominican president fired shots.

The protests were over alleged abuses of Haitian refugees in the Dominican Republic, an issue of importance to the relationship of the two countries in the past several months. In May the Dominican government deported at least 2,000 Haitian in response to murder of a Dominican woman. Earlier in December several Dominican villagers burned down settlements of Haitians in response for the death of a business man.

Provisional President Boniface Alexandre said that he hopes these talks could fuel better relations between the neighboring countries. Dominican President Fernandez says that he deplores any act of violence against Haitians in his country.

Wikipedia and Britannica about as accurate in science entries, reports Nature

An investigation performed by the scientific revue Nature on Wikipedia and Britannica science entries found the two encyclopedia have similar accuracy.

Nature used peer reviewing to compare Wikipedia and Britannica's coverage of science. In this study, entries were chosen from the websites of Wikipedia and Encyclopaedia Britannica on a broad range of scientific disciplines and sent to a relevant expert for peer review. Each reviewer examined the entry on a single subject from the two encyclopedias without being told which article came from which encyclopaedia.

Among 42 entries tested, the difference in accuracy was not very important: the average science entry in Wikipedia contained around four inaccuracies, Britannica, about three. In the pairs of articles reviewed, eight serious errors such as misinterpretations of important concepts were detected, four from each encyclopaedia. Reviewers also found many factual errors, omissions or misleading statements: 162 in Wikipedia and 123 in Britannica.

The main criticism about Wikipedia was on its readability, with several reviewers commenting that the articles they read were poorly

structured and confusing.

As well as comparing the two encyclopaedias, Nature surveyed more than 1,000 Nature authors and found that although more than 70% had heard of Wikipedia and 17% of those consulted it on a weekly basis, less than 10% help to update it.

Business Brief for December 15, 2005

US trade deficit grows to record levels in October

The US trade deficit grew to record levels in October. Imports have climbed faster than exports despite dropping oil prices. The deficit has widened by \$3 billion to the record \$68.9 billion for the month. The deficit was forecasted by Wall Street to narrow. The nations huge trade imbalance has not begun to stabilize. The gap will effect the nations overall growth. Morgan Stanley has reduced its forecast of the nations growth to 3% from 3.4%. Merrill Lynch is going further forecasting just 2.3% growth. The deficit with China hit \$166.8 billion, \$2.3 billion more than the deficit with China for the entire previous year.

Wal-Mart adds 140 outlets in Brazil

Wal-Mart has agreed to buy the Portuguese group Sonae SGPS SA's retail business in Brazil for about \$757 million. Sonae's 140 stores with an annual revenue of \$1.4 billion will double the amount of Wal-Mart stores in Brazil. The stores will continue to operate under their existing names. Wal-Mart has been expanding internationally and plans to open more than one-third of its stores overseas next year. This is the second acquisition for Wal-Mart in the last two years in the country. Last year the company bought

Bompreco a 118 store supermarket chain for \$300 million. This new acquisition gives Wal-mart 295 outlets in the Brazil. Wal-Mart is the third biggest retailer in the country.

Canadian trade surplus stable through October

Exports rose a tick to C\$40.2 billion, the eighth consecutive increase, but imports increased even more—1.2%—to \$33 billion. The net \$7.17 billion is effectively unchanged since September. Imports from China have reached \$24.2 billion as of October, like China's imports to the United States, have surpassed the total amount imported the entire previous year.

Amgen buys Abgenix, retains full rights to profits

Biotech company Amgen announced today that it will purchase Abgenix for \$2.2 billion. Amgen and Abgenix co-developed a late-stage cancer drug panitumumab. The drug shows promise as a low-side effect alternative to Erbitux (marketed by ImClone Systems and Bristol-Myers Squibb). The takeover means that Amgen will no longer have to split profits from the drug 50/50 with Abgenix. Amgen paid \$22.50/share, 53.6% greater than today's closing price, but analysts state that the stock has enough potential to justify the high expenditure.

Today in History

1653 - The Protectorate: Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland.

1773 - Samuel Adams and the Sons of Liberty attended the Boston Tea Party.

1850 - The Canterbury Pilgrims aboard Randolph and Charlotte-Jane arrived to settle Christchurch,

New Zealand.

1971 - Pakistani forces in East Pakistan surrendered, ending the Indo-Pakistani War and the Bangladesh Liberation War.

1989 - The Romanian Revolution began as a protest in the city of Timișoara against an attempt by the government to evict dissident priest Tőkés. Rioting ensued.

December 17 is National Day in Bahrain (1971), Victory Day in Bangladesh (1971), Independence Day in Kazakhstan (1991).

Quote of the Day

"Fear can make you do more wrong than hate or jealousy. If you're afraid you don't commit yourself to life completely; fear makes you always, always hold something back." ~ Philip K. Dick

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