



### Top Stories

#### Thousands demand climate change action

Thousands of people across Australia are taking part in protests calling on the Federal Government to ratify the Kyoto protocol. The 'Walk Against Warming' is part of an international day of action in 40 countries, coinciding with the United Nations climate change talks in Montreal.

#### Bush speaks of goals for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, decries calls for timetable

U.S. President Bush stated his commitment to withdraw troops from Iraq and outlined goals for training Iraqi security forces that will guide such withdrawal. As expected, he did not set a timeframe for this withdrawal.

### Featured story

#### First face transplant performed on French woman

Surgeons in France have performed a face transplant operation on a French woman who had lost her nose, lips and chin after being savaged by a dog.

### Wikipedia Current Events

- Talks on the new EU budget may not be completed under the United Kingdom's presidency, the UK's minister for Europe warns
- Republic of China (Taiwan) opposition party Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) makes major gains in municipal

### Wikipedia Current Events

elections, taking 14 of 23 mayor or county magistrate seats. Ruling Democratic Progressive Party takes six seats. People First Party and New Party each takes one seat, and an independent wins one seat. DPP chairman Su Tseng-chang resigns to take responsibility for his party's defeat.

•Pakistan's information minister claims Pakistani forces have killed al-Qaeda operational commander Abu Hamza Rabia in fighting along the Afghanistan border.

•Roadside Bomb about 60 miles from Baghdad, attack kills 19 Iraqi Troops.

•Some 40,000 protest inaction on global warming in Montreal. The demonstration, held as part of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, is one of the largest environmental protests ever and is accompanied by marches worldwide, including one in hurricane-devastated New Orleans.

#### Judge allows student to sue school for revealing sexuality

A U.S. federal judge ruled on Nov. 28 that 17-year old Charlene Nguon can sue her high school principal who revealed to her mother that she is lesbian.

The lawsuit, brought in September by a high school senior in California, claims she was unfairly disciplined by the school for kissing her girlfriend. She also

alleges that her sexuality caused the school to suspend her when there was no specific policy addressing displays of public affection in the student handbook, and that her privacy rights were violated when the school principal revealed to her parents that she was lesbian.

The school district sought to have the charges dismissed by arguing in part that Nguon was openly gay on campus, and therefore had no right to privacy on the matter.

Judge James V. Selna of the Central District Court of California found that the school district was immune from the plaintiff's claims in a 13-page finding issued on Monday. However, the individual administrators, the school principal and superintendent, did not qualify for immunity. In his findings he noted that the administrators did not take "action to stop or remedy the alleged harassment and discrimination", and did not enact an "adequate formal or informal policy to ensure that Santiago High is providing a learning environment free from discrimination", which is a requirement of the California Education Code.

In allowing the lawsuit to move forward, Judge Selna found that Nguon had "sufficiently alleged a legally protected privacy interest in information about her sexual orientation."

Nguon is seeking unspecified damages and is being represented

by the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California.

"This is the first court ruling we're aware of where a judge has recognized that a student has a right not to have her sexual orientation disclosed to her parents," said Christine Sun, Nguon's lawyer.

Nguon was found in the hallway openly kissing and hugging her girlfriend, actions permitted between heterosexual students at the Santiago High School in Garden Grove, California. The school principal, Ben Wolf, told Nguon's mother about her daughter's sexuality after the student failed to stop the displays of affection between her and her girlfriend. During this time, Nguon was suspended numerous times for ignoring the requests, and was ultimately forced to temporarily change schools.

No trial date is set. The parties are scheduled to return to court on Jan. 23.

### **East Timor - Australia problematic billion-dollar gas and oil accord**

Australia and East Timor officials signed a billion-dollar gas and oil accord, which is necessary because of a current maritime border dispute between the countries, which covers a major oil field. Although the accord has to be ratified by East Timor's parliament which is ruled by Fretilin with 55 seats the biggest block in parliament, but all the smaller parties are said to be working together to veto the deal.

In 1975, Portugal abandoned East Timor and the people declared self-independence only to be invaded by Indonesia with out any

intervention from Australia or the United States. Indonesia then agreed on no formal maritime boards but on a joint exploitation zone splitting profits 50/50.

Indonesian rule in East Timor was marked by extreme violence and brutality and following a UN-sponsored agreement between Indonesia, Portugal and the US, East Timor held a referendum and gained independence, but violent Indonesian sponsored militia took hold. A peacekeeping force (INTERFET, led by Australia) then intervened putting a stop to the violence. The exploitation zone splitting profits was then changed to 60% in favour of Australia, but now a new deal has been proposed 90/10 in favour of Timor. In the mean time Australia has been accused of profiting by up to 2 billion dollars between the deals by activist groups like <http://www.timorseajustice.org/> whose campaigning saw Woodside suspended oil pumping in the affected area.

Contemporary International law asserts that the area under dispute belongs to East Timor. Australia has withdrawn from the maritime division of the International Court of Justice, which could have settled this matter, instead opting to try settle the matter without the court.

The previous deal has caused political infight within East Timor about why such a smaller percentage was accepted.

### **Tennessee town mulls 'stop work order' as construction of controversial grain tanks begins**

Mayor Scott Jewell of the city of Dyer, Tennessee did not issue a "stop work order" to Dyer Grain Company late Tuesday afternoon

as had been expected. The order would have temporarily halted construction of new grain storage tanks.

Dyer Grain's efforts at expansion have been blocked several times over the past few years both by zoning restrictions on the height of structures and by citizens groups who filed suit against the grain company and the city's board of zoning appeals. The lawsuit was dismissed two months ago. The Dyer City Council then amended the zoning ordinance to include "grain storage tanks and bins" in a section of the ordinance listing exclusions, such as free standing spires and towers, to the regular 40 foot height restriction on buildings.

Several citizens spoke at the November 28 city council meeting to address alleged deficiencies in the building permit issued to Dyer Grain. The citizens claimed that according to the site plan filed with the application for the permit, the location of the tanks will violate another provision in the zoning ordinance restricting the height of all structures to the distance from surrounding property lines plus ten feet. The citizens were also concerned over a "grain conveyor" that will cross a city street. Mayor Jewell indicated that he would contact the Gibson County building inspector (who is contracted by the city to act as the municipal inspector) to research the citizens' concerns.

Jewell contacted Ricky Bailey, Gibson County Building inspector, on Wednesday. Bailey reportedly could find no deficiencies with the permit and, based on this advice, Jewell chose not to issue the stop work order himself. The City Council could still meet and vote to issue the order. The council

meets the second monday of each month.

"The main problem is that the grain company is in an industrial zone -- which is located smack in the middle of a low-density residential zone." Nathan Reed, an elected Alderman of Dyer said, "The property values in the area have increased (with inflation) but not at the same rate as other properties."

Normal buildings, such as offices and warehouses, can't exceed 40' plus 10' to the eave. The requested change in the ordinance changes the status of the towers from a building to the same status of an antenna or tower.

Mr Reed added, "The height to the eave is 76', the height to the top of the tank is 105', the height to the top of the elevator (atop the tank) is 133'. The 133' is the only measurement that matters now because the change to the zoning ordinance means this is no longer a "building", but rather the same as an antenna or tower."

"The grain company specifically requested that change to the ordinance -- which was opposed by several citizens...They can build it as high as they like so long as it conforms to the overall height restriction for towers, spires, etc."

Mr Reed commented on additional concerns, "The citizens are concerned about the health effects of (additional) grain dust, noise, and grain explosions."

The new construction is expected to generate annual property tax revenues of \$10,000 to \$16,000.

### Today in History

1639 - Jeremiah Horrocks made the first observation of a transit of Venus.

1674 - Jesuit missionary Jacques Marquette (pictured) founded a mission on the shores of Lake Michigan to minister to the Illiniwek; the mission later grew into Chicago, Illinois.

1791 - The Observer, the world's first Sunday newspaper, was first published.

1829 - The practice of sati, a Hindu funeral custom in which the widow immolated herself alive on her husband's pyre, was banned by Lord William Bentinck in British India.

1977 - The President of the Central African Republic had himself crowned as Emperor Bokassa I in a lavish ceremony.

### Quote of the Day

"All idealisation makes life poorer. To beautify it is to take away its character of complexity — it is to destroy it." ~ Joseph Conrad

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