



Top Stories

Major fire breaks out at Istanbul airport

A major blaze has broken out in Turkey's Ataturk International Airport, causing all flight-operations to be suspended. Large-scale fire-fighting operations are underway.

The Australia Institute identifies ideal sites for nuclear power stations

The Australia Institute has released its analysis of ideal locations for a nuclear power plant in Australia. They said the most important criteria is for the site to be on the coast so it has access to large volumes of water used by the reactor for cooling.

Featured story

British sailor resumes around-the-world voyage after stop in Hawaii

British sailor Adrian Flanagan, seeking to become the first person to single-handedly circumnavigate the globe in a north-south direction, set sail from Honolulu on May 17 after a nine-day stop for supplies and repairs to his boat. Flanagan had spent his stay as a guest of the Waikiki Yacht Club, which arranged for emergency repairs to his boat.

Wikipedia Current Events

- World Health Organization is investigating several bird flu deaths for a possible person-to-person transmission chain.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The FBI announces that Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Dennis Hastert is under investigation for corruption. The charge is later termed to be false. Hastert denies knowledge of any FBI investigation, and jointly issues a statement with Democrat House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi demanding that the FBI return documents found in a court ordered search of Democratic Representative Bill Jefferson. The documents are expected to implicate several congressman in the ongoing corruption scandal.

- Over one hundred people are feared dead following heavy rains and flooding in northern Thailand.

- Four Russian soldiers die during fighting in Chechnya.

- Disgruntled former soldiers and government troops clash in East Timor, leading to at least two deaths in Dili. Australians evacuate as violence escalates. As requested by the East Timor government, at least four countries, Australia, New Zealand, Portugal and Malaysia, are sending in troops in an effort to maintain order.

- A large fire breaks out at the cargo terminal of Ataturk International Airport in Istanbul, Turkey, forcing the suspension of air traffic.

- President of Mexico Vicente Fox begins a tour of the United States in Salt Lake City by attacking a

Wikipedia Current Events

proposed border wall. This comes amid the U.S. Senate passing a sweeping immigration bill.

British plane catches fire in Afghanistan

A British plane caught on fire in Afghanistan. It was a four-engine propeller aircraft that got into trouble while landing. One of the aircraft's tyres exploded.

Ambassador Stephen Evans escaped injury after a military transport plane he was travelling in caught fire at an airstrip in southern Afghanistan.

None were seriously hurt. All 27 people on board were safe.

Multinational force sent to East Timor

After the breakdown of law and order in the world's newest nation, East Timor's Foreign Minister, Jose Ramos Horta has requested military assistance from Australia, New Zealand, Portugal and Malaysia. The force would "disarm renegade troops and police rebelling against the state" and "...Australia and New Zealand will come soon" Mr Horta said to reporters.

The first troops from Australia's 1300 strong commitment to East Timor, which also includes three ships, helicopters and armoured personnel carriers, will likely arrive in East Timor by this afternoon, having been on standby in recent weeks in preparation for such a

possibility. Two of the Royal Australian Navy's amphibious landing ships, HMAS Kanimbla and Manoora, are currently heading north to East Timor with troops on board, and the rest of Australia's 1300 strong task force would likely arrive in the next 48 hours. They would be joined by approximately 120 Portuguese military police and 60 police and troops from New Zealand. Australia may also send troops from 4 RAR (Commandos) and SASR from Holsworthy, NSW and Perth respectively.

The uprising in East Timor has resulted from the firing of nearly 600 East Timorese soldiers who went on strike, alleging ethnic discrimination and poor pay and conditions. They are led by the highest ranking officer in the renegade force, Australian-trained Major Alfredo Reinado, who East Timorese President Xanana Gusmao has vowed to hunt down, and who will undoubtedly be an important target for the Australian task force entering an ill-defined Area of Operations (AO) where East Timorese government forces have been battling the renegade troops and police.

Foreign minister Ramos-Horta told the ABC that he hoped foreign forces would not have to engage the renegade East Timorese troops but would have "an immediate calming effect throughout the country" and "encourage political dialogue."

California Supreme Court revives High School Exit Exam

The on-again, off-again requirement that California high school seniors must pass the High School Exit Exam is back on again, after the California State Supreme Court today granted the state's request that the court stay a lower court's decision to stop schools

from requiring the test.

Lawyers for State Superintendent of Schools Jack O'Connell asked for the stay after Alameda County Superior Court Judge Robert Freedman ruled May 12 that the test requirement was unfair and unconstitutional, and forbade the state's schools from using it as a graduation requirement. O'Connell's lawyers also asked the Supreme Court to hear their argument that the Court should endorse the test and overturn Freedman's ruling, but the Court sent the case down to the 1st District Court of Appeal for hearings.

"I am extremely pleased that the Supreme Court has reinstated the California High School Exit Exam as a condition for graduation," O'Connell said after the decision was announced. "As a result, school districts can continue their graduation exercises as planned before this litigation began."

Arturo Gonzalez, lead counsel for the students who challenged the test in court, told the James Logan Courier, "Our clients are disappointed in today's 4-3 split decision of the California Supreme Court. However, this fight is not over. We intend to seek immediate relief in the court of appeals in San Francisco. We are hopeful that oral argument can be scheduled in time to obtain an order that would allow the Class of 2006 to graduate."

O'Connell said he's instructing school districts to withhold diplomas from those who haven't passed the test. "I will communicate with districts today to ensure they are aware that the exit exam is a graduation requirement" he said. "Students who have worked hard to pass this

exam will be given a diploma that signifies their mastery of essential skills in reading and math. I hope that this decision will give students in the class of 2006, their parents, and their schools certainty.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger praised the court's decision. "'Today's ruling is a victory for the children of California and for our future as a state," said Schwarzenegger. "The exit exam ensures that our schools are living up to their responsibility by giving our students the skills and the knowledge they need to succeed in college and in the workplace. Postponement would have deprived us of the best tool we have to measure how well schools are doing their job."

The ruling affects about 70 students at James Logan High School who haven't passed either the math or language arts portions of the test, or both. As many as 47,000 are affected statewide.

"It's crazy, I want to cry," said Zuhai, a senior who hasn't yet passed the test after she heard the news. Then she started crying.

Raymond, a senior who has had trouble with the math portion of the test, said he had made plans for graduating based on Freedman's banning of the test. "I'm really disappointed," he said. "I feel really bad. They should cancel it right now. Graduation day is too near."

Both students took the test earlier this month, but won't know if they passed until August 15, said Ray, too late to receive a diploma with their classmates.

"The Supreme Court did not say that Judge Freedman was wrong. Four justices simply questioned

whether allowing our clients to graduate was the appropriate remedy," said Gonzalez, "We intend to demonstrate that the relief was proper. If the constitutional rights of our children are violated, we cannot punish them further by depriving them of a diploma that they have rightfully earned by passing all required courses."

O'Connell said students who haven't passed the test will have more opportunities. "We will not give up on the students who are still struggling to pass," O'Connell said, " They will continue to be given every option to master those skills they will need in order to succeed beyond high school."

O'Connell said he looked forward to arguing the case in the appellate court. "In sending this case to the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court has provided us an opportunity to argue the merits of this case," he said.

O'Connell who wrote the law when he was a state legislator in 1999, said the test is an important ingredient in California's school reform efforts. "We know, and look forward to sharing with the court, that as a result of the exit exam, our students have studied harder and learned more than they would have otherwise," he said.

"Schools, administrators, school board members, parents, and even policy makers here in Sacramento paid more attention to the needs of students who were falling behind their peers.

"Today's court action marks an important step for school accountability. I will continue to fight to make sure every student who graduates in California has the skills necessary to succeed," he said.

Fishermen make "very rare" find in Siberia

In Siberia, fishermen made what experts are calling a "very rare" discovery. A complete and nearly intact skeleton of a mammoth has been found in Krasnoyarsk, Russia off the shores of a small lake. The skeleton became visible when waters from a recent flood receded.

"It happens very rarely. I've been in the area 14 years and this is the first time. The bones are usually spread around over a wide area. The find has retained a backbone, a skull with teeth and a tusk and other anatomic details," said deputy director of the museum and archeologist in Novoselovo, Russia, Alexander Kerzhayev.

Kerzhayev also said that the mammoth appeared to have lived until about 50-years old. "It was an adult mammoth, judging by the size of bones it was at least 50 years old," he added also saying the mammoth appeared to have died from being sick.

However; Kerzhayev also says that the museum does not have the resources to retrieve the remains and that "no one seems to care" about the discovery adding that small portions of the animal could be retrieved.

Major fire breaks out at Istanbul airport

A huge fire which started in the cargo area has engulfed part of Turkey's Atatürk International Airport in Istanbul. All flights to and from the airport have been diverted and major fire-fighting efforts are in progress. Hundreds of people have evacuated the area which is about 1 kilometre away from the passenger terminal.

A witness told Turkish news channel NTV that the blaze broke out in the cargo area of Terminal A, presumably due to an electrical spark, at around 12:30 UTC. The area in which the fire is raging is near the location of the fuel depots. Unconfirmed reports suggest that there were about 250 cargo-handlers present there but most of them seem to have escaped unharmed.

Thirty metre high plumes of smoke are rising into the air and the billows can be seen from all over Istanbul, which indicates the severity of the inferno. Several fire-engines and ambulances are rushing to the scene even as aircraft overhead try to douse the fire in an attempt to prevent it from spreading to a hotel nearby. The airport, incidentally, is located very close to a military hangar.

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Flanagan had spent his stay as a guest of the Waikiki Yacht Club, which arranged for emergency repairs to his boat.

Flanagan, 45, left England on October 28, 2005, headed south through the Atlantic and around the coast of South America. His boat, the 40-foot vessel Barrabas, suffered structural damage during stormy weather around Cape Horn at the southern tip of South America, as a loose wire cut a gash into the mast of his boat. He also suffered dislocated wrists while navigating through the

storm.

Flanagan had initially sought to become the first person to circumnavigate the globe solo without stopping, but the stop in Honolulu brought that goal to an end. When Flanagan reached Hawaii, he had traveled 18,221 miles (29,318 km), becoming the first person to sail solo from Britain to Hawaii westward via Cape Horn.

Flanagan said it had been a dream since he was 15 to be the first to sail the world through the frigid Arctic Ocean instead of the more traditional Pacific/Atlantic route.

The next major landmark on Flanagan's journey is the Bering Strait. According to Flanagan, to successfully navigate the Arctic Ocean, he would need to reach the Bering Strait by July 15. He hopes to travel along the northern coast of Russia to the United Kingdom, conditions permitting.

Sir Edmund Hillary angry with mountaineers who left British climber to die

Sir Edmund Hillary, the New Zealand mountaineer and explorer, is angry with 40 mountaineers, including Mark Inglis, the first double amputee to reach the summit of Mount Everest, who left a British climber to die. Sir Edmund was the first person to climb Mount Everest, in 1953.

David Sharp, 34, who had reached the summit of Everest after two other unsuccessful attempts, ran out of oxygen on his way back. Sharp was found 305 meters below the summit, in a cave. He had apparently climbed alone.

According to Inglis, he was the first of 40 people to pass David Sharp, and his party was the only

one that offered help. He radioed in to his base camp, but his expedition manager, "Russ," said, "Mate, you can't do anything. He's been there X number of hours without oxygen, he's effectively dead."

"The trouble is, at 8,500 metres it's extremely difficult to keep yourself alive, let alone keep anyone else alive," Inglis told Television New Zealand.

Hillary faulted commercialisation of the mountain for the climber's death, saying that had a fellow climber been in distress he would have helped him even if it meant abandoning his own summit quest. "I think the whole attitude towards climbing Mount Everest has become rather horrifying," The New Zealand Herald newspaper quoted him as saying. "The people just want to get to the top. They don't give a damn for anybody else who may be in distress."

Hillary said that heading for the summit and letting people lie dying is not pleasant and he hopes it is not repeated.

Sharp's parents, for their part, said that they do not blame Inglis, or anyone else for their son's death; the other climbers had to look after themselves.

The Australia Institute identifies ideal sites for nuclear power stations

The Australia Institute, an Australian research organisation that some consider to be aligned to the political left, has released its analysis of ideal locations for a nuclear power plant in Australia.

According to the institute, they consulted with a number of nuclear energy experts and determined the best possible sites

for a nuclear power reactor in Australia. These sites include the popular holiday destinations of Port Stephens in New South Wales and Westernport Bay in Victoria.

The institute identified sites based on the needs of nuclear power generators. They said the most important criteria is for the site to be on the coast so it has access to large volumes of water used by the reactor for cooling. The institute found inland locations are not suitable as "Australia's inland water supplies are unreliable and are already over-committed."

The institute also reports that Port Stephens and Westernport Bay meet other desirable criteria, being near major electricity transmission lines and have good rail and port access for imported fuel rods.

The institute said that unused fuel rods would need to be imported, but "spent fuel will need to be stored in perpetuity". According to the institute, in Europe nuclear waste is often stored on the power plant's site.

Dr Clive Hamilton, executive director of the Australia Institute said that the government is yet to give an indication on potential nuclear power sites and there is only a small number of sites which would be suitable for a power generation reactor. "It is not clear whether the Government has yet considered where the proposed nuclear power plants will be located, but there are only a limited number of suitable sites. Other likely sites include the Central Coast and the area south of Wollongong in NSW, the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, and Port Phillip Bay and Portland in Victoria".

Mr Hamilton said that the institute had decided to investigate possible locations as there is little point having a nuclear debate where no possible sites are identified. "The Prime Minister has said he wants a national debate about nuclear power, but there is little point in debating it in the abstract".

Mayor of Port Stephens, Craig Baumann is not impressed by the Australia Institute's findings. He said he would be opposed to any nuclear power facility being built in Port Stephens.

"I just don't like the idea of any power station, something like Vailes Point being stuck on the shores of Port Stephens,"

"Obviously the power station should be close to transport, obviously large volumes of water and the grid that it's meant to service" Mr Baumann said.

Mr Baumann did however suggest a possible location for a power plant. "I'd suggest that they move the ships out of Garden Island and stick it right in the middle of Sydney."

If the government decided on a location in Victoria for a nuclear power plant there would be some legal implications, requiring the federal government to overturn state law (which is difficult). Victoria enacted the Nuclear Activities (Prohibitions) Act in 1983 which states it is to "protect the health, welfare and safety of the people of Victoria and to limit deterioration of the environment in which they dwell by prohibiting the establishment of nuclear activities".

Under the act, nuclear power generation is specified as a prohibited activity.

East Timor descends into further violence: Downer

On Tuesday Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer (Division of Mayo, Liberal) told parliament that the government has received fresh reports of violence in East Timor.

Mr. Downer told the Australian House of Representatives that he has received fresh reports of violence erupting in parts of the East Timorese capital, Dili, as well as other parts of the nation.

According to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), there were shootouts near Becora and Fatuahi on Tuesday involving the East Timorese military and militia.

Violence erupted in East Timor in April 2006 following the dismissal of 585 East Timorese soldiers for deserting. On April 28, 2006, five people were killed in violent clashes in Dili. An independent commission has been setup by the East Timorese government to investigate complaints by the dismissed soldiers. Mr. Downer urged the commission to "conclude its work quickly as a first step to the resolution of the current crisis".

Mr. Downer said that he had made it clear to the East Timorese government that Australia will assist in East Timor if requested. He said that the Australian military have a rapid response team, consisting of naval ships, aircraft and troops deployed in Northern Australia ready to go to East Timor if requested.

DFAT is advising Australians not to travel to East Timor due to what it calls an "extremely dangerous security situation". It advises that those who are already in East

Timor consider leaving.

Police retrieve body of American tourist on hunting holiday in New Zealand

Police retrieved the body of an American tourist who plunged to his death moments after stepping out of a helicopter while hunting in the Southern Alps, New Zealand.

57-year-old Clifford Wayne Senter, of New Hampshire in the US, died when he slipped on wet ground while exiting the helicopter, and plunged down a steep bluff near Lois Peak in Mount Aspiring National Park. He had been hunting chamois at the time.

Low cloud and fog has prevented search and rescue teams from reaching him on Monday night but a recovery team was deployed early Tuesday. The team found Mr Senter's body at the base of the bluff in the afternoon.

Police say that Mr Senter had been in New Zealand for a week on a hunting holiday, with his wife and two friends.

Today in History

1085 - King Alfonso VI of León-Castile conquered the Moorish taifa kingdom of Toledo, a major milestone in the Reconquista.

1521 - Martin Luther was declared an outlaw and a heretic by the Diet of Worms.

1810 - May Revolution: Citizens of Buenos Aires ousted the Spanish viceroy and established Primera Junta, the first independent local government in Argentina.

1946 - The parliament of Transjordan proclaimed their emir as King Abdullah, and formally changed the name of the country to the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan.

1961 - Project Apollo, with the goal of "landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth before the decade is out" was announced.

May 25 is Ascension Thursday in Western Christianity (2006); Independence Day in Jordan (1946), African Liberation Day in various African countries.

Quote of the Day

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson ~

Word of the Daytrudge; *v*

Definition

1. To walk wearily with heavy, slow steps.

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