



Top Stories

Pakistan and China sign free-trade deal

Chinese president, Hu Jintao has signed a free-trade deal with his Pakistani counterpart, General Pervez Musharraf during ongoing talks in Islamabad.

Traces of radiation found where Litvinenko ate

Scotland Yard has confirmed that traces of Polonium-210 were found at the Itsu sushi restaurant in Piccadilly, London where former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko ate before falling ill.

Featured story

Judging the Courts: Wikinews interviews Prof. Lawrence Douglas

Wikinews interviews Lawrence Douglas, Professor of Law, Jurisprudence and Social Thought at Amherst College about the trial of Saddam Hussein and the purpose, conduct and impact of courts trying crimes such as genocide.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Convicted killer and loyalist Michael Stone is seized by security guards and police at Northern Ireland's parliament building, Stormont, while carrying a gun, knife and several possibly "viable" explosive devices.
- Rwanda breaks off diplomatic relations with France after a French judge, Jean-Louis

Wikipedia Current Events

Bruguière, issues warrants for the arrest of President of Rwanda Paul Kagame and nine associates for their alleged involvement in the shooting down of a plane carrying former President Juvenal Habyarimana. The incident sparked the Rwandan Genocide in 1994.

- Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Israel and Palestinians have agreed to a ceasefire.
- Campaigning has ended in Bahrain's parliamentary elections before tomorrow's vote. The International Herald Tribune says voter turnout is expected to be 'huge' after a divisive election campaign.
- In the last statement before his death, poisoned former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko accuses Russian president Vladimir Putin of his murder. (The Times)
- Suicide bombers kill 22 people and wound 26 in the city of Tal Afar in northern Iraq.
- The European Union (EU) hosts the President of Russia Vladimir Putin in a summit. Poland has vetoed the launch of EU-Russia partnership talks.
- The Cole Inquiry delivers its report to the Australian Government to be tabled in the Parliament of Australia on Monday. It was inquiring whether Australian companies notably AWB Limited paid bribes to the Government of Saddam Hussein in order to sell wheat to Iraq.

Wikipedia Current Events

•In a poll conducted by the U.S. Agency for Development, following President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's signing of the controversial, new Constitution of Kyrgyzstan, 62% of Kyrgyz citizens believe the country is moving in the right direction.

Buddhist relic collection tours North America and world

With the hopes of funding the creation of a statue in northern India that would end up dwarfing the Statue of Liberty, an unprecedented collection of Buddhist artifacts continue crisscrossing American, Europe, and Asia in three different, but related collections.

The Maitreya Project, the brainchild of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, seeks to build a monument and development dedicated to Buddhism at Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh in northern India. The centerpiece of this massive development will be a 152m (500 ft) bronze statue of the Maitreya Buddha, the Buddha of the future.

Buddhist belief says that there have been Buddhas in the distant past and there will be Buddhas in the distant future. The historical Buddha, the one who was born in India about 2500 years ago, is known as Shakyamuni Buddha. Buddhist belief says that sometime in the distant future the teachings that Shakyamuni Buddha brought to Earth will fade away. At that point the Maitreya Buddha will be

born and gain enlightenment in order to refresh and renew Buddhist teachings.

Along with the statue, the development is also planned to include temples, exhibition halls, parks, a museum, library, and a theater as well as a hospital and educational center.

In order to move forward with this project the Maitreya Project has created collections of artifacts that are touring the world. Once the statue is built these artifacts will be housed in it for viewing.

Buddhist artifacts are usually associated with the body of the person involved. While they can be such things as bone and teeth, usually they are pearl-like objects that are found and collected after the enlightened person is cremated. These pearl-like objects are called ringsel.

There are three collections of artifacts currently touring American, Europe, and East Asia. They include relics from the immediate past Buddha, called Kasyapa, the historical Buddha, five of his original disciples, several Tibetan and Zen masters, and the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso.

Wikinews reporter Richard Kinne spent three days with the relics when the North American tour came to Ithaca, NY a few weeks ago. The relics travel with two caretakers, one of whom is always in close proximity to the relics. Setup for the relics display can take about four hours depending on the venue. Taking it down takes a bit under two hours.

Each morning of the tour the relics are taken out of their padded case and placed in clear plexiglass

display cases. The relics are displayed individually in small containers called stupas. Some containers appear very full, while others contain just one very small object. Each evening the process is reversed and the padded case stays with the relic caretakers.

Between the morning and the evening people from all walks of life come to see the relics - believers, people who are curious, academics, Buddhist monks and nuns, both older folks and small children. While the Heart Relic Tour just does deals with displaying the relics, the sponsoring venue can add to the display in various ways such as lectures, meditation classes and demonstrations, or various other rituals.

The tour in North America reaches Jacksonville, FL during the first weekend of December. From there it will go to Miami between the 9th to the 11th, and then to Phoenix, AZ between the 15th to the 17th. In Asia the tour spends time in Malaysia in the first part of December.

Cheney meets with King Abdullah in Riyadh

U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney met with Saudi leader King Abdullah in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia today. The Vice President is seeking the Sunni royal family's influence and tribal connections to calm Iraq after an especially violent week.

A Saudi official said Cheney and Abdullah would discuss "the deteriorating situation in Iraq" as well as the situation in Lebanon, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the standoff with Iran. Cheney will also meet the Saudi Crown Prince Sultan, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not

authorized to talk to the media.

The Middle East has another summit planned for today but in Tehran. Iran, the United States' top rival in the Middle East, had planned its own summit today, inviting the presidents of Iraq and Syria in what was seen as a bid to assert its role as a powerbroker in the Iraqi conflict. Syria never responded to the invitation and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani was unable to go to Iran today because Baghdad's airport was ordered closed after the burst of violence, and he said he would be unable to visit Iran before Sunday at the earliest.

Still, today Lebanon is the biggest issue for all Middle East countries. Saudi Arabia has strong links to the anti-Syrian bloc that dominates Lebanon's government and the U.S. accuses Iran — along with its ally Syria — of trying to overthrow Lebanon's U.S.-backed government.

Australian wheat kickback report handed to Governor-General

The report from the Cole Inquiry has been handed down to Governor-General Michael Jeffrey. The inquiry was setup by the Howard government just over twelve months ago to investigate claims of corruption in relation to the United Nations Oil-for-Food Program.

The report will be made public next week.

Mainstream media has speculated that the report will recommend a string of charges against former AWB executives. It is believed that around AUD\$222 million of illegal payments were made to a Jordanian trucking company partly owned by Hussein's Iraqi regime.

AWB executives claim it was a victim of the Iraq government's corruption.

The Australian government has also come under scrutiny for failing to investigate reports of the AWB breaching UN sanctions against Iraq. It is expected that the report will contain little about the government's role as that is outside the inquiry's terms of reference.

The opposition is expected to attack the government when the report is tabled in parliament this week. Opposition spokesman for Public Accountability, Kelvin Thomson said the inquiry was set up to return a verdict wanted by the government and that the terms of reference were deliberately narrow.

"The inquiry has been given rorted terms of reference. It has been limited to reporting on the conduct of AWB, it has not been allowed to make findings concerning the conduct of Howard Government ministers."

"The Opposition expressly raised this with Commissioner Cole earlier this year and this was Commissioner Cole's response."

"So all along, the Howard Government has been seeking a verdict of AWB guilty, Government innocent," said Mr Thomson.

Former chairman of AWB, Trevor Flugge said he will not read the report when it is released and said he has done nothing wrong but fears going to gaol.

Speaking to The Australian newspaper, Mr Flugge said he had no interest in reading the Cole report because the case has been built against him from the outset.

"My public life is obviously over. And I can't honestly say that I miss it," Mr Flugge said.

Pakistan and China sign free-trade deal

Chinese president, Hu Jintao has signed a free-trade deal with his Pakistani counterpart, General Pervez Musharraf during ongoing talks in Islamabad. They signed a five-year pact to boost bilateral trade on Friday.

After a three-day trip to India, Hu Jintao travelled to Pakistan for a four-day visit and at his arrival he got a royal reception. His visit to Pakistan is the first by any Chinese leader in a decade.

According to diplomats, the agreement could triple the value of bilateral trade within next five years, to \$15bn.

Pakistani commerce minister, Humayoun Akhtar said that new trade pact would energize the efforts to cut tariffs. He added that the trade would be completely tariff-free between the two countries within next five years.

Both countries have agreed a number of new defence and energy deals. The Pakistan Air Force and Chinese Aviation Industries have agreed for long term collaboration in the fields of aircraft manufacturing including Airborne Warning And Control Systems (AWACS).

Traces of radiation found where Litvinenko ate

Traces of radioactive material that apparently killed former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko were found at restaurants where he met other spies just before falling ill and at his home, Scotland Yard said Friday.

Litvinenko, a former KGB agent who was investigating the death of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya suddenly fell ill on November 1. In interviews, he stated that he had met with two former KGB officials earlier in the day, and then had had lunch at Itsu, a sushi restaurant on Piccadilly in London. He died two days later at the age of 44.

"Traces of Polonium-210 were found at the Itsu sushi restaurant in Piccadilly, the Millennium Hotel, Grosvenor Square, and at Mr. Litvinenko's home in Muswell Hill, London," Scotland Yard said in a statement. "We are not prepared to discuss further."

Roger Cox, head of the HPA's radiation protection branch, confirmed that the radiation was found in Litvinenko's body.

"A large quantity of alpha radiation from polonium-210 was found in the urine of Mr. Litvinenko", Cox said, adding that it was "unlikely" that the radioactive material came from natural sources.

Litvinenko, in a statement written before his death and read Friday, claimed that Russian President Vladimir Putin was behind his murder, a charge Putin denied.

"You may succeed in silencing one man but the howl of protest from around the world will reverberate, Mr. Putin, in your ears for the rest of your life," Litvinenko said in his statement.

Doctors all around the world have been explaining to the media how harmful Polonium-210 can be to a person.

"Only a very, very small amount of polonium would need to be

ingested to be fatal, but that depends on how pure the polonium is," said Dr. Mike Keir, a radiation protection adviser at the Royal Victoria Infirmary.

Today in History

1778 - The expedition led by James Cook reached Maui, the second largest of the Hawaiian Islands.

1842 - The University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, United States was founded by members of the Roman Catholic Congregation of Holy Cross.

1922 - Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon became the first people to enter the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun in over 3000 years.

1942 - World War II: Josip Tito and the Yugoslav Partisans convened the first meeting of the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia at Bihać in northwestern Bosnia.

1950 - Battle of Chosin Reservoir: Chinese forces in North Korea launched a massive counterattack against South Korean and United States armed forces, ending any thought of a quick end to the Korean War.

Quote of the Day

We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures.
~ Thornton Wilder

Word of the Day

careen; v

1. To heave a ship down on one side so as to expose the other.
2. To sway violently from side to side.

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