



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

Wikipedia Current Events

- ROC local elections, 2005: Republic of China (Taiwan) opposition party Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) makes major gains in municipal 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.
- 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.

South Dakota tower demolition botched

The United States Transportation Security Administration (TSA) announced Friday that it will relax proscriptions against certain carry-on items. Beginning December 22, travelers flying in the United States will be allowed to carry scissors less than 4 inches in length and screwdrivers less than 7 inches in length.

The TSA hopes that by relaxing restrictions on scissors and

screwdrivers, screeners will be able to more closely guard against items such as box cutters and bomb making materials. There have been no restrictions on items such as scissor and screwdrivers in checked luggage -- in fact, box cutters, ice axes/Ice picks, knives, meat cleavers, razor-type blades, sabers and swords can all be transported in checked baggage.

As part of a broader security realignment, TSA screeners will begin performing more random searches of carry-on bags, pat downs, and hand-wand searches of travelers.

"By incorporating unpredictability into our procedures and eliminating low-threat items, we can better focus our efforts on stopping individuals that wish to do us harm," TSA chief Kip Hawley said.

Flight attendants and pilots largely oppose the changes in permitted items -- they maintain that the changes undermine flight security.

Scissors, screwdrivers OK on US flights beginning December 22

South Dakotans got more than a charity bash Saturday after a planned demolition of the tallest building in South Dakota, a feed plant tower, went badly. Experts will attempt to reprise their role on Monday, planting more explosives to topple the now leaning Zip Feed Mill tower of Sioux Falls, or perhaps finish it by smashing it down with a wrecking ball.

Some would like to see the odd landmark stay in its 30 degree list as a tourist attraction. But few believe the partnership that owns it will stand for such a ruse. Most believe the tower is a major menace in its present half-demolished position.

Tickets were sold for a dollar each to raise money for local charities, raising over \$100,000. The massive concrete structure was underestimated in its ability to withstand the timed and computer designed blasting pattern.

The 202 foot tower was the tallest building in South Dakota, but may no longer be so due to its tilt.

G7 keeps pressure on China over currency

Financial ministers and central bank governors from the G7 countries are pressuring China to make it's exchange rate more flexible. "We expect that further flexible implementation of China's currency system would improve the functioning and stability of the global economy and the international monetary system," they said in a written statement. Separately US Treasury Secretary John Snow said "China's new exchange rate system has operated with too " He remarked "This rigidity constrains exchange rate flexibility in the region and thus poses risks to China's economy and the global economy."

Virgin Mobile in talks to merge with NTL

Virgin Moble is in merger talks with the cable operator NTL Inc. The deal will create UK's first company able to provide mobile, landline, Broadband, and TV services. Richard Branson, who holds 72% of Virgin Mobile, will

own 14% of the new company to be called Virgin. The company will pose a strategic threat to Sky Broadcasting, which is 37% owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

Gas prices drop an average of 11 cents

Retail gas prices have dropped and average of 11 cents in the past two weeks according to the Lundberg Survey. The Survey, released today, says the weighted average price for all three grades fell to \$2.16 a gallon as of December 2. The semimonthly survey surveys 7,000 gas stations nationwide. The lowest average price for regular unleaded was \$1.89 a gallon in Tulsa, OK. The highest price was \$2.55 in Honolulu. Gas prices have fallen about 88 cents a gallon since September according to Lundberg.

Today in History

1492 - Christopher Columbus became the first European to set foot on the island of Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic).

1791 - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (pictured) died without completing his Requiem mass in D minor.

1933 - Prohibition of alcoholic beverages in the United States officially ended when the 21st Amendment to the U.S.

Constitution was ratified.
1936 - The 1936 Soviet Constitution, also known as the "Stalin" constitution, was adopted.

1945 - Flight 19, a squadron of five Avenger TBM torpedo bombers of the U.S. Navy, disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle.

December 05 is Father's Day in Thailand, St Nicholas's Eve in various European countries, International Volunteer Day.

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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