

Think Large

Japan's electronics giant Matsushita Electric Industrial employee Satoko Kubo displays the world's largest 103-inch plasma display panel (PDP) television in Tokyo. Matsushita announced a surge in third quarter profits as plasma televisions and other electronic goods flew off the shelves. The group, which recently unveiled plans to build the world's largest plasma panel plant to meet booming demand for flat-screen TVs, also upgraded its full-year outlook and announced the sale of stake in a media company.

Technology may revolutionise kitchens

Food poisoning may become a thing of the past under a European Union project that would link commercial kitchen appliances to the Internet. The idea of remotely monitoring and controlling catering equipment over the Internet isn't new, said Stephen Read, coordinator of the EU's project I'MOK -- Intelligent Monitoring of Kitchens. But nobody succeeded in doing it. Our plug-and-play software and hardware is a major step forward, with the potential to reduce cases of food poisoning in the European Union by more than 113,000 annually, said Read. Researchers from Belgium, Germany, Italy and England developed a system linking each kitchen appliance with a local area or wide area network control station that's connected to the Internet. When a problem is detected, the system alerts kitchen managers via an email or text message. Designers say the system can work with anything from a single appliance in a cafe to thousands of machines owned by a large company.

Fungus Defuses Explosives

A US scientist claims to have identified a fungus that can degrade and thus defuse unused explosives safely. Robert Riggs of Texas claimed he uses the white-rot fungus 'Phlebia radiate' (a type of mushroom) that can eat up explosives and thus silently exterminate them, avoiding environmental problems. When explosives are used for mining or demolition, some may fail to detonate and get lost in the rubble. Several methods exist to degrade explosives that have not been detonated. Many of these involve the use of chemical compounds, which are a potential environmental hazard. Avoiding these problems, Riggs' approach employs micro organisms to metabolise and degrade the explosives' compounds.

Plants to Battle Pollution

Chinese scientists are now growing poison-accumulating plants to 'suck up' poisonous elements, mostly heavy metals like arsenic, copper and zinc, from polluted soil to repair contaminated lands. "In some parts of China, scientists have grown poison-accumulating plants, widely regarded as a 'hyperaccumulators' in academic circles, on poisonous soil to accumulate heavy metals," said Chen Tongbin, a researcher with the Geographic Science and Resources institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Chen's research team has begun to renovate about 333.3 hectares of arsenic polluted fields in south China's Huanjiang County. " Soil contamination is the most dangerous because it is hidden, slow and fundamental," said Chen. A global leader in technology for collecting arsenic from soil, Chen's team proved that a brake fern widely found in southern China, with strong ability to draw arsenic from the soil.