



Top Stories

Tempers flare over New Orleans tragedy

Handling of the devastation left by Hurricane Katrina, considered by many to be inadequate, has prompted scathing criticism of American politicians.

China, EU reach deal on textile import



80 million pieces of Chinese textiles impounded at European ports have been unblocked under a recent deal.

Featured story

Childhood ibuprofen-triggered asthma a concern



A new study in the Journal of Pediatrics indicates that childhood ibuprofen-triggered asthma attacks is a health concern for many children.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Hurricane Katrina: Senator and former First Lady Hillary Clinton calls for a "9/11 Style Inquiry" into the U.S. federal government's response to the Hurricane.
- A cable car crash at Sölden, Ötztal, in the Austrian Alps leaves nine people dead when a helicopter carrying construction materials dropped concrete onto the cable.

Wikipedia Current Events

- American jurist John G. Roberts, Jr. is nominated by US President George W. Bush as the next Chief Justice of the United States. Bush withdrew Roberts' original nomination to succeed retiring Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.
- Three teenage girls admit starting a fire in Paris on September 3 which left 16 people dead.
- Google taps into the Chinese local markets by opening their fifth international Local Search Engine on Google China at bendi.google.com.
- Ibrahim Rugova, the President of Kosovo, has announced that he has lung cancer but will not be stepping down.
- Conflict in Iraq: Two British Soldiers have been killed following a roadside IED bomb in Basra, southern Iraq.
- Mandala Airlines Flight 091: A Mandala Airlines flight crashes into a residential area of the Indonesian city of Medan, killing at least 100 passengers. Among the dead are the governor and former governor of Sumatra Utara, Rizal Nurdin and Raja Inal Siregar.

China, EU reach deal on textile import

China and the European Union agreed to unblock 80 million pieces of Chinese textiles impounded at

European ports. The deal was announced during a one-day EU-China summit in Beijing by Tony Blair, prime minister of the United Kingdom, which is holding the EU presidency, and Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao.

According to the agreement, 50% of the impounded clothing will be allowed into the EU unconditionally, while the rest will be counted against 2006 quotas.

Today's deal ended the so-called European-Chinese 'bra wars', which have split the EU member states: those with a strong retail sector supported the agreement, while those with large clothing industries wanted to set up protectionist policy against China.

The agreement now must be approved by all 25 EU members.

Tsunami nations give relief advice to U.S.

The nations hard hit by last year's devastating tsunami are now lending advice to the United States on how to cope with the Katrina crisis.

Nopadol Somboonsub, the head of tsunami corpse identification in Thailand noted that the U.S. needs to "...examine the bodies slowly and put all the data into a computer," and added that "It's very important to get it right. You cannot assume that this or that body is the right body simply because a relative identified it."

Somboonsub noted that life insurance and identity theft fraud

are all matters to consider when dealing with body identification. For all people, he should understand this, as his team dealt with the identities of 5,395 corpses of various ethnicities in Thailand.

In India too, experts have advice for the U.S. For instance, one unnamed Indian official said that nations should not be arrogant when it comes to handling disasters. He also stated that "In India, for all its vastness, we have a very easily operable contingency plan for disasters at the grassroots level. It is not a highly complicated national response system."

He emphasized that relief is most important on the local level: "A person at the grassroots level knows that sandbags have to be organized, identifies likely places of breaches, plans clearing debris and setting up relief camps and cooking centers."

In Aceh, in Indonesia, Budi Atmadi, head of relief operations, said that humanitarian concerns must come first.

"In that period, the blame game is rampant because one person will always say the relief has been slow while another says there are so many limitations. The blame game will always be there so your ears need to be thick," Atmadi stated, along with "The important thing is to stay committed and put humanitarian concerns at the top."

The United States has refused all help from all countries besides monetary and the increase of oil production which many consider to be a needless arrogance in a time of great need.

7 British paratroopers accused of murder begin trial

Seven paratroopers accused of beating three Iraqis—one to death—are now standing trial in Essex, United Kingdom.

On May 11, 2003 a part of a platoon of the 3rd Battalion Parachute Regiment visited a "small southern Iraqi village". They pursued and stopped a white Toyota truck driven by Athar Finnjan Saddam who, along with 18-year-old Nadhem Abdullah, was taken out of the truck and thrown to the ground. It is at this time that the paratroopers allegedly began beating both men brutally without provocation.

Dalal Sadaam, a female relative who had just given birth, attempted to stop the violence only to be assaulted herself by the butt of a rifle to the mouth. A woman who was pregnant at the time in the vehicle shouted for the soldiers to stop. After the soldiers left, the other victim took Abdullah to a doctor. The doctor sent him to a hospital, but he died en route.

Only two of the paratroopers even recalled the incident months later, but evidence of the victim's blood has been found on at least one of the soldier's guns. Eyewitnesses were mostly illiterate Marsh Arabs who have had trouble understanding the interviewer's questions but have been cooperating fully.

A price of about £2 million is currently being attached to the cost of the trial in the UK; however, the family of the victim may be able to extract civil damages from the UK in the emerging Iraqi judicial system.

Canada increases oil production to assist U.S.

The Alberta Energy and Utilities Board of Alberta, Canada, will increase oil output by between 18,000 and 30,000 barrels a day to help the U.S. in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This is being done by temporarily suspending limits on oil production. The increase was requested by Alberta's Premier, Ralph Klein.

The comparatively small size of the increase has led industry analyst Peter Linder to call the increase "more of a token gesture" and a "drop in the bucket" by comparison to normal production levels.

The increase in production levels is temporary, but no date has been set for when the output levels might again be capped. Analysts say that 10% of the U.S. Gulf States' oil production was affected by the hurricane.

President Bush nominates John Roberts as Chief Justice of the U.S.



John Roberts (l.) with George W. Bush

In a statement made at approximately 12:00 UTC Monday, U.S. President George W. Bush nominated Judge John G. Roberts, Jr. as Chief Justice of the United States to succeed the late William H. Rehnquist.

Bush said that it is in the best interest of the nation that Roberts will be confirmed by the U.S.

Senate within one month, before the Supreme Court reconvenes. He said "It is fitting that a great chief justice be followed in office by a person who shared his deep reverence for the Constitution, his profound respect for the Supreme Court and his complete devotion to the cause of justice."

Roberts went on to reply, saying, "I am honored and humbled by the confidence that the president had shown in me, and I'm very much aware that, if I am confirmed, I would succeed a man that I deeply respect and admire, a man who has been very kind to me for 25 years." Roberts had been a law clerk in the U.S. Supreme Court working directly for William Rehnquist during 1980 and 1981.

Before this nomination Roberts was due to fill the Associate Justice slot left vacant by Sandra Day O'Connor's retirement. Bush now must consider other candidates for nomination as Associate Justice.

Roberts is considered to have largely conservative views and faced resistance during his nomination to succeed O'Connor from Civil rights groups like the ACLU, NAACP and Pro-Choice organisations like NARAL, which sponsored an ad against his nomination and had to retract it due to the liability for some of the claims they were making of him supporting terrorists

Islamic political party seeks registration in Australia

A political party has formed in Australia to represent Muslims. The Best Party of Allah issued a press release on September 5 announcing that they would be seeking registration in the

Australian Capital Territory. The president and founder of the party, Mr Kurt Kennedy, says that the party will respect the laws of Australia, but will also be seeking to implement laws that are consistent with the teachings of Allah.

"We acknowledge that as Australian citizens, we will abide by its civil laws and the rule of law. And as Believers in Allah we also have a commitment to the rule of Allah's laws in our personal lives," Mr Kennedy said.

"These laws are found in the Noble Qur'an and on the whole are not inconsistent with the best laws that Australian parliaments has to offer," he added.

The party is seeking registration in the ACT, however Mr Kennedy says that its goal is to be registered at the national level. The press release said that Australia's 500,000 Muslims were enough to elect four members to the Federal Parliament.

Mr Kennedy said that he was inspired to form the new party after the emergence of Christian parties such as Family First.

Mr Kennedy explicitly rejected extremism.

"We totally reject people who would kill people indiscriminately, you know, as violence for its own sake and that's the story, that's the end of it," he said.

The party's website reveals that it is opposed to the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, of which Australia took part.

"See how Iraq and Afghanistan were invaded and occupied because they were weak countries

with substantial resources? The invaders gave the reason for invasion based on a fear of emerging Islamic militancy but were actually based on greed for oil and greed for markets," the website said.

The registration has been reported as far away as Iran, appearing on the Iranian Quran News Agency website.

Court rules in favour of record labels, Kazaa found illegal



Sharman Networks, owner of the popular Kazaa peer-to-peer software, lost against a coalition of record labels in an Australian federal court. The court ruled that Kazaa infringed on artists' copyright and facilitated piracy. The list of plaintiffs included EMI, Sony BMG, Warner, Festival Mushroom and Universal.

The court has ordered Sharman to modify the software within two months to prevent further piracy. While this order is only valid in Australia, Sharman is incorporated in the country and thus the effect of the ruling will be felt in the peer to peer community worldwide. Sharman was also ordered to pay 90% of the plaintiff's legal fees, with damages to be considered at a later date. Sharman has said it will appeal.

It is unclear whether this will have a significant effect on preventing piracy in the music industry. Surveys have shown that users have already abandoned Kazaa, which used to be the dominant peer to peer program used for sharing files, in favour of newer

networks such as eDonkey and BitTorrent. This trend amongst users was also observed to happen with Grokster and Napster, two legacy peer-to-peer networks which faced similar suits.

This is not the first case Sharman has had to defend itself: in a related case in the U.S. Supreme Court which concluded two months ago, the court ruled that file sharing networks could be held responsible for the actions of its users in some circumstances. This may have influenced this most recent case, where the court found the Kazaa website encouraged visitors to feel 'cool' about breaking copyright law and downloading illegal music.

Kazaa, or other versions of it, has been estimated to be installed on up to 300 million computers worldwide.

Brazilian Vote Buying parliamentary commission present first joint preliminary report



*Brasília — The Post Office and Vote Buying parliamentary commissions of investigation.
Photo: José Cruz/ABr.*

Brazil – The Post Office and Vote Buying parliamentary commissions of investigation unanimously approved on Thursday (1) their first joint preliminary report of activities. The text was prepared by their redactors, Osmar Serraglio (PMDB) and Ibrahim Abi-

Ackel (PP), from Post Office and Vote Buying commissions respectively.

The deputies cited in the report are: Carlos Rodrigues (PL-RJ), José Janene (PP-PR), Pedro Correia (PP-PE), Pedro Henry (PP-MS), Sandro Mabel (PL-GO), João Magno (PT-MG), João Paulo Cunha (PT-SP), José Borba (PMDB-PR), Josias Gomes da Silva (PT-BA), Paulo Rocha (PT-BA), Professor Luizinho (PT-SP), Romeu Queiroz (PTB-MG), Vadão Gomes (PP-SP), Vanderval Santos (PL-SP), José Mentor (PT-SP), Roberto Brant (PFL-MG), José Dirceu (PT-SP) and Roberto Jefferson (PTB-RJ).

The report indicts 18 Brazilian deputies and the former deputy Valdemar Costa Neto [who resigned on August 1]. They are accused of illegal campaign finance activities, of placing cronies in strategic positions in government enterprises and getting kickbacks from them, and of receiving cash payments in exchange for voting in line with the government in the Brazilian Congress.

The redactors called the allegation made by some parliamentarians that the resources were used to settle debts with electoral campaigns a "lame excuse". According to them it is "perfectly plausible" that the loans taken by the businessman Marcos Valério at the Banco Rural and the BMG for the ruling Workers' Party (PT) were false and created to make the illegal funds seem legal.

In regards to the denunciations done by deputy Roberto Jefferson (PTB) the report says: Everything which he said that could be investigated showed to be true, including confessions against himself .

Everything that must be compared to other testimonies showed a great degree of truth. As a matter of fact, all of who, hurriedly, questioned him, saw their defenses collapse, before the successive discoveries.

According to the report, the businessman Marcos Valério is a not reliable person because of his contradictory testimonies.

The report says that several documents were identified and reviewed proving that large sums of money were withdrawn from agencies of the Rural Bank, in Brasilia and Belo Horizonte, as well as from bank accounts of the enterprises SMPB and DNA Propaganda. According to the documents the beneficiaries were federal deputies who received the money in person or through relatives, advisers, or persons nominated by Marcos Valério.

The report affirms that it is possible that some payments were made on a monthly basis, and others more or less frequently. Nevertheless, according to the report the periodicity of the payments is the less important fact.

Jetliner crashes in Indonesia

A Boeing 737 jetliner operated by low-cost airline Mandala crashed approximately one minute after taking off from Polonia International Airport in the Indonesian city of Medan on the island of Sumatra.

The airport is surrounded by a very densely-populated residential area, and the number of casualties on the ground is unknown. Local TV showed images of dozens of homes and cars destroyed by the impact.

There have been unconfirmed reports that there were some survivors of the crash, conflicting with earlier reports that all 117 persons on board had perished in the crash. The Associated Press quoted an airport official as stating that all 112 passengers died along with the 5 person crew. On the contrary, at 15:38 on local time (UTC+7), the Jakarta Post reported the airline said at least six passengers survived. The BBC is now reporting as many as 13 people may have survived.

The Boeing 737 plane was nearly 25 years old, but was not due to be retired for another 11 years. It received a full service in June this year.

It has been reported that the flight, bound for Jakarta, was carrying several local politicians, including Rizal Nurdin, the governor of North Sumatra, and one of his predecessors.

U.S. classifies record number of documents in 2004

OpenTheGovernment.Org, a coalition of conservative and liberal nonprofit groups, released a 2005 report (PDF, 12 pages) saying that all branches of the U.S. Federal Government are being significantly more secretive, and spending significantly more money on document secrecy. In 2004, federal officials classified 15.6 million new documents, which is 81 percent more than in 2001. Over the same period, the cost of classifying those new documents rose from \$4.7 billion to \$7.2 billion. These figures do not include documents classified by the CIA, as that agency's information is itself secret.

The report is also critical of the

fact that only \$48.3 million was spent on declassifying old documents in 2004. They concluded that for every dollar spent on declassification, the federal officials spent \$148 creating and storing new secrets, more than in any previous year. It is estimated to cost \$460 to classify one document.

The state secrets privilege allows the executive branch to classify federal court hearings and documents. On average, the Bush administration has used this privilege 33 times more per year than cold war administrations (1953-1976), and nearly three times the 1977-2001 average. The report sees other measures of government secrecy, such as the number of secret patents on the rise as well.

The report does not explore the larger economic impact of the increase in secrecy per se. However, it observes that taxpayer savings due to whistleblower activity is on the rise despite the elimination of traditional whistleblower protections.

It also notes that 64% of advisory meetings were closed to the public. Such meetings provide lawmakers with advice on scientific and technical matters which are supposed to be free of special interest. Legislation covering such meetings states or assumes that they are open to the public, but some agencies, like the Department of Defense, have traditionally been permitted to hold closed meetings. Once such agencies are excluded, the report finds a threefold increase in closed meetings since 2001.

The report is critical of poor funding for processing Freedom of

Information Act (FOIA) requests, with which the majority of federal agencies surveyed can not keep up. There is concern that more of the financial burden for such requests may be being born by those organizations making the requests, instead of the agencies holding the classified documents. FOIA requests increased by 25% between 2003 and 2004, to 4 million, while funding for processing such requests increased by only 5%.

How much of this secrecy directly relates to various current events, such as the War in Iraq or terrorism, is unclear. In 2004, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court approved 1,754 requests from law enforcement officials last year to conduct surveillance on foreign nationals within the United States, double the number issued four years ago.

The report is also critical of the rise of "sensitive but unclassified" information, as well as new state based secrecy initiatives.

Australian Health minister makes inappropriate comments about Brogden suicide attempt

Australian Federal Government health minister, Tony Abbott, made a number of comments about the previous New South Wales Australian Liberal Party leader, John Brogden, who recently attempted suicide, which were widely thought to be inappropriate.

Abbott is reported to have made comments such as "If we did that, we would be as dead as the former Liberal leader's political prospects" and "Whenever you hear that David Clarke is doing bad things, you know he is really doing a great job", referring to the factional

leader claimed to have led the campaign against Brogden, at a party function approximately twelve hours after Brogden's suicide attempt, and that Abbott had said "I just want to make it clear I have never told an inappropriate joke, I've never pinched a woman on the backside and I never make inappropriate gestures to women." at a Kenthurst Liberal Party branch meeting.

Many in the community, such as those involved in mental health services, and Federal shadow health minister Julia Gillard and Federal Opposition leader Kim Beazley have called for either Abbott's resignation or that the Prime Minister John Howard sack the minister, claiming that such comments show Abbott is not mindful of mental health issues when they should be foremost in his mind.

These comments were first investigated by the ABC Insiders program yesterday with Abbott; he offered to apologize "if anyone is upset", and later that day made such an apology; the extent of the apology was criticised in the House of Representatives in Federal Parliament that day, with Julia Gillard, Federal Opposition health shadow minister calling it "half-arsed" during a motion to censure the minister for his comments, which failed due to the Liberal Government holding the balance of power in the House.

There is suspicion that the tipoff about Abbott's comments were made by a member of the Liberal left faction, of which Brogden was a member, as a form of payback against members of the right faction who were said to have been involved in the campaign against Brogden.

Police shoot eight gunmen on New Orleans bridge, five dead

New Orleans police shot eight armed gunmen from the Danziger Bridge, after contractors crossing the bridge came under fire. The police claim they have shot at eight people carrying guns on the bridge.

The fourteen contractors were en route to launch barges into Lake Pontchartrain to help fix the break in the 17th Street Canal when, according to police, the gunmen opened fire on the group.

Deputy Police Chief W.J. Riley said police shot at eight people carrying guns, killing five or six. None of the contractors were killed.

Former US VP Al Gore spearheads transport of hurricane victims to relief in home state

Knoxville, Tennessee – About 140 mostly weak or ailing victims of the hurricane ravaged city of New Orleans were flown here Saturday by a volunteer crew on a flight chartered by former United States Vice President Albert Gore.

The victims were greeted by Knoxville's mayor, many medical professionals, and other volunteers helping them board buses destined to area hospitals. There they were to be assessed and sent to a local Red Cross shelter.

Although Gore was present on the flight and assisted moving the passengers to the waiting buses, he "declined to take credit for the airlift, fearing it would be 'politicized.'" An associate of Gore who assisted in the project, Dr. Anderson Spickard, said that

although Gore chartered the flight, "we'll decide who pays for it later."

Spickard also remarked that originally the plane was to take two flights that day, but flight delays forestalled that plan. The plane will leave Knoxville Saturday evening, he said, to make another aid flight on Sunday.

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Today in History

- 394 - The Christian Roman Emperor Theodosius I defeated the pagan usurper Eugenius in the Battle of Frigidus.
- 1522 - The Victoria returned to Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Spain with Juan Sebastián Elcano and 17 survivors of Ferdinand Magellan's 265-man expedition, becoming the first ship to circumnavigate the globe.
- 1941 - Holocaust: All Jews over the age of 6 were required to wear the Star of David in areas controlled by Nazi Germany.
- 1955 - Ethnic Greeks in Istanbul, Turkey were attacked by an overwhelming Turkish mob during the Istanbul Pogrom.
- 1995 - Baltimore Oriole shortstop Cal Ripken, Jr. played his 2131st consecutive major league baseball game, breaking the 56-year old record set by New York Yankee first baseman Lou Gehrig.

September 6 is Independence Day in Swaziland (1968);
Defence Day in Pakistan

Quote of the Day

No one is fanatically shouting that the sun is going to rise tomorrow. They know it's going to rise tomorrow. When people are fanatically dedicated to political or religious faiths or any other kinds of dogmas or goals, it's always because these dogmas or goals are in doubt." ~ Robert M. Pirsig

