



Top Stories

Chief Justice of the United States, William H Rehnquist, dies at age 80



Chief Justice of the United States, William H. Rehnquist, has died at age 80 from thyroid cancer. His death leaves a second vacancy in the Supreme Court.

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.

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

- Estimates of the death toll in New Orleans are made by Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt: "I think it's evident it's in the thousands. It's clear to me that this has been sickeningly difficult and profoundly tragic circumstance" Leavitt said.
- The Coast Guard is requesting people in the New Orleans area to hang brightly colored or white sheets, towels or anything else that might help draw attention to those still in need of assistance.
- 1,800 aerial photos of Gulf Coast destruction areas are posted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on the web which display each neighborhood in high resolution.
- The United States has received offers of financial and humanitarian assistance from multiple nations and international groups, including NATO and Iran. Iran says all aid will be sent through the Red Crescent organization.
- Scientists at the Wistar Institute claim to have isolated a set of genes in a species of lab mice that enable the mice to regenerate damaged or amputated limbs or organs. If true, this may be the first known success in enabling a mammal to regenerate tissues that it ordinarily could not.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visits her native Alabama. She defended President Bush's response to the hurricane saying: "Nobody, especially the president, would have left people unattended on the basis of race."
- With 250,000 refugees already in Texas Gov. Rick Perry ordered emergency officials to begin preparations to airlift some of them to other states that have offered to help.
- Typhoon Talim passes over China, killing at least 54 people.

Police shoot 8 gunmen on New Orleans bridge, 5 dead

New Orleans police shot 8 armed gunmen from the Danziger Bridge after contractors crossing the bridge came under fire. The police claim they have shot at 8 people carrying guns on the bridge.

The fourteen contractors were on their way to launch barges into Lake Pontchartrain to help fix the break in the 17th Street Canal, when 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 fourteen contractors were killed.

According the Associated Press, no other details are available at the time.

EU, China fail to agree on textile trade

Talks between the European Union Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson and Chinese Commerce Minister Bo Xilai, held today in Beijing, brought no compromise on unblocking 80 million pieces of Chinese textiles impounded in the EU.

The clothing is held in European warehouses due to overshoot of the China-to-the-EU export quotas. In June, the EU member states agreed to rise the limits by about 10%, but that was not enough for importers and Chinese producers.

Concerns on textiles imported from Asia have split the EU countries: those with strong retail sector support increasing the quotas, while others, which have big clothing industries (Spain, Portugal, Italy) want to keep, or even reduce, the limits in the future.

There is also similar ongoing dispute between China and the United States. On Friday, George Bush's administration announced new quotas on imports of Chinese bras and synthetic fabric after fail of two-sides talks.

TV debate between German chancellor Schröder and opposition leader Merkel held



Gerhard Schröder

German chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) and the Chair of the Christian Democrats (CDU), Angela Merkel, faced each other on Sunday evening in the first and only debate between them in this election campaign.

The 90-minute long program, simulcasted on Germany's four major TV stations, focused on employment, taxation and social reforms.

Merkel stated that she wants to reduce the taxation on gasoline to ease the high price Germans have to pay at the pump. Schröder responded that the VAT-increase that the CDU is planning would neutralize that effect and that his

government hadn't increased gasoline taxes since 2003.

The chancellor went on to blast Merkel's designate Finance minister Paul Kirchhof, a proponent of a flat tax on income. He said that Kirchhof's suggestions would turn Germans into "guinea pigs". But Merkel called Kirchhof a "visionary" and said her party would make taxation "easier and juster".

Speaking of employment, Schröder stated that his reforms are beginning to work and that he is on the right track. Merkel referred to five million unemployed Germans and said that seven years of Schröder government were "bad years for Germany".



Angela Merkel

Polls conducted by the ARD after the debate show that 49% of Germans believe that Schröder was "more convincing" while 33% think that Merkel was. The ZDF said that 48% of the population think Schröder performed better, while 28% say the same about Merkel.

However, overall polls conducted by the ARD as well, say that Schröder's SPD can expect 32% in the upcoming federal election, his current coalition partner, the Greens, 7%. Merkel's CDU, along with its bavarian sister party CSU, on the other hand is projected to get 43%, which would enable them to form a coalition

government with the FDP, which stands at 6%. Their majority however is slim, because the newly formed Party of the Left can expect 9%.

Kuwait donates US\$500 million to Katrina relief efforts

On Sunday, the country of Kuwait pledged US\$500 million in oil products and other aid to United States Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. It is the single largest donation given to help the victims of hurricane Katrina.

Energy Minister Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahd al-Sabah explained, "The humanitarian aid is oil products that the devastated (U.S.) states need in these circumstances, plus other humanitarian aid to lessen the devastation these three states have been subjected to."

Al Sabah also stated that "It's our duty as Kuwaitis to stand by our friends to lighten the humanitarian misery and as a payback for the many situations during which Washington helped us through the significant relations between the two friendly countries." Kuwait is in fact one of the U.S.'s strongest allies in the Middle East, due to the U.S. protection of Kuwait in 1991 during the Gulf War.

Kuwait's donation was followed by a \$100 million donation from Qatar, a small, U.S. friendly peninsula jutting out into the Red Sea.

These donations were brought on as the 22 members of Arab League (based in Egypt) asked Arab countries to donate to the Katrina relief efforts, and sent their deepest condolences to the U.S.

Australia hits new Telstra privatization hurdles

The Australian Government's plan for the full privatization of Telstra, Australia's dominant telecommunications company, received criticism leveled at the government and company by executives. The government owns 51.8%, with the remaining 48.2% of Telstra stock held by shareholders, having been partially floated in the 1990s.

Phil Burgess, senior executive, made comments that Telstra was "a loser" hindered by excessive regulations and that he would not recommend purchasing the shares to his mother. The government responded, with Treasurer Peter Costello telling the Telstra management to manage the company and leave industry regulation to the government. Prime Minister John Howard repeated those sentiments, saying Telstra's problem was government ownership over government regulation.

There are plans for introducing legislation next week which will approve the sale of the remainder of the government's share. This is the first time such legislation will have gone through the Senate with the Coalition, consisting of the Liberal and National parties, controlling both the Senate and the House of Representatives. This may allow the predominantly Liberal-backed proposal to be passed. However, members of the National Party have spoken out against full privatisation, citing concerns over the future of less profitable rural services. A major base of support for the National Party is in rural areas.

Two major financial institutions divested their Telstra stock as

shares dropped to their lowest point since mid last year.

Hurricane Maria forms in Atlantic

Tropical storm Maria intensified and became the season's fifth hurricane on Sunday, September 4. The hurricane is currently growing stronger in the warm waters of the open Atlantic Ocean.

According to MSNBC News, at 5 a.m. EDT the hurricane had a maximum sustained wind of 75 mph., which barely qualifies for category 1 hurricane status, and was centered at 256 miles Southeast of Bermuda. Currently it is moving north-northwest and has been predicted to turn northward around late Sunday and early Monday. If the hurricane continues on its route as predicted, hurricane specialist Stacy Stewart believes, "Maria should remain well to the east of Bermuda and only pose a threat to shipping interests."

This hurricane does not appear to pose a threat comparable to the current major US disaster, Hurricane Katrina, since it plainly is not as powerful and is expected to soon move into cooler Atlantic waters, sapping much of its remaining strength.

Maria is the 13th named storm of this hurricane season, which far surpasses the typical 4 or 5 named storms as of this time of year — keeping in mind the season runs from June 1 to November 30.

PayPal freezes \$20k in hurricane relief donations



Online money transfer company

PayPal is reportedly blocking over \$20,000 in donations from the website Something Awful, donations intended for the American Red Cross hurricane Katrina relief efforts. Rich Kyanka, founder of Something Awful, reports that the account he set up for Red Cross donations has been suspended by the eBay-owned subsidiary due to "suspicious behavior".

According to Kyanka, PayPal is requesting "proof of delivery", even though there is no item being purchased and the account was set up to accept donations. The account remains frozen. Kyanka is attempting to solve the problem by faxing various documents to PayPal in order to prove the legitimacy of the drive.

According to recent updates posted on the Something Awful website, Kyanka is requesting that PayPal refund any donations sent to the frozen account and require members to use an alternative link to donate directly to Red Cross if they wish to do so.

Something Awful, despite being a humor website, has a history of running donation drives for certain causes, including purchasing ballistic chest plates and body armor for a platoon in the US Army's 25th Infantry Division during the 2003 Iraq War. The Something Awful web servers are located in New Orleans where Hurricane Katrina hit.

Israelis, Pakistanis watch and wait as ties develop

Since last Thursday's surprise meeting between Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and Pakistani Foreign Minister Khursheed Kasuri in Istanbul, Turkey, both the governments of

Israel and Pakistan at various times played up and played down the impression that full diplomatic relations, while not on the immediate horizon, were certainly on their way to development.

Officials at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem stated that there was cautious optimism following the meeting and officials in Islamabad reiterated that any diplomatic relations with Israel were contingent on the reaching of a settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with further Israeli withdrawals from disputed territory captured by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War.

Pakistani officials, speaking on behalf of President Pervez Musharraf, have noted that Pakistan has no formal dispute with Israel and that Pakistan's relations with the Arab world would not necessarily deteriorate should Israel-Pakistan ties develop, citing the example that the Arab world has not given Pakistan much support in the country's dispute with India over the region of Kashmir.

Observers note that it is in Pakistan's interest to develop formal ties with Israel in order to improve the Pakistan's image in Washington as well as to counter-balance Israel's strong diplomatic and defense ties with Pakistan's neighbor India. For its part, Israel wishes to develop and/or improve relations with Arab and Islamic countries, though Israel itself must tread carefully so as to not damage relations with New Delhi.

Pakistani passports still have the disclaimer, "Valid in all countries, except Israel".

Controversy over whether New Orleans Mayor failed to follow hurricane plan



Hundreds of buses sit damaged and unused.

New Orleans' Mayor Ray Nagin is facing criticism for not using buses to evacuate citizens before Hurricane Katrina struck.

In the days leading up to Hurricane Katrina, Mayor Ray Nagin did not use hundreds of buses that were sitting in bus yards, some less than a mile from the Superdome, to evacuate citizens who were too poor to make their way out of the city. Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco commented, "The buses could have saved an estimated 20,000 people if they had been used for emergency evacuations which President Bush had declared two days before Katrina hit." Thursday, after the storm, Blanco by executive order used school buses for evacuation.

The 2000 edition of the southeast Louisiana evacuation plan on page 13, paragraph 5 states:

5. The primary means of hurricane evacuation will be personal vehicles. School and municipal buses, government-owned vehicles and vehicles provided by volunteer agencies may be used to provide transportation for individuals who

lack transportation and require assistance in evacuating.

The Superdome had been opened shortly before the storm as a shelter of last resort for those who had not evacuated. As FEMA observed at that time: "Most residents have evacuated the city and those left behind do not have transportation or have special needs."



In addition to the buses shown above, another 146 buses were left unused less than a mile from the Superdome.

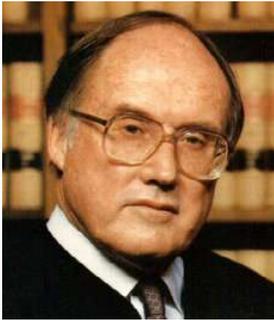
According to WWLTV, during a news conference on Sunday before the hurricane struck, Mayor Nagin claimed he "could and would commandeer any property or vehicle it deemed necessary to provide safe shelter or transport for those in need", but hundreds of vehicles, including city and school district buses, went unused.

In a radio interview on WWL-AM shortly after the hurricane, Mayor Nagin said, "I need 500 buses, man." On Saturday evening, Mayor Nagin also made remarks during an interview on CNN that the CIA will "wipe him out", in response for his criticisms of the Federal Government.

Chief Justice of the United States, William H Rehnquist, dies at age 80

United States Chief Justice William Rehnquist has died of complications from thyroid cancer.

He was 80. Rehnquist died surrounded by friends and family in his Arlington, Virginia home.



"President Bush and Mrs. Bush are deeply saddened by the news," said White House counselor Dan Bartlett. "It's a tremendous loss for our nation."

Rehnquist's death creates a second opening in the United States Supreme Court. The first vacancy occurred when Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor announced her retirement on July 1, 2005, though O'Connor will remain in office until her successor has been appointed. Hearings for nominee John G. Roberts, Jr. are set to begin on Tuesday, September 6, 2005.

Rehnquist first joined the Supreme Court, the highest court in the U.S., as an Associate Justice in 1972. He was elevated to the leading position of Chief Justice in 1986 and presided over the court for the next 19 years.

India struggles with encephalitis outbreak

Over 400 have died in an outbreak of encephalitis in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh and nearby regions, including neighbouring Nepal. The actual figures are estimated to be much higher, as the current toll only



takes into account those that have died at public hospitals, excluding any deaths in villages and private hospitals. A further 1500 or more are estimated to currently be hospitalised with the disease. The majority of the dead and infected are reported to be under 15.

The first cases of the disease this season were reported in late July. The disease is carried by pigs, which then migrates to humans through mosquitos. The outbreak has prompted the Indian government to undertake such measures as deployment of pig catchers in seriously affected areas, distributing thousands of mosquito curtains and spraying pesticides. Several million vials of encephalitis vaccine have also been promised by the government, which will help prepare health agencies for next year. Plans for vaccines to be delivered to the historically most affected areas this year were delayed due to lack of funds and low prioritisation relative to other diseases.

This is not the first time such an event has occurred. Thousands have died of the disease over the past three decades in the region. The most common period for the disease is during the monsoon season (July-September).

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. President Bush was criticized for verbally "pandering" to public opinion, while little is done about the tragedy. In a WWL radio interview, New Orleans Mayor Ray

Nagin called for a "moratorium on press conferences" and said, "[The government is] feeding the public a line of bull, and they are spinning, and people are dying."

Malik Rahim, a recent Green Party candidate for New Orleans City Council, describes the poor organization as criminal, and called for his party to come help when the federal government would permit it. Grammy award-winning rapper Kanye West created controversy when he said "George Bush doesn't care about black people" and that "America is set up to help the poor, the black people, the less well-off as slow as possible" in a telethon for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Onsite television news reporters have also levied harsh criticism against the politicians whom they were interviewing. Anderson Cooper (CNN) took Sen. Mary Landrieu (D., Louisiana) to task for her detachment (WMV, transcript). Andrea Mitchell (MSNBC), Bill O'Reilly (FOX), Geraldo Rivera (FOX), Scarborough (MSNBC), Shepard Smith (FOX), Robert Siegel (NPR), and Paula Zahn (CNN) have also harshly criticized their interviewees (WMV). One broadcaster bitterly exclaimed "The only difference between the chaos of New Orleans and a Third World disaster operation, was that a foreign dictator would have responded better."

In a press release issued September 3rd, 2005, Democratic Senator Mary L. Landrieu of Louisiana claims that President Bush staged a photo opportunity by having rescue equipment quickly moved into the background during the event. Senator Landrieu claims the equipment was dispersed elsewhere the next day. Landrieu says in her press release,

" ... we witnessed a hastily prepared stage set for a Presidential photo opportunity; and the desperately needed resources we saw were this morning reduced to a single, lonely piece of equipment. The good and decent people of southeast Louisiana and the Gulf Coast -- black and white, rich and poor, young and old -- deserve far better from their national government ..."

Not all of the coverage has been concerned with the failures at the federal or state level. The American Family Association's Agape Press published praise for the hurricane's destruction as an instrument of God's mercy, in that it "wiped out rampant sin". Rev. Bill Shanks, pastor of New Covenant Fellowship of New Orleans, said "God simply, I believe, in His mercy purged all of that stuff out of there -- and now we're going to start over again." "New Orleans now is abortion free. New Orleans now is Mardi Gras free. New Orleans now is free of Southern Decadence and the sodomites, the witchcraft workers, false religion -- it's free of all of those things now," Shanks says.

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. Although the rate of ibuprofen-sensitive asthma is low, it is a concern due to the number of children who use ibuprofen and have asthma. According to Dr. Jason Debley, more than 100,000 asthmatic children are at risk for asthma attacks brought on by ibuprofen. Debley emphasized that parents and doctors of children with

asthma should be careful when administering ibuprofen.

Ibuprofen-sensitive asthma attacks have been known of for quite some time, but a study has never before measured its risks and effects. According to Debley: "Although it has been recognized for some time that (drugs like ibuprofen) can trigger...an asthma attack in some people, the prevalence of ibuprofen-sensitive asthma in children had previously not been studied in a rigorous manner."

The study was conducted in Children's Hospital in Seattle to try to determine how many asthmatic children are sensitive to ibuprofen. It was run using 100 children who have mild to moderate asthma.

The child subjects were given either ibuprofen or a placebo in the trial. Within two hours of ibuprofen administration, four percent of the subjects exhibited decreased lung function by more than 15 percent; none of the placebo group children experienced this decrease.

Debley notes that ibuprofen should be given to children with asthma cautiously. He also warns that there may be a higher risk of decreased lung function after ibuprofen has been given to kids with more severe asthma. Parents and doctors should be aware of this and act accordingly.

Oil spill spotted along Mississippi River

In Louisiana, southeast of New Orleans, two storage tanks estimated to be filled with up to 160,000 barrels (6.7 million gallons) of oil are reported to be leaking into the Mississippi River.

It was first noticed on September 1, 2005 by an aircraft flying overhead. Officials are not certain whether the tanks are the cause of the leak or how full the tanks are. Inspection of the storage tanks from the ground is impossible due to flooding in the area.

In comparison, the Exxon Valdez oil spill off Alaska leaked between 11 and 35 million gallons of oil.

Due to massive efforts directed toward search and rescue in New Orleans, the Coast Guard has not been able to look into the matter.

California's SB 1 Bill Originators' and Supporters Turn Against Bill

Changes to California's SB 1 Bill have forced many of the bill's strongest supporters, including Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, to oppose it. Governor Schwarzenegger is now expected to veto the bill.

The bill sought to provide incentives for businesses and individuals to install rooftop solar panels, in a manner similar to existing programs in Washington and Oregon. Under pressure from the electrician's union, the bill was amended to require that installation be done by licensed electricians and that "prevailing wages" be paid for all commercial solar work done in the state.

Existing solar contractors were originally among the the bill's strongest supporters but now oppose it due to the changes. This comes despite the fact that they would be, under a grandfather clause, granted an exception to the new requirements for an electrician's license. Future solar specialists would be required to also be licensed electricians.

Deadly blaze in Paris possibly caused by arson



The building after the fire

The fire that broke out in a Parisian building that housed black immigrants may have been caused by criminals who committed arson, authorities announced. Activist groups denounce housing and immigration policies.

In the night of August 25 to August 26, a fire broke out a run-down apartment building located at 20, Bd Vincent Auriol in Paris, France. The building housed a number of immigrant families from Africa. These families had squatted the building illegally, until the building was bought by the local government and ran through some charity; even then, the building did not respect applicable safety norms.

immigration, work etc.

Experts have examined the situation. While no hydrocarbons (fuel etc.) were found on the scene, the speed of the fire seems to indicate a criminal origin. For this reason, the prosecution service of Paris (parquet) opened a criminal investigation for "arson resulting in death". An investigating magistrate has been named. Criminals face a maximal penalty of life imprisonment, though lesser criminal qualifications may be retained during the course of the enquiry.

On Saturday 4, protests were staged denouncing the recent fires that killed black immigrant families housed in unsafe buildings. Left-wing groups such as the Revolutionary Communist League denounced the immigration, workforce and housing policies of the center-right government, as well as its center-left predecessor, as regressive and promoting racism.



At nearby pavements, flowers honor the dead, and left-wing pamphlets denounce governmental policies on housing,

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