



Top Stories

Earthquake kills thousands in Indonesia

Over 2,500 people have been killed and thousands more injured in a 6.2 magnitude earthquake in Indonesia.

Indian Communists protest US involvement in country's internal affairs

The Central Government has been asked by the CPI to clarify to the U.S embassy that Washington's involvement in tackling India's Naxalism problem is not welcome.

Featured story

Keep your eyes peeled for cosmic debris

Stardust@home will use distributed computing which will allow participants to discover interstellar dust. Andrew Westphal is the director of Stardust@home and Wikinews interviewed him.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The body of Canadian diplomat Lewis Brooke Miskell is found in Naples, Italy, three months after his disappearance.
- The Wind That Shakes the Barley, a film by British director Ken Loach, is awarded the Palme d'Or at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival.
- Ivan Basso wins the 2006 Giro d'Italia.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Sam Hornish Jr. wins the 90th Indianapolis 500, beating Marco Andretti (Michael's son and Mario Andretti's grandson) at the line on the final lap.
- Barry Bonds hits his 715th home run against the Colorado Rockies, passing Babe Ruth to move into second place on the list of all-time home run hitters.

Student faces expulsion over blog post

A 17-year-old student faces expulsion by the Plainfield School District in Plainfield, Illinois as a result of blog posts he made on xanga.com which were critical of the school staff, alleging bullying and intimidation. The student has already been suspended for 10 days for the "inappropriate comments" and "threats" the school felt he had expressed on his blog. The posts were not made on school time or with school equipment.

On May 1st, the student posted the following message which apparently initiated the suspension:
dear plainfield school district 202: i know you read this. and you suck. suspend me or what ever you would like to do. but this is my fuckin web site and i can put what ever i want on it. kinda goes with the first amendment. by suspending kyle again for his xanga you guys are pathetic and totally irrational. first amendment you fucks. freedom of speech. and who the fuck are you to say what

some one can do from there own personal computer. one more thing kiss my ass.

On May 2nd, the student continued his passionate rant, giving some background to the controversy:
you are bully's. I feel threatened by you. if you don't like what you see here then do not come here its that simple. I'm pretty sure when you suspended Sam you brought her to tears, you are a bully and you make me sick. there's nothing you can do about us posting about parties we've been to and how much liquor we had or how much pot was smoked, the police need to do a better job, you are not the police. and how is it that you feel threatened what was said that was so threatening. I feel threatened by you, I cant even have a public web page with out you bullying me and telling me what has to be removed. where is this freedom of speech that this government is sworn to uphold? none of this is posted at school, its all posted from our home computers, and once we step foot into our homes we are not on school property any more. you are just power hungry, don't you ever think? did you stop to think that maybe this will make parents angry that you are bullying their children around? did you ever stop to think that maybe now you really are going to have a threat on your hands now that you have just pissed off kids for voicing their opinions? did you ever stop to think this will start a community backlash? The kids at Columbine did what they did because they were bullied. In my

opinion you are the real threat here. None of us ever put in our xanga's that they were going to kill or bring harm to any one. we voiced our opinions. you are the real threat here. you are depriving us of our right to learn. now stick that in your pipe and smoke it.

Says attorney Carl Buck, who feels the school authorities have overstepped their boundaries: "The district is going to take away the student's education for exercising his freedom of speech... I feel like they are trying to control his freedom of speech. ... He is saying, 'You can't bully people and we have a right to object and you can't throw people out of school for voicing their opinions.'"

Other students at the school posted messages of support in their own Xanga blogs. A blogger named Meghan wrote, "As Americans, we have the right to speak our mind." Another student, Heather, who found out about the possible expulsion through the local news, wrote that "first of all, Xanga is outside of school ... second of all ... there was no threat towards anyone on his posts."

In a related case in March 2006, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that an Alaska high school acted improperly by suspending a student for carrying a banner reading "Bong Hits 4 Jesus" across the street from the school.

Interview with LibriVox founder Hugh McGuire

Old books never die. They don't even fade away. Instead, their copyright expires and they are released into the public domain, where hordes of volunteers breathe new life into them. Groups like Project Gutenberg, Distributed Proofreaders and Wikisource

digitize, preserve and categorize classic works of literature, old encyclopedias, and even periodicals.

Hugh McGuire, a writer from Montreal, decided that he did not only want to read these voices from the past — he wanted to hear them. "On a practical level," he says, "I wanted to download a free audiobook." Disappointed with the somewhat meager outcome of his search, he decided to create an open community website dedicated to creating spoken word versions of public domain texts. In August 2005, LibriVox was born. The call to action is simple enough:

"Would you like to record chapters of books in the public domain? It's easy to volunteer. All you need is a computer, some free recording software, and your own voice."

Less than a year later, the website features a hundred or so completed books, and 300 people have contributed chapters or poetry. "Probably another 400 have done or are expected to do chapters for books not yet completed or cataloged," McGuire explains. The finished audio files, like the texts they come from, are released into the public domain and offered in the MP3 and Ogg Vorbis file formats. Volunteers use the active forums and a wiki to collaborate. We asked Hugh McGuire about the state of the project, internationalization, and the place of LibriVox in the larger free content community.

Why did you decide to take the acoustic fate of public domain works into your own hands, and how did you go about it?

I think that a vibrant public domain is very important to a healthy world, and so I thought:

here's a way to help the cause. I launched LibriVox, emailed some friends and some podcasters who were doing literary stuff, and invited them to record a chapter of Joseph Conrad's *Secret Agent*. Things have grown steadily since. By the way, AKMA was the first guy I know of to do something like this, with [Lawrence] Lessig's *Free Culture*. That, I think, started my thinking about this, but it took a while for the idea to crystallize.

Do you personally record audiobooks, and did you already do so before LibriVox?

LibriVox was my first experience recording audiobooks. I still do the odd chapter, but i am a bit delinquent in finishing some of them these days!

Is there a particular LibriVox book which you think stands out because of the quality, the overall effort involved, its popularity, or for some other reason?

My personal favourite is *Notes from the Underground* (Dostoyevsky). Other random good ones: *Austen, Jane. Pride and Prejudice* *Christie, Agatha. The Mysterious Affair at Styles* *London, Jack. White Fang* *Macaulay, Thomas Babington. History of England (Volume 1, Chapter 1)* *Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich. The Communist Manifesto (solo)* *Twain, Mark. A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (solo)*

[Ed.: See the LibriVox catalog for a full index.]

Browsing the catalog, I find that the quality of the spoken audio varies greatly from text to text or even from chapter to chapter. If someone wanted to re-record a

chapter because they didn't like the speaker, would you then offer two versions?

Yes. We take the Wikipedia approach: if you think it should be better, please help it be so. You'll note we offer a couple of versions of some books. Indeed our weekly poetry project celebrates this diversity of voice: each week a new short poem is chosen and as many readers as wish to record a version, so you get 20+ versions of the same poem, a very interesting audio experience.

Besides works whose copyright has expired, there is an increasing number of modern books available under Creative Commons and similar licenses. You mentioned Larry Lessig's Free Culture, but it also includes some out of print titles by publishers who are open to the concept, such as O'Reilly. Do you want to limit the scope of LibriVox strictly to old public domain works, or do you have plans to include recent works under reasonably permissive licenses as well?

We are only doing public domain works, for a number of reasons, partly to keep simplicity in our copyright situation -- public domain means its as simple as can be. CC makes things more complex. Also, there are other sites, notably podiobooks.com, which are better suited to CC works than LibriVox. we find it makes things clear and easy to say: published works, public domain, and leave it at that.

As far as I can tell, podiobooks.com features "free as in beer" content — material which you can download, but which isn't under a free content license. Instead of "public domain", wouldn't "free content" work just

as well, using something like the Free Content Definition to limit the scope?

This needs more discussion obviously: we chose public domain because the texts we use are public domain and we didn't want to add new restrictions, especially not non-commercial, since already our recordings are being used for a number of commercialish projects (I can't recall any specific project names, but some pay-education sites use LV stuff). That's good and well and fine with us. We don't want to have to give anyone permission to use our recordings, we want anyone to use them for whatever they want.

Also, for the thing to work you need to have many dedicated volunteers willing to do the management (onerous) and many willing to do the reading. While *Pride and Prejudice* will attract many readers, I don't know about O'Reilly's latest tome on XML... though I might be wrong.

Are there plans to fully internationalize the website?

LV is a totally open project, so where the volunteers go, we go. We have books in German, Italian, French, Spanish, Hebrew, Finnish, Japanese, Old English... and possibly a few more. We also have a wiki, and our response to such questions is to encourage any non-anglos to make translations there, and we can incorporate into the site as needed. We have a language policy, which basically says that in general the forum language is english (so that admin know what's going on) but that if a non-English book project is started, the language in that thread can be whatever volunteers wish to use.

I was thinking specifically about things like the user interface of the website and the forums. Are there plans to internationalize these? Many people speak no English at all, so an English website might not work for them.

In order for this to happen we need volunteers willing to do it. We have no budget (literally zero) and our structure is totally loose and open, so if a volunteer or group of volunteers offer to do this, we will find a way to help make it happen. There is the constraint that we'd be most comfortable with active volunteers doing it, who understand the project and its particularities.

Since everything is volunteer, the current admin would have to find the time to manage this, too, but I expect if there were a serious desire on the part of some volunteers, we'd have no problem adding the text. We have a wiki, where anyone is welcome to write the text in whatever language, and then we could easily post pages up to the site.

Has podcasting helped you in gaining more awareness?

Sure! Podcasting was the inspiration for LV ... easy, cheap, do-it-yourself audio! Superb. Podcasting is an important part of our distribution, but torrents and regular downloads are probably bigger.

So, do you have an idea how many people listen to your podcast?

Last estimation was in the 5000 range.

Besides human readers, there's also the fully automated approach of turning text into sound. Text-to-

speech software is getting better every year, with an increasing focus on "natural" voices.

I don't find text-to-speech very interesting. LV is about people reading to you, which is very different than having a computer - no matter the naturalness - read to you. Our recordings have mistakes, fumbles, coughs, and beautiful human voices being human, reading wonderful works of literature. It's not just transmission of audio information, it's something much more, and something no computer, robot etc. could ever replicate.

Do you not sometimes get worried that your work might eventually be made obsolete by technology?

See above, but we don't really feel like we are in competition with other projects. Many of us are working for similar goals, and there's room for many of us. Personally, I am very much interested in what the readers get out of the process, as much as the listeners. If there are computer-generated public domain audiobooks, so much the better. There are also many other audiobook projects, and we all seem to be doing parallel stuff. I think that's great. The beauty of LV, podcasting etc. is that it's all so cheap to do - you can have your choice. I will choose a real human reading over a computer reading any day, but others might not agree. That's fine. LVers read out of love of literature, and nothing more.

Wikisource is the Wikimedia project which digitizes and archives free content texts. There's also an existing Wikimedia effort to create spoken versions of Wikipedia articles. Are you guys aware of each other, and possibly

already working together?

We're aware of some of these projects, and have corresponded with some of these and others. There's so much to do! It's great that so many are doing this stuff, and that people can choose the things that interest them. This is the thing about LV (as with Wikipedia etc) ... we can't control our volunteers, nor do we want to. We just give a framework, and hope for the best.

What is the last audiobook you've listened to?

To be honest, I haven't listened to a full book in a long while! Last chapter I listened to was from Whitman's Leaves of Grass.

Keep your eyes peeled for cosmic debris

Stardust is a NASA space capsule that collected samples from comet Wild 2 in deep space and landed back on Earth on January 15, 2006. It was decided that distributed computing would be used to "discover" the samples the capsule collected. The project is called Stardust@home.

Andrew Westphal is the director of Stardust@home and Wikinews interviewed him for May's Interview of the Month (IOTM) on May 18, 2006.

Wikinews: Some may not know exactly what Stardust and or Stardust@home are. Can you explain more about it for us?

Andrew Westphal: Stardust is a NASA Discovery mission that was launched in 1999. It is really two missions in one. The primary science goal of the mission was to collect a sample from a known primitive solar-system body, a comet called Wild2 (pronounced

"Vilt-two" -- the discoverer was German, I believe). This is the first US "sample return" mission since Apollo, and the first ever from beyond the moon. This gives a little context. By "sample return" of course I mean a mission that brings back extraterrestrial material. I should have said above that this is the first "solid" sample return mission -- Genesis brought back a sample from the Sun almost two years ago, but Stardust is also bringing back the first solid samples from the local interstellar medium -- basically this is a sample of the Galaxy. This is absolutely unprecedented, and we're obviously incredibly excited. I should mention parenthetically that there is a fantastic launch video -- taken from the POV of the rocket on the JPL Stardust website -- highly recommended -- best I've ever seen -- all the way from the launch pad to. Basically interplanetary trajectory. Absolutely great.

WN: Is the video available to the public?

Andrew Westphal: Yes. OK, I digress. The first challenge that we have before can do any kind of analysis of these interstellar dust particles is simply to find them. This is a big challenge because they are very small (order of micron in size) and are somewhere (we don't know where) on a HUGE collector-- at least on the scale of the particle size -- about a tenth of a square meter. SO...

We're right now using an automated microscope that we developed several years ago for nuclear astrophysics work to scan the collector in the Cosmic Dust Lab in Building 31 at Johnson Space Center. This is the ARES group that handles returned samples (Moon Rocks, Genesis

chips, Meteorites, and Interplanetary Dust Particles collected by U2 in the stratosphere). The microscope collects stacks of digital images of the aerogel collectors in the array. These images are sent to us -- we compress them and convert them into a format appropriate for Stardust@home.

Stardust@home is a highly distributed project using a "Virtual Microscope" that is written in html and javascript and runs on most browsers -- no downloads are required. Using the Virtual Microscope volunteers can search over the collector for the tracks of the interstellar dust particles.

WN: How many samples do you anticipate to be found during the course of the project?

A.W.: Great question. The short answer is that we don't know. The long answer is a bit more complicated. Here's what we know. The Galileo and Ulysses spacecraft carried dust detectors onboard that Eberhard Gruen and his colleagues used to first detect and then measure the flux of interstellar dust particles streaming into the solar system. (This is a kind of "wind" of interstellar dust, caused by the fact that our solar system is moving with respect to the local interstellar medium.) Markus Landgraf has estimated the number of interstellar dust particles that should have been captured by Stardust during two periods of the "cruise" phase of the interplanetary orbit in which the spacecraft was moving with this wind. He estimated that there should be around 45 particles, but this number is very uncertain -- I wouldn't be surprised if it is quite different from that. That was the long answer! One thing that I

should say...is that like all research, the outcome of what we are doing is highly uncertain. There is a wonderful quote attributed to Einstein -- "If we knew what we were doing, it wouldn't be called "research", would it?"

WN: How big would the samples be?

A.W.: We expect that the particles will be of order a micron in size. (A millionth of a meter.) When people are searching using the virtual microscope, they will be looking not for the particles, but for the tracks that the particles make, which are much larger -- several microns in diameter. Just yesterday we switched over to a new site which has a demo of the VM (virtual microscope) I invite you to check it out. The tracks in the demo are from submicron carbonyl iron particles that were shot into aerogel using a particle accelerator modified to accelerate dust particles to very high speeds, to simulate the interstellar dust impacts that we're looking for.

WN: And that's on the main Stardust@home website?

A.W.: Yes.

WN: How long will the project take to complete?

A.W.: Partly the answer depends on what you mean by "the project". The search will take several months. The bottleneck, we expect (but don't really know yet) is in the scanning -- we can only scan about one tile per day and there are 130 tiles in the collector. is that these particles will be quite diverse, so we're hoping that we'll continue to have lots of volunteers collaborating with us on

this after the initial discoveries. It may be that the 50th particle that we find will be the real Rosetta stone that turns out to be critical to our understanding of interstellar dust. So we really want to find them all! Enlarging the idea of the project a little, beyond the search, though is to actually analyze these particles. That's the whole point, obviously!

DragonFire2410: of course :)

A.W.: And this is the huge advantage with this kind of a mission -- a "sample return" mission.

A.W.: Most missions rather do things quite differently... you have to build an instrument to make a measurement and that instrument design gets locked in several years before launch practically guaranteeing that it will be obsolete by the time you launch. Here exactly the opposite is true. Several of the instruments that are now being used to analyze the cometary dust did not exist when the mission was launched. Further, some instruments (e.g., synchrotrons) are the size of shopping malls -- you

DragonFire2410: That I did not know :)

A.W.: don't have a hope of flying these in space. So we can and will study these samples for many years. AND we have to preserve some of these dust particles for our grandchildren to analyze with their hyper-quark-gluon plasma microscopes! (or whatever)

When do you anticipate the project to start?

A.W.: We're really frustrated with the delays that we've been having. Some of it has to do with learning how to deal with the aerogel collectors, which are rougher and more fractured than we expected. The good news is that they are pretty clean -- there is very little of the dust that you see on our training images -- these were deliberately left out in the lab to collect dust so that we could give people experience with the worst case we could think of. In learning how to do the scanning of the actual flight aerogel, we uncovered a couple of bugs in our scanning software -- which forced us to go back and rescan. Part of the other reason for the delay was that we had to learn how to handle the collector -- it would cost \$200M to replace it if something happened to it, so we had to develop procedures to deal with it, and add several new safety features to the Cosmic Dust Lab. This all took time. Finally, we're distracted because we also have many responsibilities for the cometary analysis, which has a deadline of August 15 for finishing analysis. The IS project has no such deadline, so at times we had to delay the IS (interstellar, sorry) in order to focus on the cometary work. We are very grateful to everyone for their patience on this -- I mean that very sincerely.

DragonFire2410: :)

A.W.: And rest assured that we're just as frustrated!

I know there will be a "test" that participants will have to take before they can examine the "real thing". What will that test consist of?

A.W.: The test will look very

similar to the training images that you can look at now. But.. there will of course be no annotation to tell you where the tracks are!

Why did NASA decide to take the route of distributed computing? Will they do this again?

A.W.: I wouldn't say that NASA decided to do this -- the idea for Stardust@home originated here at U. C. Berkeley. Part of the idea of course came

If I understand correctly it isn't distributed computing, but distributed eyeballing?

A.W.: from the SETI@home people who are just down the hall from us. But as brianmc just pointed out. this is not really distributed computing like SETI@home the computers are just platforms for the VM and it is human eyes and brains who are doing the real work which makes it fun (IMHO)

DragonFire2410: I agree :)

A.W.: THAT SAID... There have been quite a few people who have expressed interested in developing automated algorithms for searching. Just because WE don't know how to write such an algorithm doesn't mean NOBODY does. We're delighted at this and are happy to help make it happen

Isn't there a catch 22 that the data you're going to collect would be a prerequisite to automating the process?

A.W.: That was the conclusion that we can to early on -- that we would need some sort of training set to be able to train an

algorithm. Of course you have to train people too, but we're hoping (we'll see..!) that people are more flexible in recognizing things that they've never seen before and pointing them out. Our experience is that people who have never seen a track in aerogel can learn to recognize them very quickly, even against a big background of cracks, dust and other sources of confusion... Coming back to the original question -- although NASA didn't originate the idea, they are very generously supporting this project. It wouldn't have happened without NASA's financial support (and of course access to the Stardust collector) Did that answer the question?

DragonFire2410: yup :)

brianmc: I think so, with a little diversion.

Will a project like this be done again?

A.W.: I don't know... There are only a few projects for which this approach makes sense... In fact, I frankly haven't run across another at least in Space Science. But I am totally open to the idea of it. I am not in favor of just doing it as "make-work" -- that is just artificially taking this approach when another approach would make more sense.

How did the idea come up to do this kind of project?

A.W.: Really desperation. When we first thought about this we assumed that we would use some sort of automated image recognition technique. We asked some experts around here in CS and the conclusion was that the problem was somewhere between

trivial and impossible, and we wouldn't know until we had some real examples to work with. So we talked with Dan Wertheimer and Dave Anderson (literally down the hall from us) about the idea of a distributed project, and they were quite encouraging. Dave proposed the VM machinery, and Josh Von Korff, a physics grad student, implemented it. (Beautifully, I think. I take no credit!)

I got to meet one of the stardust directors in March during the Texas Aerospace Scholars program at JSC. She talked about searching for meteors in Antarctica, one that were unblemished by Earth conditions. Is that our best chance of finding new information on comets and asteroids? Or will more Stardust programs be our best solution?

A.W.: That's a really good question. Much will depend on what we learn during this official "Preliminary Examination" period for the cometary analysis. Aerogel capture is pretty darn good, but it's not perfect and things are altered during capture in ways that we're still understanding. I think that much also depends on what question you're asking. For example, some of the most important science is done by measuring the relative abundances of isotopes in samples, and these are not affected (at least not much) by capture into aerogel.

Also, she talked about how some of the agencies whom they gave samples to had lost or destroyed 2-3 samples while trying to analyze them. That one, in fact, had been statically charged, and stuck to the side of the microscope lens and they spent over an hour looking for it. Is that really our biggest danger? Giving out

samples as a show of good faith, and not letting NASA example all samples collected?

A.W.: These will be the first measurements, probably, that we'll make on the interstellar dust. There is always a risk of loss. Fortunately for the cometary samples there is quite a lot there, so it's not a disaster. NASA has some analytical capabilities, particularly at JSC, but the vast majority of the analytical capability in the community is not at NASA but is at universities, government labs and other institutions all over the world. I should also point out that practically every analytical technique is destructive at some level. (There are a few exceptions, but not many.) The problem with meteorites is that except in a very few cases, we don't know where they specifically came from. So having a sample that we KNOW for sure is from the comet is golden!@

I am currently working on my Bachelor's in computer science, with a minor in astronomy. Do you see successes of programs like Stardust to open up more private space exploration positions for people such as myself. Even though I'm not in the typical "space" fields of education?

A.W.: Can you elaborate on your question a little -- I'm not sure that I understand...

Well, while at JSC I learned that they mostly want Engineers, and a few science grads, and I worry that my computer science degree with not be very valuable, as the NASA rep told me only 1% of the applicants for their work study program are CS majors. Im just curious as to your thoughts on if

CS majors will be more in demand now that projects like Stardust and the Mars missions have been great successes? Have you seen a trend towards more private businesses moving in that direction, especially with President Bush's statement of Man on the Moon in 2015?

A.W.: That's a good question. I am personally not very optimistic about the direction that NASA is going. Despite recent successes, including but not limited to Stardust, science at NASA is being decimated

I made a joke with some people at the TAS event that one day SpaceShipOne will be sent up to save stranded ISS astronauts. It makes me wonder what kind of private redundancy the US government is taking for future missions

A.W.: I guess one thing to be a little cautious about is that despite SpaceShipOne's success, we haven't had an orbital project that has been successful in that style of private enterprise. It would be nice to see that happen. I know that there's a lot of interest...!

Now I know the answer to this question...but a lot do not...When samples are found, How will they be analyzed? Who gets the credit for finding the samples?

A.W.: The first person who identifies an interstellar dust particle will be acknowledged on the website (and probably will be much in demand for interviews from the media!), will have the privilege of naming the particle,

DragonFire2410: awesome!

A.W.: and will be a co-author on any papers that WE (at UCB) publish on the analysis of the particle. Also, although we are precluded from paying for travel expenses, we will invite those who discover particles AND the top performers to our lab for a hands-on tour.

DragonFire2410: way cool

A.W.: We have some fun things, including micromachines.

How many people/participants do you expect to have?

A.W.: About 113,000 have preregistered on our website. Frankly, I don't have a clue how many will actually volunteer and do a substantial amount of searching. We've never done this before, after all!

One last thing I want to say ... well, two. First, we are going to special efforts NOT to do any searching ourselves before we go "live". It would not be fair to all the volunteers for us to get a jumpstart on the search. ALL we are doing is looking at a few random views to make sure that the focus and illumination are good. (And we haven't seen anything -- no surprise at all!) Also, the attitude for this should be: Have Fun. If you're not having fun doing it, stop and do something else! A good maxim for life in general!

Authorities detonate bomb left on doorstep in Florida

According to St. Johns County Sheriff's Office in Julington Creek, Florida ten homes had to be temporarily evacuated after a

suspicious package was left on a doorstep of a home on West Pleasant Place in the city and featured a photo of the skyline of New York City and the former World Trade Center towers.

"We have a Sept. 11 scene - a scene of New York City prior to Sept. 11. After that fact, we're not going to too many specifics about the device itself, certainly we'll let ATF and our investigators look at that," said Chuck Mulligan, St. Johns County officer.

The tenants were not expecting a package and called police to report it as being suspicious. The bomb squad responded and used a special robot to look at the package and open it. When the robot opened the package, authorities saw what appeared to be a bomb. They then detonated the package two times, both of which exploded. After recovering the material, they determined that two pipe bombs had been inside the package.

"Normally, even if someone has designed a package to look as though it's an explosive device, we find nothing explosive inside. Certainly different today," added Mulligan.

It is still unknown who placed the bombs on the doorstep and why they did it. So far no arrests have been made and no suspects have been announced. Authorities have set up a tip line for anyone who has information on the case.

Fernando Alonso wins Monaco Grand Prix

Fernando Alonso won the FIA Formula-1 Monaco Grand Prix for the first time in his career today.

During Saturday's qualifying session, Michael Schumacher

made a strange mistake in the La Rascasse corner, when he driver locked his car's wheels, bringing the vehicle to a halt and finished the race causing the drivers behind him to lose time on their their fast laps. After a long investigation the FIA's stewards decided to cancel all his fast laps as a penalty for the unsporting behaviour displayed by him. Article 112 of the regulations, applied by FIA, prevents the F1 team Ferrari to appeal this decision. Thus, Schumacher and Felipe Massa, who crashed his car earlier in the qualification, were last on the starting grid. The Ferrari team decided to change all two engines, because there was no more stringent penalty that could have been imposed on them. Michael started the race from the pit-lane.

Alonso was in the lead for the most of the race. Kimi Raikkonen and Mark Webber, who were the only serious competitors to Alonso for the first part of the race lost their cars (due to engine failure) almost simultaneously, one by one. After that Alonso drove to victory with little opposition from the other drivers.

With a huge gap from the Spaniard, McLaren driver Juan-Pablo Montoya took second place.

The circuit was a great success for Red Bull team as David Coulthard came in at third place.

There was no traditional champagne douche after the race in memory of Édouard Michelin, one of the owner of Michelin company died a couple of days before the race.

More earthquakes shake the South Pacific

Two more major earthquakes

about 30-minutes apart, have struck in the countries of Papua New Guinea and Tonga, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The two quakes are not believed to be related.

The first quake struck in Papua New Guinea on the small island of New Britain at 03:12 (UTC) and had a magnitude of 6.2. The second quake, on the island nation of Tonga struck at 03:36 (UTC) with a magnitude of 6.7. No injuries or damage have been reported from either of the quakes.

"They're probably unrelated, they just happened at the same time," said geophysicist with Hawaii's Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, Barry Hirshorn. He also said that neither quake posed a tsunami threat.

"No destructive Pacific-wide tsunami threat exists based on historical earthquake and tsunami data," said a statement on the warning center's website.

However; the statement also said that large earthquakes like these could sometimes "generate tsunamis that can be destructive" within 100km of the epicenters and added that cities in that range should be warned of the possibility and take "appropriate actions."

Just yesterday, a magnitude 6.3 quake struck the island of Java in Indonesia which killed over 3,000 people.

Two boys dead after their father throws them off hotel balcony

A father and his two sons are dead after he threw them off the Loews Hotel balcony 15 floors above the ground in Miami, Florida. Dr. Edward van Dyk, 43, threw both of

his sons, 4 and 8, off the hotel balcony and then jumped off the balcony himself.

Police say that van Dyk and his wife Qino were having problems in their marriage but were getting ready to celebrate their ten year wedding anniversary and did not have a fight before the tragedy. Police also say that van Dyk was attempting to get back at his wife for the problems.

According to Qino, she heard one of the boys yelling. When she got to the room to see what was wrong, all she saw was her husband jumping off the balcony. She then looked off the balcony to find her two sons and her husband lying motionless on the roof of the hotel, two floors above the ground.

"It's unfortunate that this gentleman was so selfish and in an effort to get back at his wife he took the two most loved people in the world away from her. It's a terrible tragedy," said Bobby Hernandez a spokesman for the Miami Beach Police Department.

Van Dyk was working out of Alton Memorial Hospital and was a doctor of radiation oncology and was employed at the hospital for just over one year. He was also in charge of the hospital's cancer unit.

"We are shocked and saddened by this tragedy and we offer our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Van Dyk and her family," said Rob Shelton spokesman for the hospital.

Van Dyk left no note or clues as to the reasons why he killed his sons and himself. Guests in rooms near the incident did not hear any noise. The family was on vacation from Alton, Illinois.

Activists in Tunisia thrashed by police

Activists from Tunisia's only independent human-rights body have been assaulted by the police in that country, according to reports. Witnesses say the roads leading to the Tunisia Human Rights League were blocked by plainclothes policemen who insulted and kicked activists who attempted to breach the cordon. U.S diplomats and French lawyers, who had been invited to the meeting, were also present at the scene. No arrests have so far been reported in this incident, which according to human-rights activists, is the latest in a chain of government atrocities that include beating lawyers, jailing opponents and stifling the press.

Mokhtar Trifi, the president of the group, said: "It is shameful that those invited to support human rights in Tunisia cannot gain access to the headquarters of the human rights league." Some pro-government members of the Human Rights League, however, accuse their leadership of cronyism, physical and verbal violence against militants and of sidelining members who disagree with them.

Meanwhile, members of the Tunisian National Organisation for Lawyers have begun a hunger strike in protest against the law of the Supreme Bar Institute that was endorsed by the Tunisian parliament. The lawyers accuse the Ministry of Justice of seeking to control the lawyers' syndicate. The government says it is committed to democracy and respects human rights, adding it has no political prisoners and that it has not jailed anyone for expressing their opinions.

Queensland Liberal and National parties move towards becoming a single party

The Liberal and National parties in Queensland have moved towards unification following separate meetings today. In most states of Australia and at the federal level the two parties co-operate with each other to form a coalition.

The coalition is generally led by the more dominant party, which in other states and at the federal level is generally the Liberals. In Queensland this is reversed.

If the Queensland proposal is successful it will create a single conservative party in the state. Many see it as the only way to challenge Peter Beattie's Labor government, which holds a 31-seat majority in Queensland's lower house.

The idea was originally floated by Queensland Nationals leader Lawrence Springborg two years ago but was rejected by most Liberals who feared such a merger would disassociate them from the federal Liberals. The idea was also unpopular with National party members.

The new party would be led by Opposition leader Lawrence Springborg, currently of the Nationals, with Liberals leader Bob Quinn as his deputy. Liberal State Director Geoff Greene said that the party would follow a Liberal-style structure with branding to be "negotiated".

Mr Greene said that there would be discussions held in Canberra over the coming days. It is believed that Liberal Prime Minister, John Howard will be involved in the discussions. If the parties merge, both will need to make changes to their

constitutions.

Israeli Air Force attacks militant bases in Lebanon

Lebanese officials have stated that jets from Israel have bombed the bases of a Palestinian militant group near Beirut. Reports say missiles were fired at camps run by the PFLP a few hours after an Israeli soldier was hurt when a rocket which was fired from Lebanon hit an army base near the Israeli town of Safed.

Israeli officials stated that they were holding the government of Lebanon responsible for the attack that originated from within the latter country's borders. According to the Associated Press, Israel is going to make an official complaint to the United Nations Security Council. A spokeswoman for the Israeli Army said, "The state of Israel holds the Lebanese government responsible for any terror attack emanating from its territory."

No militant group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack, although the Lebanese extremist group Hezbollah and Palestinian militants based in Lebanon have, in the past, claimed responsibility for such attacks. Israel has also responded to such incidents by conducting air-operations similar to the one it conducted today. There were reports that the Israeli planes fired up to eight missiles during the two runs they conducted, but there do not seem to be any casualties.

Crusaders win Super 14 final in eerie mist

The Canterbury Crusaders won the inaugural Super 14 title, downing the Wellington Hurricanes 19 points to 12 at Jade Stadium, Christchurch. The game was dominated by surreal conditions -

a thick fog made viewing the game from the top of the stands impossible. Only one try was scored in the mistake-riddled game, to Crusaders centre Casey Laulala.

Both sides were consulted prior to the match on whether the final should be postponed, as a thick fog engulfed the sold-out Jade Stadium. Patrons in the South Stand turned their attention to the stadium screen behind them, as they could not see anything through the mist. The television audience was in a similar position, with most of the pictures being shrouded in a white cloud. Sky Sports commentators split the commentary between themselves and a sideline commentator, as they could not see the other side of the pitch from the commentary box.

Referee Jonathon Kaplan and the players of both the Crusaders and Hurricanes were asked if they wished to continue at half time, there was apparently a clear view that everyone wanted to continue with the final. The final score was 19 points to 12, a converted try being the difference. For the Crusaders, it was the team's sixth championship in 11 years. Despite the eerie conditions, jubilant celebrations followed after full-time.

Earthquake kills thousands in Indonesia

An earthquake measuring magnitude 6.3 struck Indonesia's Central Java province early on Saturday morning, killing at least 4,285 people, and injuring thousands more. Severe damage has been reported in the city of Yogyakarta, with over three thousand buildings having collapsed and electricity and communications links broken. The

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) reports that the quake struck at 5:54 a.m. local time (2254 UTC Friday) and the epicentre was offshore, approximately 25 km (15 miles) southwest of the city.

Nearby Mount Merapi, which has seen increased activity in recent weeks, had emitted a large cloud of purple smoke and ash shortly before the earthquake, and vulcanologists have confirmed that the earthquake has increased the volcano's activity. Indonesia lies on the Pacific Ring of Fire, a zone containing the boundaries of tectonic plate that encircles the basin of the Pacific Ocean, and is prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Hospital efforts are being hampered by aftershocks, which the USGS have measured as being up to 4.8 in magnitude, and by a lack of doctors and medical supplies. The Indonesian Transport Minister Hatta Radjasa has said that the earthquake has damaged the Yogyakarta airport runway, closing it to air traffic until at least Sunday.

Many countries have offered aid to the devastated region, with the United Kingdom offering three million pounds (\$5,600,000 U.S), Australia offering three million Australian dollars (\$2,270,000 U.S) China offering two million U.S dollars, and the United States, European Union, Japan and UNICEF offering further immediate aid. The Red Cross, Red Crescent, OXFAM as well as UNICEF have been providing tents and emergency supplies to the victims.

Many residents spent the night outdoors, either afraid to return for fear of more aftershocks, or because they had lost their homes. In the Bantul district, up

to 80% of houses were destroyed, leaving an estimated 150,000 homeless. The Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, visited the disaster area and has called in the army to assist in rescue efforts.

Sale Sharks defeat Leicester Tigers to win Guinness Premiership

The Sale Sharks defeated the Leicester Tigers in the Guinness Premiership final, claiming the team's first title of the modern competition. The game was played at a rainy Twickenham Stadium on Saturday, May 27, the final score being 45 points to 20.

Sale entered the game as the top English rugby union club after finishing atop of the 2005-06 Guinness Premiership. In addition, Leicester finished second, so it was 1st v 2nd. The scoring opened up in the 3rd minute, with fly-half Charlie Hodgson land a penalty kick for the Sharks, scoring continued for the Sharks a few minutes later when Mark Cueto scored the opening try of the match.

Leicester hit back in the 9th minute with flanker Lewis Moody scoring the team's first try, with Andy Goode converting the try, the score was now a lot closer, ten minutes into the game. Moody's try was followed by a period of no scoring, until Magnus Lund scored a try for the Sharks in the 17th minute to extend Sale's lead. More points came for the Sharks over 10 minutes later, with Hodgson kicking another penalty goal in the 31st minute.

Leicester also got a penalty shortly after Hodgson kicked Sale's, Goode was successful in kicking the penalty goal for Leicester in the 36th minute. Sale hit back in the

closing moments of the first half, with Oriol Ripol Fortuny scoring a try, which was converted by Hodgson. Sale went into halftime leading Leicester 23 points to 10.

Penalty kicks were exchanged in the early stages of the second half, with Leicester's Goode kicking one in the 43rd minute, with Hodgson kicking one in the 45th minute for the Sharks. Hodgson got another penalty goal in the 48th minute, extending the Sharks' lead over Leicester.

In the 63rd minute, Charlie Hodgson kicked another penalty goal for Sale, furthering the lead, with less than 20 minutes left in the final. In the 70th minute, with 10 minutes remaining on the clock, Charlie Hodgson landed a drop goal. Leicester replied with a try in James Hamilton in the 74th minute, although it may have been too late, Goode converted the try. Sale got more points on the board in the 78th minute, with Hodgson landing another penalty goal. In the final moments of the game, Chris Mayor scored a try, which was converted by Valentin Courrent.

Today in History

1453 - Constantinople fell to an Ottoman army led by Sultan Mehmed II, ending the Byzantine Empire.

1660 - English Restoration: The monarchy in England was restored under King Charles II on Oak Apple Day.

1919 - Observations made by Arthur Eddington during a solar eclipse confirmed part of Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.

1953 - Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay became the first people to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

1999 - Olusegun Obasanjo took office as President of Nigeria, the first elected and civilian head of state in Nigeria after 16 years of military rule.

May 29 is Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna Day in Fiji, Memorial Day in the United States (2006).

Quote of the Day

"It is idle to talk always of the alternative of reason and faith. Reason is itself a matter of faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all." ~ G. K. Chesterton

Word of the Day

subterfuge; *n*

Definition

1. An indirect or deceptive device or strategem; a blind.
2. Deception; misrepresentation of the true nature of an activity.

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+44-871-218-6397
(U.K. / Europe)

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