

# NEWS

## National and world news in brief

By Patrick Webster  
managing editor

### Caskets and urns to feature major sports teams

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania: Some companies in the funeral products industry are moving towards the personalization of customers' final resting places, including featuring the logos of professional sports teams for lifelong sports fans.

Eternal Images, Inc., a firm that designs and produces custom urns and caskets for funerals, recently entered into a licensing agreement with Major League Baseball to use official logos and images to serve their customers' final requests. The company is also pursuing similar licensing deals with Harley Davidson, the NFL, and the NHL.

Kurt Stoffe, a spokesman for the National Funeral Directors Association, said that the now \$11 billion funeral industry is capitalizing on the desire for personalization in all aspects of life, including death.

"The baseball products are part of a trend of trying to capture the life and the passions of the person that has passed away," he said. "More and more families are wanting to have something that respects the personalities."

Specialized products featuring logos are available for preorder now, but many companies do not foresee finished products for delivery until later 2007.



Source: CNN.com, Yahoo! News

### Russia interrupts work by international aid groups

MOSCOW, Russia: The Russian government, led by President Vladimir Putin, recently suspended the operations of over 100 international non-government organizations for not properly registering their actions and intentions under a new Russian law.

The groups, which include several leading human rights organizations including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have been barred from continuing the distribution of aid, research projects, and investigations until cleared by the Russian government.

Lawyers advising several of the groups claim that their work has been unduly hampered or interfered with by Russian officials.

"It appears that if you are an organization involved in human rights or democracy activities then your application gets much harsher scrutiny," said Kim Reed, an NGO attorney. "Even if you are not sending police and court bailiffs to shut down their office, by not registering them, you are effectively doing that."

Many organizations are also expressing concerns that the painfully slow registration process is a direct attempt to hamper the progress of organizations who intend to guarantee certain civil liberties and freedom of speech in Russia.

"They are certainly using every means they can to find minor, absurd aspects of the applications to refuse documents, and that amounts to deliberate obstructionism," said an NGO activist who spoke anonymously to protect her organization from discrimination.

Several member states of the European Union have also expressed concern with the trend in Russia of suppressing civil liberties.

"We attach paramount importance to the principle of freedom of association and we hope the NGO law will have a positive rather than negative impact," said European Commission spokesman Pietro Petrucci.

Russian officials claim that applications are being processed as quickly as possible and that no foul play is involved.

"We will do our best to process them as quickly as possible so they can resume their work," said Anatoly Panchenko, an official in the Russian Justice Department. He claimed that the failure to process the applications of 97 human rights organizations was nothing more than a bureaucratic holdup.

The new law has already been used to silence several Russian organizations critical towards government health and human rights actions.

The Behrend Beacon would like your help!

Anyone interested in writing or taking photographs for The Beacon can stop by the office located in the first floor of the Reed Union Building to learn more.

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