



News, Views & Comments from the World of Building Service Contracting

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## ARGENTINA-BUENOS AIRES

### Despite Strides, Women Still Unequal

**D**espite the fact that the employment rate for women over 14 years old climbed from 32 to 42 percent from 1980 to 2001, studies show women spend an average of two hours a day more than men on housekeeping tasks and seven out of 10 men living in Buenos Aires admit that they do not participate in domestic work, according to a household survey carried out by the National Statistics and Census Institute (INDEC). While in some cases women entered the workforce due to access to higher levels of education, some went to work because of the economic crises, and had to take informal or precarious jobs. Nearly 15 percent of wage-earning women work as domestics, especially in households where the woman is employed outside the home. Perhaps that will change with the possibility that Senator Cristina Fernández, The wife of President Néstor Kirchner, is far ahead in the running for the presidential elections in Argentina.

## AUSTRALIA-VICTORIA

### Water A Scare Commodity

**A** study released in August by the Water Services Association of Australia has stated that all of Australia's mainland capital cities will experience continually rising prices as the

result of rainfall falling by as much as 80 percent below average. The report claims that municipalities will need to develop new ways of providing water such as desalination and recycling. Australia is the second driest continent in the world after Antarctica.

## BELGIUM-BRUSSELS

### New Way To Report Public Health Threats

**T**he European Union has developed a new intelligence system to help identify disease outbreaks, industrial accidents, bioterrorist attacks and the like. Called MediSys, the system constantly collects and sorts information from over 1,000 news and 120 public health websites in 32 languages and also offers information on how to deal with certain public health situations.

## BELGIUM-BRUSSELS

### Unemployment Stable At 6.9%

**1** 6.1 million men and women in the EU27, of which 10.4 million were in the euro area, were unemployed in June 2007, a decrease from June 2006. Unemployment was lowest in the Netherlands (3.3%), Denmark (3.5%), Cyprus (3.9%) and Ireland (4.0%) in figures published by Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities. Unemployment fell in

Poland (13.9% to 10.2%) and Sweden (7.2% to 5.3%) and rose in Luxembourg (4.6% to 4.9%) and Hungary (7.3% to 7.7%). Both female and youth (under-25) unemployment declined in the Euro area.

## CANADA-ALBERTA

### Poor Training Leads To New Standards

**A** report by the Health Quality Council of Alberta found safety and sterilization problems occurred at all 12 facilities in the East Central Health region. As a result, the Alberta government will introduce mandatory equipment sterilization and cleanliness standards for all Alberta hospitals. Problems included tap water used to clean some equipment, cardboard, a great site for fungus growth, left in sterilized areas and single-use cauterizing tools re-used after being cleaned. The report found a major problem was training. In some facilities, staff with other duties were simply called in to do the cleaning, even though they were not properly trained.

## CANADA-BRITISH COLUMBIA

### \$214 Million To Be Spent On Cleanup

**T**he new Minister of the Environment announced the federal government has set aside funding to clean up contaminated sites across Canada. \$189.3 million will be spent on remediation and risk management of 279 priority contaminated sites and \$25 million will go towards the assessment of an estimated 417 sites. Currently, there are 11,000 sites listed in the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory. For a listing of the sites, go to: <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/dfrp-rbif/cs-sc/>.

## FRANCE-MOSELLE

### Bird Flu Reported in France

**I**n the first report in over a year of bird flu, French authorities noted that four ducks have tested positive for the H5N1 strain of bird flu in northeastern France. The dead

ducks were found after two dead swans with the bird flu were found dead in the same area in July.

## FRANCE-PARIS

### Paris Second Highest Place To Live

**A** bi-annual survey comparing products and prices in over 130 cities across the globe, which collects detailed information on the cost of more than 160 items, over 50,000 individual prices in total, has shown that Norway is the most expensive place to live in the world followed by Paris, Copenhagen and London. Tokyo, Reykjavik, New York, Zurich, Frankfurt and Helsinki make up the rest of the top 10. Brussels, Belgium came in at 20<sup>th</sup> and Amsterdam at 26<sup>th</sup>.

## GERMANY-BERLIN

### Unexpected Decline In Economy

**A**lthough the German economy grew at the fastest pace since the turn of the decade in 2006, and economists expected a 0.5 percent gain in 2007, industrial production in Germany, Europe's largest economy, declined in June, as a result in a drop in consumer goods and construction.

## INDIA-CHANDIGARH

### Minister Fights Clogged Toilets

**P**unjab's Transport Minister called up the Governor to officially lodge a complaint after visiting the stinking and clogged toilets at the city's premier bus stand – the inter-state bus terminus (ISBT). The toilets not only were in very unsanitary condition, some unauthorized persons were fleecing passengers by charging them for the use of the toilets. In addition, there were non-functioning water coolers, over-flowing dustbins, and flies.

## JAPAN-TOKYO

### Bank Of Japan Notes Economy Expanding

**T**he Bank of Japan in its monthly report noted the economy for the 14th straight month is "expanding moderately". The yen shot up to the 111 level against the dollar, reaching that level for the first time since early June 2006. However, public investment has been "sluggish," and production flat. The bank noted credit demand in the private sector has also been flat. The bank further noted the core nationwide consumer price index fell 0.1 percent in June from June 2006, for a fifth straight monthly drop.

## NEW ZEALAND-QUEENSTOWN

### Mislabeling Leads To Accident

**A** Queenstown cafe which accidentally served up industrial cleaner instead of mulled wine has been issued with a workplace safety improvement notice. A customer suffered burns to his esophagus and stomach when he tasted the cleaner, which was served at the Old Man Rock Cafe. A Labor Department investigation found the company that supplied the cleaner had put it in a container that had previously held mulled wine and still bore the wine label. It has issued an improvement notice to Queenstown Cleaning Supplies, requiring them to remove all previous labels from the containers.

## SPAIN-BARCELONA

### Nurses And Cleaners Vulnerable

**R**esults from the European Community Respiratory Health Survey confirmed that exposure to certain cleaning chemicals, bioaerosols, mites, agricultural products, and latex in the workplace raise the risk of developing asthma. The study found nurses had 2.2-times the risk of asthma and cleaners had 1.7-times the risk. In addi-

tion, workers exposed to "an acute symptomatic inhalation event," such as a chemical spill, were 3.3-times more likely to develop asthma than non-exposed workers. Researchers estimate about 250 to 300 cases of occupation-related asthma occur for every one million people annually.

## SOUTH KOREA-SEOUL

### Benchmark Interest Rate Rises Again

**T**he Bank of Korea unexpectedly raised the benchmark interest rate to five percent. The move was made to decrease the money supply and prevent inflation, taking the cost of borrowing to its highest level since July 2001. Bank lending to households surged 1.77 trillion won (\$1.9 billion) in July from June. The bank believes the Korean economy will accelerate over the rest of the year, with the growth rate for the second half close to 5 percent. The Bank forecast the economy would grow 4.5 percent in 2007 and even faster in 2008. It expanded by 5 percent in 2006.

## TAIWAN-TAIPEI

### Taiwan To Host Green Workshop

**T**aiwan plans to propose a Green APEC Opportunity Initiative during the APEC summit in Australia. The initiative will create a platform for exchanging information on green production and consumption, as well as conservation. Taiwan hopes to provide the platform by hosting a Green APEC Workshop and Green APEC Clean Development Exhibition" in 2008.

## THE NETHERLANDS-AMSTERDAM

### Dutch Wages Are Among The Highest

**T**he monthly minimum wage in the Netherlands at 1,301 euro is among the six highest in the EU. In many European countries the minimum wage does

not exceed 700 euro. The average monthly full-time wage was approximately 2,900 euro, over twice the minimum wage. Only four percent of Dutch employees earn minimum wage and most of those are in the restaurants agriculture, fisheries and trade sectors. In comparison, over 15 percent of full-timers in France and Bulgaria take home the minimum wage.

#### UK-LONDON

##### Tiny Units May Combat MRSA

**A** yet to be published study looks at the impact of ultra-violet air-cleansing (UV) units on environmental MRSA. The UV units resemble small air conditioner units, drawing in air and funneling it past ultraviolet bulbs, which kill bacteria that have been shaken around the room by the normal comings and goings of patients and staff. The test compared two identical single-bed side rooms over three months - one with the UV cleaner, the other without. The researchers regularly tested the rooms and the patients in them for MRSA. During the trial nearly half these tests on patients in the "control room" were positive and no test in the room with the UV cleaner was. Some experts are skeptical and feel there needs to be more research and monitoring of outcomes. If the units prove to be successful in hindering MRSA, they may also be useful in fighting other infections such as C. difficile, drug-resistant TB and even pandemic flu.

#### US-CALIFORNIA

##### Post-game Cleanup Will Change

**T**he practice at Angel Stadium of leaving discarded food on the ground for twelve or more hours after a game is going to change after food vendors were cited 118 times for vermin violations since 2005. Previously, cleaning crews would not start removing leftover food and garbage from the stands until the morning after a game. Post-game nighttime cleanups will begin immediately.

#### US-NEW YORK

##### Brazen Robbers Take Vacuums

**A**fter a department store security guard called police when a red Chevrolet Blazer backed up to a fire door on the west side of the building, police arrested one man and are still seeking two others. The men hauled six vacuum cleaners worth \$3,519, through the store's fire door and loaded them into the Blazer before escaping.

#### CORPORATE MEMBER NEWS

##### Ecolab

**E**colab Inc. announced it will purchase Microtek Medical Holdings Inc., an Alpharetta, Georgia-based manufacturer and marketer of infection control products for healthcare and acute care facilities. Microtek's specialized product lines include infection barrier equipment drapes, patient drapes, fluid control products and operating room cleanup systems. Microtek's 2006 sales were \$142 million. Douglas M. Baker, Jr., Ecolab's Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer commented on the announcement, saying, "This represents another strong step to significantly expand Ecolab's growing presence in healthcare cleaning and infection prevention."

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

17th Congress of the World Federation of Building Service Contractors

Buenos Aires, Argentina

October 26-29, 2008

Visit the WFBSC website at [www.wfbsc.org](http://www.wfbsc.org) for more information.



## WFBC MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

ALL BUILDING SERVICE CONTRACTING COMPANIES THAT ARE MEMBERS OF ONE OF THE ASSOCIATIONS THAT IS A WFBC MEMBER, ARE AUTOMATICALLY MEMBERS OF THE WFBC.

## WFBC CORPORATE MEMBERS

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