



Top Stories

"Darfur a powder keg" says UN Head of Humanitarian Affairs

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator of the United Nations, said "this is the moment of truth. We are playing with a powder keg". This followed disagreement about the role that UN would play in providing a force to help deal with the crisis in Darfur.

MSN browser upgrade leaves users frozen

Users of the MSN Explorer software for browsing the Internet were faced with connectivity problems after Microsoft distributed silent updates to version 9.0 of the browser. Launching the application brought the user to a window stating that the software encountered a problem and had to be closed.

Featured story

Kirby Chambliss wins 2006 Red Bull Air Race World Series

American Kirby Chambliss has won the 2006 Red Bull Air Race World Series despite a win from Hungarian team mate, Peter Besenyei in the final leg in Perth, Western Australia.

Wikipedia Current Events

• Dmitry Peskov, a Kremlin spokesman, dismisses claims of Russian involvement in the poisoning of former KGB spy

Wikipedia Current Events

Alexander Litvinenko as "sheer nonsense".

•An explosion on a train in East India at 1240 GMT kills 5 and injures 25 to 50 others. It occurs near a station in West Bengal, 550 kilometers (345 miles) north of the capital Kolkata. The cause of the explosion is unknown.

•Syria and Iraq will restore diplomatic ties during a visit by Walid Moallem, the Syrian Foreign Minister, to Iraq.

•The Kazakh Government arrests 11 suspected terrorists in Stepnogorsk.

•Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London, accuses Home Secretary Jack Straw of participating in "demonization of Muslims only comparable to the demonization of Jews from the end of the 19th century" for his comments regarding veils.

•A Berlin underground train re-ends a stationary maintenance vehicle at the busy Südkreuz station injuring 33 people, two of them seriously, officials said.

•American stock exchange Nasdaq launches a formal bid of £2.7 billion to take over the London Stock Exchange.

•The President of the United States George W. Bush visits Indonesia to meet with the President of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono with large crowds protesting US foreign policy.

Wikipedia Current Events

•An 18-year old armed man takes several children and teachers of his former school in the German town of Emsdetten hostage. He dies from gunshot wounds. According to a police spokesman, these wounds were self inflicted. Several hostages are injured.

MSN browser upgrade leaves users frozen

The subscription Internet browser provided by Microsoft left many users of MSN Explorer frozen out beginning on Friday of last week. Launching the application brought the user to a window stating that the software encountered a problem and had to be closed.

The Internet Explorer browser software bundled with the Windows operating system remains operable, along with other non-MSN software. Subscribers to MSN are still able to retrieve e-mail by accessing their Hotmail. Telephone support wait times to resolve the connectivity problem with the browser exceeded 45 minutes on Sunday evening. Beginning on Saturday, callers were prompted that wait times were "unusually long due to high call volume".

A query to on-line chat with technical support to resolve the issue was met with, "I sincerely apologize for the length of time that it took you to get to us. We have been swamped with sessions and I am just glad that you finally got me to help you out."

The silent and automatic upgrade to the 9.5 version of MSN Explorer, from version 9.0, is experiencing difficulties on some machines. Users can log on to support using their account at membercenter.msn.com, click the Support button on the left column of the page, and then select under Subscribed Services / Sign In the link "MSN Internet Access". On-line chat, e-mail, and phone support is available there. Hint: on-line chat is probably the fastest support option.

The existing MSN Explorer software will need to be removed, some Windows registry folders may need to be removed, and the software completely re-downloaded and re-installed.

Dial-up accounts can expect the download to be 93 minutes, for broadband, 9 minutes.

New look for The London Times

The Times newspaper announced today the sixth change in font in the paper's 221 years history, and the introduction of a new coat of arms in the title piece.

The need for the latest change in font was prompted by the adoption of "compact" style for the paper in 2004. The new font, Times Modern, replaces Times Millenium and, with more letters per line, it is claimed that it "...allows for more articulation in the process of writing". Readers are assured that the change is "not a reckless impulse but reading conditions for many people have become less leisurely".

The masthead and insignia have also been redesigned. The repeated problem of depicting the lion in the masthead as fierce is now offered by designer Ewina

Ellis. She is reported as saying "It is very difficult to make a facing lion fierce — or even faintly cross. They can weep, grin and hold door-knocker rings quite easily, but in comparison to the unicorn with its horn, goat-beard, spiky ears and flowing mane, their silhouette is lumpen. I pitied the poor engravers who had no more seen a lion than a unicorn."

Basle's railway station shut down after shoot-out

Trains, Trams, Cars and Buses ground to a halt on Monday after a shoot-out between 18:00 CET and 19:00 CET in the historical city of Basle. The first shots were fired at around 16:00 CET according to the spokesperson of the Government. Special Police Forces were getting prepared to launch an assault against this building. The authors of the shoot-out are unknown as well as their target. Railway traffic was blocked off at around 18:00 CET, according to the Swiss Federal Railways' (SBB-CFF-FFS) spokesperson, Christian Kräuchi. At around 19:00 CET, railway traffic resumed.

UN calls on Israel, Palestinian groups to end their conflict

Qatar called an emergency meeting of the General Assembly on Saturday to debate the ceasefire resolution that fell at the Security Council last week on account of a veto by the United States. After some amendment, the General Assembly passed the resolution with a large majority. 156 countries supported, seven opposed and six abstained in the vote. Among those opposing were Israel, the United States and Australia.

The resolution calls on both Israel and Palestine to stop their violent activities: the Palestinian firing of rockets into Israel and the Israeli

incursions into Palestinian territory.

The reason given by Ambassador Bolton for opposing the motion was that it served the interests of those "hostile to Israel's inalienable and recognised right to exist". Attempts to form a party of national unity in Palestine are being thwarted by failure to agree on this point. Although Fatah would acknowledge Israel's right to exist, Hamas is opposing any such statement.

The UN resolution also instructed the Secretary General, Kofi Annan, to investigate the killing of 19 people by shell fire in Beit Hanoun in Gaza. At least 12 artillery shells landed on the village because, according to the Israelis, of a "tragic mistake".

Reports are now coming in of a repeat of the "civil defence" measures taken on Saturday by civilians swarming around and over a house targeted for demolition by Israeli military forces. On this occasion, the house is occupied by a senior member of Hamas, the ruling party. It is located in Beit Lahiya in the north of the Gaza strip.

Two Palestinians die, over seven others are wounded as Israeli attacks continue

An Israeli air strike on a car carrying Hamas fighters killed two Palestinians in Gaza City.

The attack also injured nine (one source says seven) people, including an elderly passerby. Hospital sources say the septuagenarian later succumbed to his wounds. The other victim was a street vendor. Seven other people, including two Hamas fighters and two children were also wounded in the attack.

Witnesses say the strike occurred near a mosque in the city's Zeitoun neighbourhood as the prayer concluded and worshippers came out. A spokesman for the Israeli military confirmed the attack, but did not provide any further details.

An Israeli Defence spokesman confirmed that Amir Peretz had called President Mahmoud Abbas, asking the latter to stop fighters from launching rockets into Israel. "During a telephone conversation, Mr Peretz asked Mr Abbas to exercise his authority to put a stop to the rocket fire," the spokesman said.

In Gaza City a spokesman for the armed wing of Hamas said that Israel would not be able to stop Palestinian fighters from firing rockets into its territory.

An Israeli woman was killed when a Qassam rocket hit the town of Sderoth on the 15 of this month. Over 400 Palestinians, including many civilians have been killed by attacks, which Israel says are aimed at Palestinian fighters, since June.

UK soldiers kill rare African animal

UK troops in Kenya killed a white rhino after it allegedly charged at them.

The White Rhinoceros* or Square-lipped rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*) is one of the five species of rhinoceros that still exists and is one of the few megafauna species left. The White Rhino is under threat from habitat loss and poaching, most recently by an offshoot of the janjaweed. A recent population count in the Congo turned up only 10 rhinos left in the wild, which led conservationists in

January 2005 to propose airlifting White Rhinos from Garamba into Kenya, where their numbers decreased to less than 200*. Although official approval was initially obtained, resentment of foreign interference within the Congo has prevented the airlift from happening as of the beginning of 2006.

New Zealand town subject to window smashers

Otaki, a small town located in the North Island of New Zealand, has been subject to vandals who have smashed around 70 windows in the local primary school, Otaki Primary School.

The smashed windows resulted in the closure of the primary school today. It is expected that the school will be open tomorrow.

The primary school was not the only property damaged. The police are reporting that the library, memorial hall, law offices, tyre factor, butchery and the citizen's advice bureau were all attacked, with other attacks possible.

The police say that the damage was done on Saturday night. Business owners are still reporting property damage. Sergeant Mark Toms said: "The damage seems to be widespread, and has not been confined to the school. Mr Toms said that they "are following strong leads as to who is responsible for the vandalism."

90 days detention still on Blair's agenda

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair, has expressed his continuing support for a 90 day holding period for terror suspects.

Despite the concern expressed by the head of MI5 and the demands

from the Metropolitan Police for more powers, there was no mention of new anti-terror legislation in the Queen's Speech.

Yet the Prime Minister still wants to extend the present period for which police can hold a suspect from 28 days to 90 days. Blair stated that he believed that the evidence supported the longer period, and said that proposals would be based on an analysis of recent experience and that legislation could be brought in before Christmas if it was thought necessary.

Gordon Brown has said that he, too, would support an extension to 90 days were an analysis to show that it was required.

Lord Carlile, responsible for overseeing terrorist legislation, said he expected new laws to be proposed in the new year, but, if an extension of the period of detention without charge was proposed, it would have to be backed with evidence of the need for it, as the Home Secretary had promised.

Shami Chakrabarti, head of Liberty, the human rights charity, said: "Ninety days is internment - our nightmare but a terrorist recruiter's dream". She deplored the absence of proposals to use intercept evidence and other means in the pursuit of terrorists.

Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General, said that although the extension from 14 to 28 days was justified by experience, he was unaware of any evidence that would support the extension to 90 days.

The Metropolitan Police had wanted the law to be changed so that interrogation could continue

after charges had been made. Lord Goldsmith said of this that there would have to be safeguards to protect prisoners from being bullied by police interrogators, but it might provide an alternative to the extension to 90 days detention period.

Although the Attorney General had, in September, agreed that the admission of intercept evidence in court would be an "important tool in the fight against terrorism", Home Secretary, John Reid, had rejected the proposal because he had seen no evidence to support its use. The Attorney General now says that ways are being sought to enable phone tapping evidence to be admitted in court without revealing how and where it had been obtained.

Downing Street refused to comment on Lord Goldsmith's statement.

The Conservative shadow home secretary, David Davis, welcomed Lord Goldsmith's statement about the 90 day period and said that this justified the stance taken by opponents of the Bill that had resulted in the rejection of the 90 day proposal and the acceptance of 28 days as the maximum period of detention without charge.

New Zealand's exams start today

New Zealand's National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) external end of year exams started today. It is expected that "...136,000 people [will be] sitting exams at 405 exam centres..." Bali Haque, deputy chief executive of New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) said.

The exams will finish on December 9.

These exams are also being closely scrutinised because of the past problems with NCEA. "...there will always be some anomalies and unforeseen events, such as the traffic jams and floods of 2005," Mr Haque said, "We are confident that we are prepared for such eventualities." The problems faced in the past include when in 2005 hundreds of english papers were remarked due to a problem with the marking schedule which caused low pass rates. In 2004 a problem with the marking consistency resulted in thousands of students failing scholarships. These problems caused the government to launch an inquiry and this year the education minister, Steve Maharey, said that he is confident nothing will go wrong. Principal of Tawa college, Murray Lucas, said: "I'm quietly confident that it will go reasonably well and that there won't be the problems that were attached to the scholarship exams in 2004, and there will be a great deal more in consistency."

Over 4,500 supervisors will, of course, supervise the 555 exams.

Principals in recent weeks have criticised the NCEA for allowing students to receive credits if the answers are written in "text (SMS) abbreviations".

Stephen Harper meets with Chinese President Hu Jintao during APEC summit

Stephen Harper met with Chinese President Hu Jintao yesterday. The fifteen minute conversation at the APEC summit was not a "very long discussion" and according to Mr. Harper was a "very frank discussion". It occurred just before a gala dinner on Saturday with 21 other world leaders.

Harper raised many issues

including the case of Chinese-Canadian, Huseyincan Celil, a Chinese-Canadian who is being held in a China prison for allegedly having links to Muslim separatist extremist groups in his native Xinjiang province. Hu refused the meeting days before due to talks about Harper bringing up China's human rights record. Beijing denied that and said "President Hu Jintao and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper will meet."

"We've had very frank discussions with a wide range of leaders, including although it was not a very long discussion, a very frank discussion with President Hu of China, a distinct impression, if I may say that, that the Chinese aren't used to that from a Canadian government, but I can't speak for them," Harper said at the end of the APEC summit. "I think if you're going to have frank discussions with other leaders, then you know, except obviously for the broad objectives you're trying to pursue, I think the details of those discussions have to be private,"

A Chinese foreign ministry official gave the Canadian media the first details of the meeting. The details were sent by e-mail to Canadian media travelling with him 14 hours later.

"If you run out of private discussions every 10 minutes and give a play-by-play of everything that was said, nobody will have a frank discussion with you," said Harper. "The fact of the matter is that neglecting human rights has not opened a lot of doors either. Obviously we don't think you get anywhere by short changing your values."

"It was quite a brief one," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu

Jianchao said.

Harper, 47, on his first trip to Asia, said he "had a good time" at the conference.

Today in History

1783 - The first successful untethered flight by humans was made in a hot air balloon constructed by the Montgolfier brothers.

1920 - Anglo-Irish War: The Irish Republican Army killed more than a dozen British intelligence officers known as the Cairo Gang, and paramilitary forces of the Royal Irish Constabulary opened fire on players and spectators at a Gaelic football match in Dublin on Bloody Sunday.

1977 - God Defend New Zealand became one of the national anthems of New Zealand.

Quote of the Day

Art defies defeat by its very existence, representing the celebration of life, in spite of all attempts to degrade and destroy it. ~ Nadine Gordimer

Word of the Day

dactylogy; n

- The use of the fingers and hands to communicate ideas, especially by the deaf.

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