



### 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

#### Amnesty Report 2006: disadvantaged pay price of war on terror

Human rights organisation Amnesty International described 2005 as a year of contradictions with signs of hope for human rights. They claim human rights are being undermined through 'deception and failed promises' of 'arrogant' governments, and sacrificed in the name of the 'war on terror'.

### Wikipedia Current Events

- Myanmar extends house arrest detention of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi for another year, amid continued pressure from the U.N. calling for her release.
- Over 70 participants in a banned gay parade are detained in Moscow. Amongst them are

### Wikipedia Current Events

organizers and members of European Parliament. A German parliamentary member Volker Beck is hit with a fist in his face and arrested by police. Moscow's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov banned the march, saying "homosexuality is unnatural."

- Tropical Storm Aletta forms south-southwest of the Mexican port of Acapulco, marking the first storm of the 2006 Pacific hurricane season.
- 2006 Java earthquake: A tectonic earthquake centred 25 kilometres (16 miles) south of Yogyakarta on the island of Java, Indonesia kills more than 3500 people and injured more than 3400. The 6.2 magnitude quake struck at 5:54 a.m. (22:54 UTC, 26 May). The epicenter was southwest of the city and near the erupting Mount Merapi.

#### Earthquake kills thousands in Indonesia

An earthquake measuring magnitude 6.2 has struck Indonesia's Central Java province early on Saturday morning, killing at least 3,500 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.

### **Pope Benedict XVI visits Poland**

Pope Benedict XVI is currently visiting Poland on his third pilgrimage. The motto of his pilgrimage to the home country of previous Pope, John Paul II, is "stay tough in faith".

The Pope arrived at Okęcie airport in Warsaw on May 25. He met with President Lech Kaczyński and prayed in an evangelic-augsburg church together with representatives of seven minor Polish churches. The following day he said mass at Piłsudski Square, mirroring a precedent set by his predecessor 27 years earlier. Benedict XVI talked in Latin and in small parts in Polish. Later that day he went to Częstochowa.

On May 27, Benedict XVI visited Wadowice, home town of John Paul II, and Kraków. Crowds of people gathered on the Błonia meadows. Benedict XVI addressed young people in his speech and was met with applause. Benedict XVI expressed his contentment with his visit in Poland.

Tomorrow will be the last day in the pilgrimage; the Pope will visit the site of the Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz and meet with representatives of other religions.

#### *Reactions to the visit*

There were some concerns about the reaction of Polish people to Benedict XVI - based on their

strong attachment to his predecessor. However, the Pope was warmly welcomed and people were excited by the visit.

The pilgrimage garnered significant media attention, not only Polish press, but also from other countries. Seven TV stations, including CNN, NBC, BBC, and EuroNews, broadcast live reports from the event. Journalists from several German stations and Russian NTW came to Poland for the visit.

### **New toll proposal on U.S. Interstate 95 nearing passage**

A \$5 toll proposal for travel on Interstate 95 is gaining momentum in North Carolina, and has passed this week in the Virginia General Assembly. Toll booths would be set up at the border between the two states to collect revenues estimated in excess of \$150 million annually, money that would be split by each state to help pay for needed maintenance of the interstate highway.

Virginia has apparently changed plans to go it alone with road improvement priorities to the I-95 section at the approach and departure corridors to Washington, D.C. The state strategy of partnering with private, for-profit road construction companies, such as Clark Construction Group and Fluor Virginia Inc., necessarily meant the placement of revenue collecting toll booths where they are least wanted and most inconvenient, on the already congested interstate travel points near the capital city of the United States.

Two proposals to widen the Springfield Interchange Improvement Project with more high-occupancy-vehicle lanes near

Washington, D.C. on the Virginia side come at a combined cost in the range of \$1.5 billion for the state to complete. A public-private partnership to fund the improvements, looked at by Virginia's Department of Transportation in January 2005, has now taken on a less region specific funding solution in favor of an interstate solution.

As a practical matter, toll collection booths located at the North Carolina-Virginia state line would spare motorists in the most affected Virginia region the hassle and expense of toll payments, but it misses imposing a toll on roadway users who are most responsible for the needed improvements. That expense, as currently proposed, is passed on to motorists using I-95 for the longer haul.

North Carolina governor Mike Easley has remained opposed to a Virginia-North Carolina Interstate Toll Road Compact. The estimated \$4 billion in needed repairs to I-95 in that state, where in some places the roadway is 20-years-old, places a stress on budget resources necessary for the state to perform needed maintenance.

Senator Clark Jenkins of Tarboro County in North Carolina proposed legislation "to get the discussion started about the concept."

### **Peacekeepers take control in East Timor**

The Australian presence in East Timor so far has been characterised by vigorous patrolling into the capital Dili, with the main goal being to lock down the city in order to separate and concentrate the various conflicting forces in East Timor. Despite the Australian military being provided strong rules of engagement by the

East Timorese government, so far no soldiers have fired their weapons or been fired upon, although they might have been fired over by gangs earlier today. Outside the Hotel Timor today, where East Timorese Prime Minister Alkatiri was about to hold a press conference, an Australian patrol arrested what appeared to be two gangs about to storm the hotel with the help of reinforcements. The men numbered around 30, carrying machetes, knives, spears, slingshots, and arrows. The Prime Minister claimed that the gangs were attempting a coup d'etat. Civilian gangs, allegedly provided arms by the East Timorese military, have so far been blamed for much of the violence in Dili.

As the rest of the 1300 strong Australian deployment is expected to arrive in East Timor tomorrow, Australian Prime Minister John Howard has said that although his government did foresee the current situation in East Timor, military action would have constituted an invasion until mandated through the United Nations' or East Timorese government's request. "...People say you should have seen it coming. The answer is yes, I did, but until you are asked, it happens to be an invasion." said Mr Howard. East Timor requested military assistance from Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Portugal on May 23, Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta explaining that the government "...[couldn't] control the situation,"; all four nations responded positively to the request.

Despite one newspaper running the headline "We'll stay till job's done, says PM", the Chief of Defence Force, Air Chief Marshall Angus Houston has said that he

hopes the Australian military will be able to be replaced within a few months by a UN peacekeepers. In any case, ACM Houston has said that he believes the Australian presence will stabilise the situation soon, perhaps aided by the good relations that exist between the ADF and the leader of the rebel group, Major Alfredo Reinado. MAJ Reinado was trained by the ADF for three months and has openly welcomed the arrival of the peacekeeping force, saying that the deployment is the "only solution" in the face of the government's inability to resolve the conflict.

After praising the speed of the deployment, Washington revealed that the US assisted the transport of Australian troops to position in Townsville and Darwin two weeks earlier.

Indonesia has now closed its border to East Timor, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono saying that "besides security reasons, the closure of the border is to prevent the possibility of issues that may worsen the image of Indonesia."

### **Cricket: West Indies win ODI series, beat India 3-1**

The West Indies beat India by six wickets in the fourth One- Day International at the Port of Spain, to clinch the 5 match series 3-1. The Indian batting order failed again, managing to make only 217/5 at the end of 50 overs. The highest scorer was Mohammad Kaif, who scored 62 runs before being bowled by Dwayne Bravo. The top-order including Sehwag, Dravid and Raina collapsed, with the the top three batsmen raking up only 33 runs between them.

The West-Indies began their chase strongly, but were dealt an early blow by Phatan who sent Samuels

back to the pavilion in the 5th over. Ajit Agarkar dispatched Sarwan for 49 four overs later, putting more pressure on the Windie middle-order. Brian Lara pleased his home fans with a 61-run knock before scooping one to Raina. The skippers' fellow Trinidadian teammate Bravo put up an unbeaten 69, notching his first ODI half-century and pulling the West Indies out of their early slump, in the process. In the end the home-team reached the target of 218 comfortably with 6 overs to spare.

The match was played at the Queen's Park Oval, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and was refereed by E.C Broad. The match-umpires were B.R. Doctrove and Simon Taufel. West-Indian veteran S. Bucknor was the T.V umpire. D.J. Bravo was awarded the Man-of-the-match award for his fine performances both with the ball and the willow.

### **Crusaders win Super 14**

The Canturbury Crusaders have won the inaugural Super 14 title, downing the Wellington Hurricanes 19-12 at Jade Stadium, Cristchurch. The game was dominated by a heavy fog, making 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.

### **Tamiflu maker on alert after bird flu deaths in Indonesia**

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Saturday asked the Swiss manufacturer of the antiviral medicine Tamiflu to prepare the global stockpile of the drug for distribution after a family of seven Indonesians died from the H5N1 avian flu virus. However, the WHO says that there is no cause for alarm at this point.

"Whenever there is a cluster, we contact Roche just to let them know that if we need to send the stockpile that they should be ready to do so," said a spokeswoman for the WHO, Maria Cheng. However, Cheng says "we have not asked that anything be sent, and nothing from Roche has been sent."

Jules Pieters, director of the WHO's rapid response unit, informed Roche Holdings AG to be on alert for the next two weeks after the Indonesian health ministry informed the WHO of the deaths of the members of a family cluster in Kubu Simbelang village in North Sumatra. "We were quite keen to inform Roche quite timely, we knew Thursday would be a holiday in Europe and wanted to make sure Roche warehouses would be open," he said.

Pieters also said that the move was part of standard procedure in cases where there is reasonable suspicion of human-to-human transmission. The WHO flew 9,500 doses of Tamiflu into Indonesia along with protective gear as a precaution.

According to the WHO, the virus has not mutated into an easily human-transmittable form, nor had it spread outside the family, who were all blood relatives in close contact.

Officials in Indonesia also reported on Friday that two more fatal cases of avian flu were reported, this time between an 18-year-old man and his 10-year-old sister. Tests on the two victims are expected to be sent to WHO laboratories for confirmation.

The WHO also says that they have "no intention of shipping that

stockpile" and that they consider this "a practice run," said spokesman for the WHO, Dick Thompson. The WHO also said that the virus has not mutated and so far has not shown any signs of human to human transmission outside the affected family members.

Roche Holding is expected to remain on high alert for at least two weeks.

### **Gang violence continues in East Timor**

Gang violence continued in East Timor today, despite patrols by foreign soldiers being stepped up. There are presently 600 troops from Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia in the East Timorese capital of Dili, with that number expected to rise to 1,300 by the end of the weekend.

The East Timorese government requested international assistance on Thursday following weeks of violence. The violence started when 600 East Timorese soldiers were dismissed from the military after claiming they had not been considered for promotion due to them being from the Western region of the country. They also claimed that the top positions in the military had been reserved for those from the Eastern regions.

East Timorese youths are forming gangs and allying with groups of feuding police and military personnel. There have been reports of youths patrolling neighborhoods carrying machetes, swords and knives near government buildings. They said they were protecting the areas against "rogue army elements".

As with the East Timorese military, the general population's support is divided between the remaining

army and the sacked soldiers. The police-force in the country is said to be non-existent, which is helping to fuel the violence.

Ethnic attacks are also occurring in the country. Gangs from opposing ethnic backgrounds rampaged through the streets torching buildings and looting shops. Tit-for-tat arson attacks by opposing factions have become common.

Speaking to Australia's ABC Radio, a UN spokesperson said that the tension has been increasing in East Timor for sometime. "It's basically pay-back time between the different groups,"

"This is a communal dispute that's escalated because of the overall situation" they said.

### **Ahern, Blair to lead Northern Ireland talks**

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain, has announced that next month, the Prime Ministers of both Ireland and the United Kingdom will meet with the parties of the Northern Ireland Assembly before the summer break.

Toiseach Bertie Ahern and the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, will meet at Hillsborough Castle, possibly on June 27, to hold "intensive talks" with the parties and to establish a "clear timeline" to the restoration of devolved government in Northern Ireland.

Hain has invited all the parties of the Assembly to form a committee to discuss obstacles to formation of a power-sharing government in Northern Ireland.

Hain has asked Assembly speaker Eileen Bell to convene the first meeting of the committee on June 6 in order to prepare for the talks.

The committee is expected to have three members from the four main parties (the DUP, UUP, SDLP and Sinn Fein) and two from the Alliance Party.

The two main parties did not take the news kindly. The Democratic Unionist Party will not sit on the committee if it leads to negotiations with the republicans as it continues not engage in direct talks with Sinn Fein nor will DUP take part in talks running alongside the talks between the parties and the premiers.

Sinn Fein says it will not sit on the committee if it turns out to be only a "talking shop". However, Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein said the party will judge the committee "on its ability to contribute to the restoration of the power-sharing executive".

The Social Democratic and Labour Party says it will only enter if the committee "is the vehicle for restoration of the agreement's institutions, not a talking shop or meaningless sideshow".

However, Ulster Unionist Party leader Sir Reg Empey was more optimistic and welcomed the initiative, commenting that the committee would "ensure adequate cross-community consensus". Empey further added, "This committee prevents the DUP from running away from the substantive work that needs to be done in identifying the blockages that are standing in the way of the restoration of devolution."

Attempts to form a new Northern Ireland Executive failed Monday when Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, refused the nomination to be the First Minister of Northern Ireland after being nominated by Sinn Fein

leader Gerry Adams.

Last month, Blair and Ahern made a joint statement calling for the return of home rule government in Northern Ireland as part of a plan by the two. They set a deadline of November 24 for power-sharing government to be set up in the Northern Ireland Assembly, which has been suspended since October 2002 over allegations of a IRA spy ring. One of the men implicated, Denis Donaldson, turned out to be a spy for British intelligence, he was murdered in his home on April 4, 2006, a few days before the statement by Blair and Ahern.

If no power-sharing government is formed by November 24, direct rule from London will continue but with greater input by the Republic of Ireland, a proposition which has greatly irked the unionists.

### **No diplomas for now; California Exit Exam appeal must wait**

Seniors who haven't been credited with passing the California High School Exit Exam won't be getting diplomas when graduation ceremonies are held next month because the First District Appellate Court won't hear the court case about the test until July 25.

The attorney for the students suing to block use of the test says he still expects to prevail.

"This case is far from over," said Arturo Gonzalez, the lead attorney in Valenzuela vs. O'Connell, in which Liliana Valenzuela, a Richmond High School student, and others sued to block the state's use of the test as a graduation requirement, "We think there is a strong chance that students in the Class of 2006 will receive their diplomas, even if it is after commencement ceremonies.

It is important that students not get discouraged. They have to stay in school and pass their classes."

On May 12, Alameda County Superior Court Judge Robert Freedman agreed with Gonzalez' argument that the state's use of the test as a graduation requirement was unconstitutional because poor and minority students don't have access to equal educational resources, and therefore don't have equal protection under the law. He issued an injunction against the use of the test.

That injunction seemed to pave the way for those of the 47,000 seniors statewide who haven't yet passed the test, but have completed all other requirements, to receive diplomas with their classmates at upcoming graduation events.

But State Superintendent of Schools Jack O'Connell quickly filed an appeal of Freedman's ruling and asked the State Supreme Court to issue a stay of Freedman's injunction. Earlier this week, the Court granted O'Connell's request for a stay, allowing schools to deny diplomas to students who haven't passed the test. The Court also ordered the Appellate court to hear O'Connell's appeal of Freedman's ruling against the test.

On Thursday, Gonzalez petitioned the Appellate Court to expedite their hearing of the case to as soon as next week, but today the court denied Gonzalez' request and scheduled the case for a hearing on July 25.

In an email to the James Logan Courier, Gonzalez said he thinks his case is strong enough to withstand the appeal. "We intend

to vigorously defend Judge Freedman's ruling," he said, "The record strongly supports his decision."

"If the court of appeals upholds Judge Freedman's ruling, students in the Class of 2006 may still receive their high school diplomas," he said.

About 70 seniors at James Logan High School in Union City, Ca., mostly minorities and those who are learning English, still need to pass the test.

O'Connell, an avid defender of the test, which is required by a law he wrote and championed when he was in the state legislature, said this week that he would make sure school districts knew that they had to require the test be passed in order to hand out diplomas to students.

"I will communicate with districts today to ensure they are aware that the exit exam is a graduation requirement" he said, "Students who have worked hard to pass this exam will be given a diploma that signifies their mastery of essential skills in reading and math."

**Today in History**

585 BC - According to Herodotus, a solar eclipse abruptly ended the Battle of Halys between the Lydians and the Medes.

1905 - Japanese forces led by Admiral Togo Heihachiro destroyed the Russian Baltic Fleet in the Battle of Tsushima, the decisive naval battle in the Russo-Japanese War.

1918 - The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, one of the first democratic republics in the Muslim world, was proclaimed in Ganja.

1961 - An article by Peter Benenson was published in newspapers, starting a letter-writing campaign that grew and became Amnesty International.

1975 - Sixteen West African countries signed the Treaty of Lagos, establishing the Economic Community of West African States. May 28 is Republic Day in Armenia and Azerbaijan

**Quote of the Day**

"What I do know for certain is that what is regarded as success in a rational materialistic society only impresses superficial minds. It amounts to nothing and will not help us rout the destructive forces threatening us today. What may be our salvation is the discovery of the identity hidden deep in any one of us, and which may be found in even the most desperate individual, if he cares to search the spiritual womb which contains the embryo of what can be one's personal contribution to truth and life." ~ Patrick White

**Word of the Day**

normalize; v

Definition

1. To format in a standard manner; to make consistent.

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