



### Top Stories

#### Aid gets through to victims of Indonesian tsunami

Aid is being provided for the 50,500 people who have been left homeless after a tsunami hit the Indonesian island of Java.

#### International bodies express concern over Israel-Hezbollah conflict

International humanitarian organisations and human rights watchdogs have expressed concerns over the rising civilian casualties and the humanitarian crisis caused by the ongoing conflict in Lebanon and northern Israel.

### Featured story

#### Bush uses his first veto ever on stem cell bill

U.S. President George W. Bush has used the first veto of his presidency on a bill for federal funding of scientific research which uses embryonic stem cells.

### Wikipedia Current Events

- War crimes could have been committed in Lebanon, Israel and Gaza, a senior UN official has said.
- Hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah militants in Lebanon must stop immediately, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has said.
- Iran states that it is determined to produce nuclear fuel on its territory. It will respond officially to a Western incentive package

### Wikipedia Current Events

on August 22, 2006.

- In India, public outcry at the recent blocking of some blogs results in a statement by that country's government that the occurrence was a "technological error," and that immediate steps will be taken to resolve the issue.
- A column of Ethiopian Army vehicles invades Somalia, reaching the town of Baidoa. They have stated that they are willing to defend Somalia's Transitional Federal Parliament from the Islamic Courts Union.
- The U.S. grand jury investigating baseball player Barry Bonds for possible perjury and tax evasion charges is set to expire today. It was extended and Bonds was not indicted. Greg Anderson, Bonds's trainer, was released from a federal prison in Dublin, California, after having been jailed for refusing to give evidence.

#### Poorly performing high schools in North Carolina threatened with closure

In March, Wake County Superior Court Judge Howard Manning threatened to close state high schools that did not meet his expectations. High schools had to meet a passing grade of 55 percent or face large scale reform.

On August 18 Judge Manning will review the state's plan to help the schools that did not meet his goal.

Last month Governor Easley

unveiled a strategy for the low performing schools. Plans include, leadership training for administrators and blueprints for improvement.

Several of the failing schools saw a reduction in passing grades over the past year. Durham County's Southern High School fell from 54.1 percent of students passing to 45.6 percent.

Superintendent of Public Instruction June Atkinson said, "I was optimistic that we would see more improvement, but it takes more time to turn around a school than just a year."

#### JetBlue launches service from Raleigh, NC to New York

JetBlue Airways launched service from Raleigh-Durham International Airport to John F. Kennedy International Airport on Thursday, July 20. The airline also announced daily service from Raleigh to Boston starting on October 18.

JetBlue's service in Raleigh is comprised of four daily flights to New York, the airline's hub.

The route is flown by EMBRAER 190 aircraft with a capacity of 100 passengers. The aircraft are equipped with DirecTV and XM Satellite Radio programming.

On October 18, JetBlue's service from Raleigh to Boston will begin with one daily flight.

Raleigh-Durham International Airport currently has 223 daily

departures to 37 cities.

### **Death toll rises in Nigeria building collapse**

Nearly 30 people are now thought to have died after a 4-storey building collapsed in the Nigerian city of Lagos. More bodies, some alive, and others dead, are still being recovered from the wreckage in the Ebute Metta area of Lagos after the apartment block suddenly gave in on Tuesday evening, local time.

The building also housed restaurants and 18 shops on the ground floor and rescuers are unsure of how many people remain trapped below the ground.

The Nigerian Red Cross said it believed around 75 people may have been inside, but survivors are claiming the death toll is considerably higher. So far, 50 survivors have been hauled from the wreckage, and still, three days after the collapse, voices are being heard from below the rubble.

"People have survived in this kind of situation for up to five days," Timothy Oladele, the Chairman of the Nigerian Red Cross told Reuters, 'We are just in the third day in our own case and by God's grace we will find some alive.'

The building, in Nigeria's largest city, is thought to have been just three years old, and officials are blaming poor construction for the collapse. Local media are reporting that despite the buildings height, city planners only gave permission for a two storey building on the site, not four. The owner of the construction company is believed to have fled; Lagos Governor Bola Tinubu pledged to punish the rogue developer. 'We know their other buildings and definitely, they will not go unpunished,' he told

local press today.

The sprawling industrial city of Lagos has a history of poor construction and maintenance. In March 2006, one of the city's tallest buildings, damaged after a fire, collapsed during a thunderstorm.

### **Somali tensions rise as Ethiopia sends in troops**

Tensions are escalating rapidly on the horn of Africa as the United Islamic Courts (UIC) closed in on Baidoa, the home of Somalia's beleaguered interim government on Wednesday. Yet as the Islamic militia were reportedly massing troops after capturing the country's capital, Mogadishu on 11 July, soldiers from Somalia's neighbour Ethiopia crossed the country's borders, sparking vitriolic attacks on both sides.

The Islamic militants vowed to start a 'holy war' against its neighbour, while the Ethiopian Information Minister Berhan Hailu said "We will use all means at our disposal to crush the Islamist group if they attempt to attack Baidoa, the seat of the transitional federal government."

This threat came after Islamist troops, fresh from taking Mogadishu last week, were seen less than 60km from Baidoa. They later pulled their troops back, claiming they were collecting defected troops and not planning an attack.

A convoy of around 2,000 soldiers were seen crossing the Ethiopian frontier overnight, joining another 2,000 troops already based in the border town of Luk. Others have reported seeing men in Ethiopian uniform inside Baidoa itself.

Despite eyewitness accounts to

the contrary, Ethiopia so far denies sending troops into Somalia. Bereket Simon, a government spokesperson, told the BBC World Service that 'so far' no government troops were inside the country. However a direct conflict seems more and more likely, as Mr. Simon confirmed that "Ethiopia is in a position to defend itself to ensure the stability of the Horn of Africa".

The Ethiopian government has openly backed the provisional government which has held a weak power over the country since 1991. The mainly Christian country fears the possibility of the United Islamic Courts ruling Somalia, in light of the strict laws the Islamist Courts impose.

The latest events have thrown the already troubled peace negotiations into turmoil. Representatives from both the Islamist Courts and the government are in delicate talks in the Sudanese capital Khartoum. Ali Mohamed Gedi, the Somali prime minister urged Islamist troops to stop their advances on the interim capital, pleading for more time for negotiations. Government diplomats boycotted talks last week, but more meetings are set for the 22nd July.

Yet direct conflict seems more and more likely, according to analysts. Despite some loyal troops the provisional government is too weak to take on the Islamist militias, but with Ethiopia now making firm moves to support the besieged government it seems war may come before peace in battle-torn Somalia.

### **International bodies express concern over Israel-Hezbollah conflict**

International humanitarian

organisations and human rights watchdogs have expressed concerns over the rising civilian casualties and the humanitarian crisis caused by the ongoing conflict in Lebanon and northern Israel. They have also warned the warring groups that their conduct may not comply with international laws governing the safety of civilians in combat areas.

#### UNCHR statement

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour expressed grave concern over the growing civilian casualties in the conflict in Lebanon, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and called for accountability for any breaches of international law in a statement released on Wednesday.

The statement said that indiscriminate shelling of cities and the targeting of supposed military sites which would foreseeably result in civilians deaths is unacceptable and unjustifiable. It called for respecting the principle of proportionality in reacting to enemy action.

The statement reminded parties to the conflict that the obligation to protect civilians during hostilities is expressed in international criminal law, and warned that the scale and predictability of the killings in the region may attach personal criminal responsibility of those involved, especially those in positions of command and control.

The High Commissioner also warned of the deteriorating humanitarian situation, especially in southern Lebanon, where large numbers of people are reported to be increasingly deprived of access to basic services and are forcibly displaced. She called for unrestricted and secure passage

for all humanitarian assistance.

#### Red Cross' assessment

In a press briefing in Geneva, The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) director of operations Pierre Krahenbuhl gave the ICRC's assessment of the humanitarian situation engendered by the conflict.

He said that the large number of civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure "raises serious questions" over the warring parties' compliance to the principle of proportionality in combat operations.

In the briefing, he stated the reported death toll as about 230 killed and 600 wounded in Lebanon and 13 civilians killed and over 150 wounded in Israel.

He said that medical assistance and evacuation for those in need is severely limited by the ongoing hostilities and that the safety of the medical mission is "deeply problematic". He pointed out that large numbers of people are fleeing the conflict zones.

He called on Israel's air and sea blockade of Lebanon to allow food and other essential supplies to reach the affected civilian population.

He stated that the ICRC has reminded the parties to the conflict, publicly and in private, of their obligation to distinguish between civilians and military targets, their obligation to respect the principle of proportionality, and to protect the medical aid services, to spare civilians and ensure secure access to medical help for all.

The representations have been made in Israel with the Ministry of

foreign affairs and Army command, and in Lebanon with the Prime minister and also to Hezbollah, with whom the ICRC has contact.

#### Human Rights Watch

The watchdog group Human Rights Watch warned Hezbollah on attacking civilian targets in Israel and called on Israel to allow relief convoys safe entry into and passage inside Lebanon,

A press release by the group said that Hezbollah rocket attacks on Sunday and Monday were "at best indiscriminate attacks in civilian areas, at worst the deliberate targeting of civilians" and called them serious violations of international humanitarian law and "probable war crimes". The rockets launched against Haifa over the past two days contained hundreds of metal ball bearings that are of limited use against military targets but cause great harm to civilians and civilian property, it said.

A release also said that border towns in Lebanon are already facing serious shortages of food and medicine, and are in urgent need of supplies. It called for safe passage for aid convoys in the wake on an Israeli missile attack on an aid convoy, reported by the Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). According to the UAE RC, the convoy was clearly marked as a relief operation, contained medical supplies and medicines, as well as several ambulances and that at least one person was killed in the attack.

#### Amnesty International

Amnesty International (AI) today called on the UN Security Council to meet urgently in order to adopt measures to protect civilians caught up in the deepening Israel-

Lebanon conflict. It alleged that G8 member states, during the recently concluded summit, had failed to "put the protection of civilians above politics" in their discussions of the conflict. AI condemned continuing attacks on civilians by both Israel and Hezbollah.

#### Responses from Israel and Hezbollah

An Israeli official told the BBC "We feel that proportionality should be judged in terms of the threat we face. This is not just an issue of the kidnappings. Hezbollah has a huge arsenal and has fired 1,000 missiles at us. We are acting in self-defence". He also said that Hezbollah often hides in civilian areas and that Israel had dropped flyers and gave other warnings to civilians to leave before an attack.

Hezbollah says its capture of Israeli soldiers was to use them in a "bargain" with Israel and that Hezbollah rocket attacks on Israel are a retaliation to Israeli strikes against Lebanon and its civilians. Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah leader, said "When the Zionists behave like there are no rules and no red lines and no limits to the confrontation, it is our right to behave in the same way."

#### **Many hurt on Alton Towers ride**

Six people have been taken to hospital and 23 others are being treated for cuts and bruises after an accident on a ride at Alton Towers, the UK's most famous theme park. The front carriages of the Runaway Mine Train, which had 46 passengers on it at the time, became separated and subsequently crashed back into the rest of the ride at the Staffordshire theme park.

A Staffordshire Ambulance

spokesman said two women, aged in their 30s or 40s, were flown by air ambulance to North Staffordshire Hospital suffering possible whiplash, spinal or abdominal injuries. A third woman was taken by land ambulance to the same hospital and a man is thought to have made his own way to a casualties centre in Leek. Two other people were taken to Accident and Emergency later, and it is believed all six will leave hospital this evening. The rest were treated at a medical centre on the premises.

The ride, which opened in 1990 and is one of Alton Towers oldest attractions, was immediately evacuated and closed to the public. Alton Towers and the Health and Safety Executive are investigating the incident which occurred at 11:00am local time on Thursday.

A spokeswoman for the theme park announced that 'the ride has been closed and will remain so whilst a thorough investigation is carried out'. It is unclear how long the ride will be closed for, but the rest of the theme park will stay open.

On the Alton Towers website, customers are told the Runaway Mine Train lets them 'rattle along the rickety rails and mine shafts, past trees and rivers, on a speeding locomotive that's out of control - and getting faster every second' .

The roller coaster was manufactured by Mack Trucks, and is situated in the Katanga Canyon area of the theme park. The train normally makes two circuits for each ride, but on quiet days, it has been known to make three.

#### **Aid gets through to victims of Indonesian tsunami**

Aid is being provided for the 50,500 people who have been left homeless after a tsunami hit the Indonesian island of Java. An underwater earthquake, which measured 7.7 on the Richter scale, triggered the deadly tidal wave. Over 500 people perished.

Aid workers have dropped 15 tonnes of rice and 1,600 boxes of instant noodles for those left displaced by the two-metre-high wave. Officials and relief workers have said provisions are getting to those who need it, but they are working to prevent disease caused by poor sanitation. "In the near term, we're focusing on open wounds and cuts to prevent serious infection," said World Health Organisation (WHO) spokeswoman Sari Setiogi.

Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is due to tour the area on Friday. His government has been criticised for failing to inform residents that a tsunami was imminent.

After the earthquake erupted, Japanese and US agencies issued tsunami alerts for parts of Indonesia and Australia, but the Indonesian government has admitted it was unable to pass warnings on to coastal areas like the small town of Pangandaran which was worst-hit. "Our system is not yet working properly. We are still developing a communication system especially for the regions," said Fauzi, a government scientist.

In the wake of the 2004 Asian tsunami, which killed more than 130,000 people in the western province of Aceh, a warning system is being implemented there. However, Java has always been perceived as having a low

tsunami threat, but Indonesia's Vice President Jusuf Kalia has said an early warning system will be installed on the island within three years.

Officials have said that almost all of the victims were Indonesians, but a Pakistani, a Swede and a Dutch citizen were among those who were killed.

It is thought that 275 people are still missing. Lieutenant Colonel Tri Yuniarto has told a 350-strong rescue team in Pangandaran to finish collecting bodies trapped under the debris of collapsed buildings by next Monday. "That's our target, because when you work, you must have a target. However, we will continue searching for bodies until there are no more bodies," he told AFP.

The army and police are searching affected areas with sniffer dogs and mechanical diggers in the hope of finding survivors. "We are looking for people who are still missing or buried under the rubble as well as clearing the debris," said Deden Rajab, an army officer.

Parents are also searching furiously for their missing children. "The water was too strong," said Irah as she dug through a pile of rubble with her hands in the hope of recovering her 6-year-old son. "Oh God. Eki, where are you?"

Worried residents continued to flee to the hills on Wednesday after rumours of another impending wall of water. "I am too scared to go down," one elderly woman told the AFP news agency.

UN secretary-general Kofi Annan gave his condolences to the victims. A statement said Mr Annan "is saddened by the loss of life and damages provoked by the

tsunami ... and the trauma being experienced by the survivors due to the series of aftershocks shaking parts of the island."

Yesterday, another earthquake caused buildings to shake in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, but there were no reports of injuries. Officials at the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said no new tsunami is expected.

Survivors have described the tsunami, which struck on Monday afternoon.

A Belgian tourist said he was in a beachside bar when the wave hit. "I saw this big cloud of dark sea water coming up to me," he said.

Uli Sutarli, a plantation worker who was on Pangandaran beach, told Reuters: "When the waves came, I heard people screaming and then I heard something like a plane about to crash nearby, and I just ran."

Indonesia is situated on the Pacific Rim of Fire where 90% of the world's earthquakes and 81% of the world's largest earthquakes occur.

### **Villagers evacuating as Mayon volcano erupts**

Officials in Manila have issued evacuation orders for a 6km (4mi) radius around Mayon Volcano in the Philippines as ash clouds, rivulets of lava, and sulphur dioxide levels indicate an imminent explosive eruption.

Many residents, though, are hesitant to leave. Regional disaster coordinating council official Angel Capilli has said that the people who farm the rich soil near the volcano would be "forcibly" removed from the area should vulcanologists determine an

explosive eruption is imminent.

Mount Mayon has erupted 47 times in recorded history, with the last major eruption in 2001 shooting ash nearly 10km above the volcano

### **Carbon trading scheme proposed by British MP**

The UK Environment Secretary, David Miliband proposed a carbon trading scheme for private citizens during the Audit Commission's annual lecture.

Under the scheme all individuals will receive equal carbon points and can trade electricity, gas, petrol and air travel for carbon points.

Mr. Miliband argues that the government could set limits on the amount of carbon emitted. He says that people with low income who contribute less to carbon emission could benefit by selling off excess carbon points. He also says that the scheme is more empowering than other forms of regulations such as banning particular products, services or activities, or taxing them heavily.

Chris Huhne, the Liberal Democrats' environment spokesman, "supported any discussion about household carbon allowances" but also argues that that this would take too long to implement. He said that green taxes have fallen to their lowest since Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister.

### **CBC's new show The One sparked some controversy over simulcast**

The One: Making a Music Star is a new reality show hosted by CBC personality George Stroumboulopoulos.

The show airs on ABC and on CBC.

It premiered yesterday and has sparked some controversy over the simulcast, which according to ABC's schedule means displacing CBC's *The National* for a U.S. program.

Over the past few weeks, CBC's decision to simulcast *The One* has drawn criticism from a number of individuals and groups, including Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, NDP MP and federal heritage critic Charlie Angus, and retired CBC journalist Knowlton Nash.

Since the show airs on Tuesday night, the episodes will bump *The National* to an earlier slot in Atlantic Canada and a later one in Ontario and Quebec, which means it will air at 11:00 PM instead of 10:00 PM in Ontario and in Quebec. The Wednesday night editions will also bump *The National* to an earlier slot in Ontario and Quebec.

The CBC's will continue to show *The National* at different times on the main broadcast network and on CBC Newsworld. "We get discouraged that people don't appreciate the fact that [*The National*] is on Newsworld. . . . People watch their news on the Internet, on cable, on broadcast and we're giving it to them in all different kinds of ways. We're very proud of *The National*. I just hope that gets across." , said Kirstine Layfield, CBC's executive director of network programming.

#### **Four children among six Canadians killed in Israeli attack on Lebanon**

Six Canadians, including four children who were killed on Sunday by an Israeli

bombardment on a house in south Labanon have been identified.

Saja Al-Akhrass (8), Zeinab Al-Akhrass (6), Ahmad Al-Akhrass (4), and Salam Al-Akhrass (11 months) were in Lebanon for a summer holiday, visiting their extended family. They were killed when their house collapsed after being struck by an Israeli bombardment. Their parents, 36-year-old Ali Al-Akhrass and his wife Amira (23) were also killed in the attack. The family were residents of Montreal.

Six others were reported wounded in the attack.

"I lost my brother, I lost my sister, my nephew, the family of my nephew, my aunt, my uncle. Oh God," said Hussain El-Akras, brother of one of the victims. He told a Montreal news conference Monday that his family were begging the government of Canada to "put pressure on Israel to stop this barbaric behaviour."

The Israeli military statement on the incident said "The responsibility for any civilian casualties rests entirely with the Hizbollah terrorist organization" and "The IDF (Israel Defense Forces) requested and warned residents of the area not to stay within range of the launch sites". Israel says that Hezbollah disperses its weaponry among supporters in residential neighborhoods to avoid being targeted by the much larger, better-equipped Israeli Defense Forces.

On Thursday the conflicts death toll reaches at least 306 people in Lebanon and 31 in Israel, the vast majority civilians.

#### **Today in History**

1298 - English and Irish forces led by Edward Longshanks defeated William Wallace's Scottish troops at the Battle of Falkirk.

1831 - In Brussels, Leopold I was inaugurated as the first King of the Belgians.

1861 - The First Battle of Bull Run, the first major battle in the American Civil War, began.

1954 - First Indochina War: The 17th parallel was established at the Geneva Conference, partitioning Vietnam into North Vietnam led by Ho Chi Minh and South Vietnam under Emperor Bảo Đại.

1970 - The Aswan High Dam in Egypt was completed after 11 years of construction.

July 21 is National holiday of Belgium

#### **Quote of the Day**

"The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong in the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry."

~ Ernest Hemingway

#### **Word of the Day**

blurt; v

- To utter suddenly and unadvisedly; to divulge inconsiderately.

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