



Top Stories

12 arrested after India-bound flight escorted back to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport

Police in the Netherlands have arrested twelve passengers after a US flight destined for Mumbai in India had to be escorted back to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport.

Woman and man arrested over multiple deaths

A thirty-five year-old woman and a forty year-old man have been arrested in connection with the deaths of a woman and her three young children in the United Kingdom.

Featured story

Violence in Congo after first round election results are announced

Three days of violent clashes have followed Sunday's announcement of the results of the first round of polling in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. President Kabila failed to win an outright majority needed to avoid a runoff against the second placed Jean-Pierre Bemba.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The United States says that Iran's proposal to the United Nations about its nuclear program "falls short of the conditions set by the Security Council."
- Northwest Airlines Flight 42 from Amsterdam to Mumbai (Bombay)

Wikipedia Current Events

was escorted by two Dutch Air Force F-16s back to Amsterdam after a request from the pilot. Twelve people have been detained.

- An ancient Persian water pipe system is discovered in Ramat Rachel, Israel.
- The Holy Jihad Brigades claims responsibility for the kidnappings of Steve Centanni and Olaf Wiig. A video was broadcast by Al-Jazeera showing no armed men and they appeared to be in good health. There are demands that the United States release "muslim prisoners" within 72 hours.
- Amnesty International accuses Israel of war crimes, saying it broke international law by deliberately destroying Lebanon's civilian infrastructure during its recent war with Hezbollah guerrillas.

US Box Office Breaks Out for August 23, 2006

The highest grossing films in the United States box offices are:

1. Snakes on a Plane with \$15.25 million
2. Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby with \$14.1 million
3. World Trade Center with \$10.8 million
4. Accepted with \$10.1 million
5. Step Up with \$9.9 million

Canadian soldier shoots Afghan boy following car bomb

The shooting death by Canadian

troops of a 10 year-old boy in Afghanistan has raised fears of a backlash and retaliation. The boy was shot and a teenager injured at around 5pm local time yesterday when, while driving a motorcycle, they sped through a roadblock cordoning off the scene of a suicide bombing. A soldier fired a bullet which passed through the 17 year-old driver and killed the boy. Military authorities are investigating the incident.

"A motorcycle carrying two people broke through the Afghan National Police outer security cordon at high speed," said Colonel Fred Lewis, deputy commander of the Canadian contingent of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). "The driver failed to heed multiple warnings to stop as he headed towards the inner Canadian cordon. A Canadian ISAF soldier then opened fire in a defensive application of our rules of engagement. A single round struck both the driver and the passenger of the motorcycle."

Lewis doubts soldiers had time to fire warning shots due to the speed of the oncoming motorcycle. He also said that while no explosives were found on the vehicle he had a "sneaking suspicion" that soldiers feared the motorcycle carried a second suicide bomber and acted defensively. He added that he was concerned that the Taliban would try to exploit the incident for propaganda purposes and that he was concerned about a possible backlash by locals.

"I would be concerned about it and I think we need to pass the right message to the Afghan people," he said. "The message is that we're here to help them and we certainly would never want to hurt them."

Relatives of the boys were at the gates of the Canadian military base last night demanding answers.

Corporal David Braun was killed in the suicide attack which occurred two hours before the shooting. Three other soldiers were wounded but are listed in good condition. An Afghan child also died in the blast which occurred when a suicide bomber rammed his car into a Canadian convoy on patrol in Kandahar.

Corporal Braun is the 27th Canadian soldier to die since Canadian military operations in Afghanistan began in late 2001 as part of the American led "War on Terror".

Forest fire in Chalkidiki peninsula causes political tension in Greece

A large forest fire in Kassandra on the Chalkidiki peninsula, close to Greece's second biggest city, Thessalonika, in Central Macedonia region, has resulted in one dead German tourist and injury to hundreds of locals and other tourists. The fire, which broke out Monday afternoon, had a front of some 20km in length as it burned through pine forest in Polychrono, Hanioti, Pefkohori and Kryopigi. Approximately 4,000 hectares (8,500 acres) of forest have been destroyed along with about 20 buildings.

The Hellenic Ministry of Mercantile Marine had sent five coastguard ships to the coasts of Kassandra to

help tourists evacuate the beaches - sending them to the opposite coasts of Sithonia to escape the fires. According to the British Foreign Office and UK tourist operators, more than 1,500 British tourists were in the area of Chalkidiki when the fire started. Local authorities report that a German tourist was found dead during his efforts to save his family in the coast.

According to AFP reports, in the western point of the peninsula more than 260 firemen, along with troops of the Greek army and volunteers, are struggling to extinguish the fires that continue to burn.

Referring to the fire on the Chalkidiki peninsula, PASOK president George Papandreou criticised the Greek government for what he called its inability to coordinate and promptly address the problem. The response from the Greek government to the major fire that broke out in northern Greece was not at all slow, the governmental spokesman told media on Tuesday.

However, the fire in Kassandra, Chalkidiki has provoked criticism from most of the Greek media against the government, which is blamed for not being ready to tackle such a situation. MPs of the opposition announced to the media that they are ready to officially question the ability of the government to prevent such disasters in popular tourist destinations of Greece like Chalkidiki.

Judge sends JonBenet murder suspect to Colorado

John Mark Karr, the man who last week admitted to killing six year-old JonBenét Ramsey on Boxing Day 1996, has been told by a

judge that he will be sent to Colorado to face charges.

On Monday, the forty-one year-old American teacher was extradited from Bangkok in Thailand to California. From there he will fly to Colorado within the next few days, and it is expected that he will be formally charged with murder, sexual assault and kidnapping.

JonBenét, a beauty queen, was found beaten and strangled in her Colorado home on the day after Christmas in 1996.

In a press conference last Wednesday, Karr confessed to being with JonBenét when she died, adding that her death was an accident. "I was with JonBenét when she died. I loved JonBenét. She died accidentally. I am so very sorry for what happened to JonBenét. It's very important for me that everyone knows that I love her very much, that her death was unintentional, that it was an accident."

Despite his confession, Karr's then ex-wife said that he was in Alabama with her when the murder occurred.

Disease outbreak feared after mass hysteria over "sweet" water in Mumbai

"18 hours of mass hysteria" (according to the Sunday Times of India) broke out last Friday in Mumbai as hundreds of residents flocked to Mahim Creek, one of the most polluted creeks in India that receives thousands of tonnes of raw sewage and industrial waste every day after reports that the salt water had suddenly turned "sweet".

Television reports showed people drinking water on the spot with their hands, and others bathing,

apparently to wash away their sins with the "holy" water.

At the height of the hysteria, bottled mineral water was selling for Rs 50 (RM4.50), with people buying the mineral water simply for the bottles, pouring away the mineral water and filling the bottles with water from the creek.

News reports of the Mahim Creek incident sparked further mass hysteria at Gujarat within hours, with residents there claiming that seawater at Teethal beach in Valsad had also turned sweet. About 400 people had gathered by the beach in the evening.

In the aftermath of the incident, local authorities stated that they were being extra vigilant because of the possibility of a severe outbreak of water-borne diseases, such as gastroenteritis as a result of so many people drinking contaminated water. The Maharashtra Pollution Control Board had warned people not to drink the water[4], but despite this many people had collected it in bottles, even as plastic and rubbish had drifted by on the current. The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai had ordered a bacteriological report into the "sweet" water, but suspected that "contamination in the water might have been reduced due to the waters from Mithi River flowing into the mouth of Mahim Bay".

By Saturday morning, the hysteria had died down, as the taste of the water had returned to normal.

Geologists at the Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay and M.D. Zingde, the head of the Mumbai office of the National Institute of Oceanography explained that the water turning sweet in Mahim Creek was a natural phenomenon.

Continuous rainfall over the preceding few days had caused a large pool of fresh water to accrue in an underground rock formation near to the coast, which then discharged into the sea as a large "plume" as fractures in the rocks widened. Because of the differences in density, the discharged fresh water floated on top of the salt water of the sea and spread along the coast. Over time, the two mixed to become normal sea water once more.

A similar explanation for the phenomenon in Gujarat was given by Valsad District Collector D Rawal. According to him, the reason for the water tasting less salty than usual was that because of the monsoon, two rivers Auranga and Banki were in spate and had been flowing into the sea in the region.

Bobby Robson recovering from operation

Earlier today former England-manager Bobby Robson underwent surgery to remove a tumour from his brain.

A statement was made saying the surgery went "very well", and that the tumour has been completely removed.

The Football Association of Ireland hopes that Sir Bobby Robson will be able to resume his duties as a consultant for the Republic of Ireland team for the games against Cyprus and the Czech Republic in early October.

Thousands watch Boobs on Bikes parade in Auckland

Thousands of spectators lined Queen St. in central Auckland, New Zealand to watch a parade of around 20 female porn stars riding topless on motorcycles. The girls, wearing studded knee-high leather

boots and leather pants, braved a winter chill, nippy wind and objections by some city officials, in a shot at promoting an Auckland Erotica Expo happening later this week.

Auckland Mayor Dick Hubbard described the parade as "morally repugnant."

12 arrested after India-bound flight escorted back to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport

Police in the Netherlands have arrested twelve passengers after a US flight destined for Mumbai in India was escorted back to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport. No further information about the arrests has been given.

The plane, which had 149 passengers on board, was accompanied by two F-16 fighter jets on its way back to the airport after the security alert today.

According to the Dutch Defence Ministry, the plane's pilot made the decision to land the aircraft after several passengers mustered suspicion. "A number of them behaved, in the opinion of the crew, in a suspicious manner," said a Defense Ministry statement. "As a result, the captain asked to return to Schiphol. The customs police have taken a number of people off the plane for questioning."

An airport spokesman said that the plane's pilot decided to reroute while in German airspace.

Earlier today, a spokeswoman said that several passengers were taken off the Northwest Airlines aircraft and have been detained for questioning. AP quotes Mirjam Snoerwang as saying: "A number of suspects were taken off the plane - I don't know how many.

They're undergoing questioning now."

The National Terrorism Coordinator has said that there is no reason to raise the terror alert level in the Netherlands. Spokeswoman Judith Sluiter said: "It is the same as it was before - light threat."

Since August 10, when police in the UK claimed they had foiled a suspected plot to blow up several transatlantic planes, security has been stepped up worldwide.

Pakistani-born Australian terrorist sentenced to 20 years in prison

Convicted terrorist Faheem Khalid Lodhi has been sentenced a 20 years prison time by the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Australia. Lodhi, a 36 year old Pakistani immigrant to Australia, was earlier in June convicted on three counts of terrorist related charges, planning to attack civilian targets and military installations. Justice Anthony Whealy commented at the court hearings that Lodhi had "the intent of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause, namely violent jihad". Lodhi is the first person to be convicted under a new set of strict anti-terrorism laws enacted by the Australian Government in 2005 and the first person convicted of terrorist activities inside Australia.

Lodhi, who maintains his innocence, will be eligible for parole in 2019.

Woman and man arrested over multiple deaths

A thirty-five year-old woman and a forty year-old man, both from Burnage in Manchester, have been arrested in connection with the deaths of a woman and her three young children.

The corpses of Uzma Rahan and her three children were found in their home in Cheadle Hulme in Greater Manchester on Monday morning. Eleven year-old Adam, eight year-old Abbas and six year-old Henne were found to have serious head injuries, and post-mortem tests concluded that they died from being beaten to death. An examination into Mrs Rahan's death will be carried out later.

A Greater Manchester Police spokeswoman said this morning: "Police investigating the murder of a woman and three children in Cheadle Hulme have this morning arrested a 35-year-old woman from Burnage on suspicion of murder. She remains in police custody and will be questioned by officers later today."

Police are continuing to look for Rahan Arshad, the children's father. In a press conference on Monday, officers revealed that the thirty-six year-old went missing five weeks ago. There is a possibility that he could be abroad.

Det Supt Martin Bottomley, from Greater Manchester Police, told reporters: "We are still actively looking for Rahan Arshad and I now believe he left the country around 29 July. We will be liaising with our colleagues on international police forces to help us to trace him. I would ask that anyone who has seen him or been in contact with him since 29 July to contact the incident room or any police officer immediately."

It is thought the four victims had been killed a month ago.

Amnesty International accuses Israel of "war crimes" in Lebanon

The human rights organisation,

Amnesty International has accused Israel of committing war crimes by deliberately targeting civilian infrastructure in Lebanon during the Israel-Lebanon conflict, calling the attacks "indiscriminate and disproportionate". Israel has rejected the charge.

"The pattern, scope and scale of the attacks makes Israel's claim that this was 'collateral damage', simply not credible," said Kate Gilmore, of Amnesty International.

Amnesty International cites the magnitude of the destruction caused by Israeli air strikes and artillery bombings, and declarations such as the one made by Israeli Chief of Staff Lt Gen Dan Halutz, that "nothing is safe [in Lebanon], as simple as that", as evidence that civilians were deliberately targeted.

Israel rejected the accusation, stating that the bombings of civilian areas was justified because Hezbollah uses civilians as "humans shields" : Lebanese infrastructure was "targeted only when that infrastructure was being exploited by the Hezbollah machine, and this is in accordance with the rules of war", said the Israeli spokesman Mark Regev. "Unlike Hezbollah, we did not deliberately target the Lebanese civilian population", Mr. Regev said.

Over 1000 Lebanese, mostly civilians were killed during the fighting, while 161 Israelis, mostly soldiers, were killed by Hezbollah. The Israeli attacks also wounded about 4000 people, and turned nearly 1 million people, a quarter of the population of Lebanon, into internal refugees. More than half a million of Israelis were forced to leave their homes in order to escape Hezbollah's rocket attacks

against the civil population of the northern cities of Israel.

New Zealand Governor-General sworn in

New Zealand's nineteenth Governor-General was sworn in today. The Honourable Anand Satyanand succeeds Dame Silvia Cartwright as the personal representative of New Zealand's Head of State, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of New Zealand. Dame Silvia concluded a five year term in office.

A fanfare of trumpets and a 21 gun salute by the 16 Field Regiment from Linton marked the start of ceremonies. Satyanand arrived at Parliament at 11.45am (NZST).

His investiture began with an Indian and Maori welcome, followed by the constitutional swearing in. A commission of appointment was read, and the Oath of Allegiance and the oath of office taken.

The appointment was then proclaimed, at which point Satyanand became the 19th Governor General of New Zealand.

There was Royal New Zealand Navy led Tri-service Royal Guard of Honour comprising 100 men and women drawn from the three services (Royal New Zealand Air Force and New Zealand Army) and their respective Queen's Colours and escorts, and the Band of the Royal New Zealand Navy and the Royal New Zealand Air Force Trumpeters were also attendance.

Following the ceremony the new Governor General laid a wreath; at the National War Memorial in honour of New Zealand's war dead; a tradition that all new Governor General undertake on

the day of their swearing in.

A 24 person Guard of Honour, Catafalque Guard, bugler and drummer from the New Zealand Defence Force also attended the commemorative service.

He says he is deeply honoured to have been asked to serve as Governor General and says there will be a great deal of pride within the Indian community about his appointment.

After the ceremony the vice regal party moved into Parliament House where presentations were be made in the Grand Hall; followed by a reception in the Banquet Hall.

Satyanand was born and raised in Auckland. He studied law at the University of Auckland law school. He has practiced law, been a judge, an ombudsman.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Helen Clark, said that has a very good and deep understanding of the law, government, an interest in international affairs and has contributed to many community activities.

Anand Satyanand's parents were Indo-Fijians, Satyanand is the first Governor-General of Asian descent. Satyanand married in 1970 and has three adult children.

Present at the swearing in ceremony were the Vice-President of Fiji: His Excellency Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi and the Honourable Mr Justice Sir Moti Tikaram. Also present were some of his former colleagues.

Prime Minister Clark said "I thank you for agreeing to serve New Zealand in this way. On behalf of

the government and people of New Zealand, I welcome you both to your new roles as you take up life and work at Government House, and wish you well for this period of service to New Zealand."

Peter Dunne, leader of the United Future party, said "I warmly welcome his appointment and I believe that with his Asian, Fijian, Indian and Kiwi background he will do an excellent job for the increasingly diverse society that is New Zealand today."

Winston Peters, New Zealand First party leader and Foreign Minister, said "He is the right person to carry out the diverse role of the Queen's representative in 21st century New Zealand. Judge Satyanand has the experience, respect and demeanour to fulfil the various demands of this most important constitutional role in the manner we expect in New Zealand."

When asked by the media in April his view of New Zealand becoming a republic, Satyanand said "I am an admirer of our country's present constitutional arrangements and the mechanisms which enable a straightforward change of government and our connection with our historical past"

Bobby Robson to undergo cancer surgery

Former England football manager, Bobby Robson CBE, will undergo surgery to remove a tumour on his brain today.

Bobby Robson is 73-years-old, and has managed various soccer teams such as England, Newcastle United, Ipswich, Barcelona, PSV Eindhoven, Fulham, Sporting Lisbon and FC Porto. Currently, he is employed as a consultant for

the Republic of Ireland team, but will miss their opening Euro 2008 qualifier against Germany in Stuttgart on 2 September. He has had cancer surgery 3 times prior.

Bobby Robson said: "The tumour is in my brain, which sounds bad, but it is in a position where it can be removed relatively easily and it's extremely small - the size of a grape - which indicates they have caught it early."

Robson was taken to hospital on 5 August 2006 after complaining about feeling unwell 10 minutes before the start of an Ipswich match. He was discharged on 7 August, and on 20 August it became apparent the incident was due to a brain tumour.

New Zealand government unwilling to help Overlander train service

New Zealand finance minister, Michael Cullen, rejected providing a subsidy for the New Zealand's Auckland to Wellington passenger train service, Overlander, which Australian company Toll Holdings Limited plans to stop on September 30, 2006.

Toll New Zealand last month said it would close the unprofitable Overlander passenger train service, citing low patronage and rising costs. Toll said the government wouldn't provide NZ\$1.8 million annual subsidy necessary to keep the service running.

"I am yet to receive any proposals for a package other than spending as much money as Toll wants to carry on the service starting at \$1.7 million dollars," Cullen said in parliament today.

Toll New Zealand Limited, New

Zealands train monopoly, began reviewing it's long distance passenger services in 2004 as it starts to focus on freight operations.

Cullen said closing the rail service wouldn't have much economic impact. Cullen said " I see very little in the future for this route as a standard passenger route. If there was to be a revival of this route it would most likely be a dedicated tourism operation. I will wait for any offers in that respect."

Toll say that they are considering closing two South Island services.

Toll Holdings owns 84% of Toll NZ. Toll NZ shares fell 19 cents, or 5.9 percent, to NZ\$3.01 today, after last trading on Aug. 21. Just 400 shares changed hands today.

Australia to subsidise Herceptin for early-stage breast cancer

The Australian federal government has announced it will subsidise the breast-cancer drug Herceptin under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for women with HER2 positive cancer. Those with advanced breast cancer will continue to be eligible for special assistance from Medicare Australia independently from the PBS.

According to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, around 2,000 of the 14,000 cases of breast cancer diagnosed annually are of the HER2 positive type. Herceptin has shown to prevent the recurrence of cancer in 30% of these patients.

In order to constrain costs, the government has accepted a recommendation from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PABC) to provide Herceptin under the PBS only to

patients who have the HER2 positive type of cancer, who have undergone surgery and who are undergoing chemotherapy. In addition, those who are predisposed to heart damage (which can be a side effect of the drug) will not be provided with the subsidised medication.

The government will provide subsidised Herceptin for 52 weeks (as found to be most effective in clinical trials) at a cost of around AUD\$50,000 per patient.

Herceptin will become available on the PBS from 1 October.

Today in History

- 79 - Mount Vesuvius erupted, burying the cities of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiae with volcanic ash.
- 410 - The Visigoths under Alaric I sacked Rome.
- 1572 - St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre: a massacre of Huguenots began. An estimated 70,000 people were killed in France in the following weeks.
- 1821 - The Treaty of Córdoba was signed, ratifying the Plan de Iguala and concluding Mexico's War of Independence from Spain.
- 1954 - President Getúlio Vargas of Brazil shot himself to death in the Catete Palace in Rio de Janeiro.
- August 24 is Independence Day in Ukraine (1991)

Quote of the Day

"If those in charge of our society — politicians, corporate executives, and owners of press and television — can dominate our ideas, they will be secure in their power. They will not need soldiers patrolling the streets. We will control ourselves."
~ Howard Zinn

Word of the Day

vortex; n

1. A whirlwind, whirlpool, or similarly moving matter in the form of a spiral or column.
2. Anything that involves constant violent or chaotic activity around some centre.
3. Anything which inevitably draws surrounding things into its current.

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