



### Top Stories

#### Indian ocean tsunami, one year after



One year on from the Indian Ocean tsunami, the world's grief and compassion

returned to the tsunami-battered coastlines of the Indian Ocean. where at least 216 000 people lost their lives.

#### Haiti might have to postpone elections again



The first round of the presidential elections, currently scheduled for January 8, 2006, might have to be delayed.

### Featured story

#### Drug website surveys LSD users and culture

Erowid, a website with the stated mission of "Documenting the Complex Relationship Between Humans & Psychoactives" has over the past few months been gathering data through a series of surveys about the drug LSD to present at the LSD Symposium, scheduled for January 2006 in Basel, Switzerland.

### Wikipedia Current Events

- Kerry Packer, Australia's richest man, died at the age of 68. His family reports he died peacefully in his home surrounded by his family.
- Memorial services around the world, including one in Banda

### Wikipedia Current Events

Aceh, Indonesia attended by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, marked the one year anniversary of the 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake which killed approximately 275,000 people.

•A gas attack occurred at an outlet of the Maksidom chain on Moskovsky Prospect in Saint Petersburg, Russia, and led to the hospitalization of numerous victims.

•The prime minister of Israel Ariel Sharon will undergo a cardiac catheterization to seal a hole in his heart. The surgery is a routine procedure for this congenital defect, according to doctors in Jerusalem.

•A Qassam rocket fired at the Israeli kibbutz Sa'ad lands near a preschool. No injuries are reported.

#### Four Russian stores hit with gas attacks

In Russia's second largest city, St. Petersburg, four gas attacks left more than 70 people ill. Devices with wires, timers, and glass vials of a gas determined on scene to be methyl mercaptan were found in outlets of Makisdom, a home improvement chain store. The chemical is both naturally occurring and manufactured and is used as an odorant for detection of propane or natural gas leaks.

Store officials have said that they had received threats that sales would be disrupted before New

Year's. Russians traditionally give gifts on the holiday. Police officials said they believed a commercial dispute or a prank not terrorism.

The local emergency hospital was overflowed from the influx of ill people from the attacks. Valentina Matviyenko, Governor of St. Petersburg, said that those who sought medical help were not suffering any further medical problems.

A custodian at one of the stores found the devices and alerted police. The devices were found at another store with their vials broken. The devices in the two other stores were carried outside by employees and covered with buckets. The police explosives experts defused them.

#### Indian ocean tsunami, one year after

One year on from the Indian Ocean tsunami, the world's grief and compassion returned to the tsunami-battered coastlines of the Indian Ocean, where at least 216 000 people lost their lives. Under a clear sky and before a gentle sea, the world commemorated those lost their lives, in one of the worst natural disasters that the modern world has experienced.

Since the Indian Ocean tsunami, patchy progress has been made on the return to a normal life for those who lived through the experience. Efforts to implement a warning system similar to that

coordinated by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii have past a number of significant milestones. Tourist resorts in many places have been rebuilt, and many visiting them at this time do so as a form of remembrance. Yet still there remain those who may never recover from the tragic events of one year ago. Some \$13 billion was pledged to relief and recovery efforts, of which 75 percent has already been secured. family, when the disaster struck.

The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami hits Sri Lanka

Banda Aceh

In one of the first ceremonies, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono joined in a moment of silence at the Baiturrahman mosque located in a Banda Aceh coastal suburb flattened by the disaster. Yudhoyono said that "was under the same blue sky, exactly one year ago, that Mother Earth unleashed her most destructive power upon us, The assault began with a massive earthquake but ... that was only a prelude to the horrific catastrophe to come."

In a live video address UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said "The toughest time after last year's devastating tsunami may be yet to come, It was so brutal, so quick, so extensive that we are still struggling to fully comprehend it."

Andaman and Nicobar archipelago Many of the survivors of the tsunami who live in the Andaman and Nicobar islands have yet to see significant benefits from international relief efforts. Over 10,000 families are having to come to terms with the policies of

their government. Whilst local people would be happy to continue with traditional wood and bamboo materials, disputes see the government trying to impose higher standards.

Thailand

In Thailand, the anniversary of the massive wave sees tourists returning and reconstruction of resorts. However, not all is so positive. Many who lost loved ones suffered from Post-traumatic stress disorder, and whilst 75% of those suffering are said to be recovered, those who still suffer may need life-long psychiatric help. In Phang-nga province, the hardest hit part of Thailand, there are around 300 people in that category, their symptoms including a deep-seated fear of the sea. Binge drinking has also become a problem among many who lost everything, including family, when the disaster struck.

The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami hits Thailand

In an attempt to focus on a recovery from the trauma inflicted on the children of Thailand, concerned parties have published a number of children's books aimed at rehabilitating. Sponsored by the Canadian Embassy, The Day the Tsunami Came tells the tale of a boy who loses his father when the wave hit his fishing village in Phanag-nga province. Its aim is to spread the message to those affected that they are not alone. Apart from publication in Thai and English, the book will be available in Swedish, Dutch, Indonesian and Sinhalese.

Measures to prevent a recurrence of the massive casualties have been implemented in the year following the tsunami. Earlier this

month Thailand's tsunami early warning system passed its first official test. National Disaster Warning Centre Director Plodprasop Suraswadi stated, "Thailand is the first country in the region to successfully install a comprehensive tsunami early warning system. I believe the system can, from now on, save lives and assets of Thais and international tourists alike". The centre is due to be expanded in the coming year to cover "natural disasters [such] as severe floods, forest fires and even air pollution." Implementation of the tsunami warning system has not all gone according to plan. Earlier in the month a false alarm caused by a technical error panicked tourists and local residents in the six provinces hit by the disaster, Krabi, Phang-nga Phuket, Ranong, Satun and Trang.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and a member of the royal family who lost her son were among those who spoke in the resort island Phuket, the source of some of the most graphic footage of the waves. In Thailand.

Periods of silence were observed at official ceremonies attended by thousands, where flags were lowered to half-staff and bells rung in remembrance. Some villagers refused to take part, saying the rites were expensive, inappropriate events designed to attract tourists and showcase the government.

Europe

Across Europe; hundreds joined in commemorating those who died. In Sweden, which suffered the highest loss of life for any country outside of Asia, official ceremonies were held, with more Swedes attended ceremonies in Thailand.

### **Bombmaking materials found near farm of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe**

A neighbor of the Colombian President called police when they found a bag near the road close to President Alvaro Uribe's farm. Soldiers who then inspected the bag found 11 pounds (5 kilograms) of C4 explosives, detonator cords, and other material needed to assemble an explosive device. The President's spokesperson said, "They found all the elements of a bomb but it had not been assembled and it was not ready to be detonated."

Uribe then left the farm and went to stay on another of his farms, this one in his home province Antioquia, for the remainder of the holidays.

Uribe has been the target of multiple assassination attempts, usually by marxist guerillas. He was, for example, attempted to be assassinated while he was campaigning and then again on his inauguration in 2002. His father was assassinated by marxist guerillas. The administration blames the rebel group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia for most of the attempts on the president's life.

### **Olympics organisers insist London win in 2012 ballot was fair**

According to the Scotsman newspaper, the directors of the 2012 London Olympics have insisted that the city won the right to host the games "fairly and squarely" after claims were touted by an Israeli official that a "potentially decisive vote was cast in error by an International Olympic Committee (IOC) official"

The Israeli official, Alex Gilady, claims that in the third round of voting, Greek delegate Lambis Nikolaou may have accidentally voted for Paris rather than Madrid, resulting in eliminating Madrid rather than Paris from the final round.

London spokesmen and bid leaders have dismissed the claims as "folklore stories", "totally irrelevant" and "tittle-tattle", while the CEO of the Madrid bid told the London Times, "We were very close to winning. We can never know if the Greek vote would have been decisive, but it is lamentable for one human error to have ruined all our hard work."

### **Iranian Baha'i dies in jail**

The Bahá'í International Community has claimed that a Bahá'í has died in mysterious circumstances in jail in Yazd, Iran.

Dhabihu'llah Mahrami was arested in 1995 and convicted by an Iranian court of "apostasy" - converting from Islam to another religion. He was sentenced to death, but following protests from the international community the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 1999.

Mahrami was a lifelong Bahá'í, who was fired from his civil service job after the Iranian revolution in 1979 on grounds of his religion. An article later appeared in a local newspaper stating he had converted to Islam, but Mahrami claimed this had been written by colleague and he had always remained a Bahá'í. After he had repeated this publicly he was arrested and charged with apostasy. Iranian authorities later claimed he was jailed for spying for Israel, but this was contradicted by the court

documents.

The Bahá'í community claims that Mahrami had no known health concerns at the time of his death, but had been forced to do arduous labour in prison and had received death threats. They say they hold the Iranian authorities responsible for his death and his only crime was belief in his religion.

They claim the Bahá'í community in Iran has suffered an increase in persecution this year, with 59 Bahá'ís arrested so far.

### **New Zealand Tsunami heroes to receive Special Service Medal**

A new medal has been created for New Zealanders who helped in recovery efforts after the Boxing Day Tsunami.

Called the New Zealand Special Service Medal (Asian Tsunami) it recognises the work of New Zealanders who went to the region after the tsunami; locating the missing, identifying the dead, and assisting those left behind. Defence Minister Phil Goff says New Zealanders who served in the devastated areas in the first two months after the tsunami, are to receive the medal.

In a provisional list; which was released today; 163 New Zealanders are honoured in which 37 are non-military or police personnel, (this include aid workers).

Also forty-seven police officers will receive the honour for their work identifying bodies in Thailand.

Prime Minister Helen Clark said the medal recognised "the special service of those New Zealanders who undertook often harrowing

tasks in dangerous conditions".

### Queensland Premier aims for a move to Australian federal politics

Australia's most experienced state leader - Peter Beattie has given his strongest indication for a move to federal politics.

Beattie, who has been the Premier of Queensland for seven-and-a-half years indicated that he only wishes to stay on for another term in state parliament and that he would never say no to federal politics. He further added "I'd love to see the Labor Party govern federally and you never rule out federal aspirations".

"But frankly, from my point of view, it's more important to deliver on all the things I promised we would deliver on" said Beattie. Beattie will be working over the holiday period to repair the crises that have engulfed his government this year. His government is yet to recover from a slump in two-party preferred polls following the Doctor Death scandal, which exposed major problems in Queensland's health system.

Mr Beattie said he would lead his party to victory in 2007 and serve out another term as premier, but indicated he would consider his "exit strategy" ahead of the 2010 state election. "I'm not someone who wants to stay forever" said Mr Beattie.

Mr Beattie has been grooming his successor, Deputy Premier Anna Bligh and plans to make her Treasurer if Labor wins the next election.

Mr Beattie said his agenda for next year in Queensland included implementing health reforms,

furthering his Smart State strategy and kick-starting a multi-billion-dollar plan for infrastructure projects.

### Today in History

1831 - Aboard HMS Beagle, Charles Darwin left Plymouth, England on what became an historic expedition to South America.

1904 - Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up, a stage play by J. M. Barrie, premiered in London.

1918 - A public speech by famed Polish pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski (pictured) in Poznań sparked the Greater Poland Uprising against Germany.

1945 - International ratification of the Bretton Woods Agreement, leading to the establishment of the International Monetary Fund and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

1949 - Queen Juliana of the Netherlands signed the papers that relinquished sovereignty of most of Dutch East Indies, now known as Indonesia.

### Quote of the Day

"It is not the facts which guide the conduct of men, but their opinions about facts; which may be entirely wrong. We can only make them right by discussion." ~ Norman Angell

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