

UNITY

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Compiled from Federal parliamentary and other sources relevant to Australia's obligations to the United Nations.

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(It may be necessary to copy and paste links into your browser/address box)

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LAUNCH OF THE UN YEAR OF SANITATION Poor sanitation In our region, in the Asia-Pacific region, affects about 190 million people. "In South-East Asia and the Pacific, approximately 75,000 children will die this year from diarrhoea,

B. CLIMATE CHANGE

C. HUMAN RIGHTS

'MYANMAR 'ONGOING SYSTEMATIC VIOLATIONS' The UN Human Rights Council has condemned "ongoing systematic violations of human rights" in Myanmar and called on the government to stop making politically motivated arrests and to release all political prisoners immediately

D. PEACE & SECURITY ZIMBABWEAN VIOLENCE THREATENS CREDIBILITY OF NEW

POLLS: BAN The current violence, intimidation and arrest of opposition leaders in Zimbabwe are not conducive to credible elections, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, calling for an immediate halt to hostilities ahead of the presidential run-off round set for next week

E. HEALTH & MEANS

F. MEDIA MATTERS

BAN KI-MOON UNVEILS MEMORIAL TO JOURNALISTS A 10m (32ft) glass and steel cone on top of BBC Broadcasting House in central London will shine a beam of light into the sky every night at 2200

G. OTHER NEWS

'MILITARY OBSTRUCTED AID BUT NO STARVATION' More than six weeks have passed since the cyclone swept through the Irrawaddy Delta in southern Myanmar, leaving a trail of flattened villages and broken lives and arousing international sympathy that turned to anguish as the military government obstructed foreign aid.

H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES (UNity, UN AND UNAA Contacts)

LAUNCH OF THE UN YEAR OF SANITATION

It was easy for people to be cynical when there's another announcement of another year of something, because we are always campaigning around the international year of this and that, and none of them appeal to everybody. They all have a target audience, Bob McMullan, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, commented at the Australian launch of the UN Year of Sanitation - Parliament House, Canberra (17/6/08).

"Sometimes, years later, you look back and see how impact they've had, but I'm sure that if you went into the street and asked ordinary citizens of this country or most countries whether the first thing we needed to do was have an International Year of Sanitation, they might not immediately respond, but I really want to challenge that. In my view, this is an excellent decision by the United Nations," he said.

Poor sanitation affected, in our region, in the Asia-Pacific region, about 190 million people. "In South-East Asia and the Pacific, approximately 75,000 children will die this year from diarrhoea - 75,000 children in our immediate region," he said. "When we talk about the Millennium Development Goals, everybody likes to talk about halving global poverty - as they should. But one of the Millennium Development Goals is about access to sanitation.

"Of the 22 developing countries that Australia provides assistance to in our region, 13 are not on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal for water, and 10 are not on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal for sanitation. Progress to so many other goals, about life expectancy for children, about broader health and development goals, are contingent upon progress in the area of water and sanitation.

Australia was to increase aid for water and sanitation by \$300 million over the next three years. "It's a very small amount this year, because we're in the planning stage, only \$8 million, but over the next three years we will make that \$300 million. We will be working with bilateral partners, with institutions like the Asian Development Bank's Water Financing Partnership Facility."

Australia planned to do more.

[SPEECH: International Development Assistance, Water and Sanitation in Developing Countries](#)

In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg reaffirmed the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000. The summit also highlighted access to basic sanitation as a centrepiece of the poverty eradication commitments and added Target 10, under MDG 7, to halve the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015, relative to 1990 levels.

Progress toward Target 10 has been slow and uneven, leading the UN General Assembly to declare 2008 the International Year of Sanitation. On November 21 2007, the UN officially launched the International Year of Sanitation to accelerate progress for the 2.6 billion people worldwide who are without access to proper sanitation facilities.

Australia is playing a lead role in the Asia-Pacific region. The recent Budget committed an additional \$300 million over three years from 2008-09 to 2010-11 on water and sanitation through Australia's international development assistance program. The initiative will include a substantial expansion of funding for basic sanitation.

AUSAID REPORTS ON 2003-2004 ACHIEVEMENTS

The Australian Government's overseas aid program continued to play an integral role in responding to issues fundamental to the Australian national interest, Bruce Davis, AusAID Director General, comments in an overview in the Australian Agency For International Development Annual Report 2003-2004 Report, released this week.

He says his organisation maintained its focus on poverty reduction in the region and adapted to playing a key role in more coherent, and significantly larger, whole-of-government responses to international challenges. While these were demanding times, the agency responded effectively to the many and varied calls upon its resources.

Key challenges for the Australian Government's aid program in 2003-04 included:

contributing to the restoration of the rule of law, improving governance and supporting the most needy in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea;
significantly raising the profile of support for basic education in Indonesia;
assisting reconstruction efforts in Iraq;
cooperating on initiatives in counter-terrorism and people trafficking;
encouraging cooperative responses to shared problems in our region, such as regional transport and police training;
responding to humanitarian emergencies in Sudan and Iran,
and contributing to the international response to global challenges such as HIV/AIDS and food security.

“Our ability to develop innovative responses to new challenges has been assisted by the development of corporate mechanisms, such as the executive services group, to support involvement in coherent, whole-of-government responses to national interest issues, as well as mechanisms for improved measurement of aid effectiveness and quality,” he says. Within the donor community, he believes Australia is recognised as flexible and responsive, able to reorient programs quickly to deal with emerging issues.

This had been true also of Australian ability within the domestic political context to deal with new realities. In the last year, AusAID had adapted to the reorienting of government policy towards the Pacific and to the government initiative to call upon its full spectrum of government resources to deal with issues of critical national interest. He says a whole-of-government response will ensure that the Australian Government will deliver more coherent and effective outcomes to development partners and build indigenous capacity by creating longer-term institutional linkages between Australian and partner agencies.

“We are contributing to the formulation and implementation of Australian regional policy as well as coordinating with other Australian government departments in a whole-of-government approach to regional issues, he says. “Particular note should be made of our experiences in the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and the Enhanced Cooperation Program to Papua New Guinea.

“Enhanced Australian and regional engagement in Solomon Islands marked the beginning of a more hands-on approach to assisting Pacific island countries. It also marked the beginning of a significant policy shift in Australia to bring to bear significant government assets from a variety of agencies.

“RAMSI is a regional mission involving security with civil policing elements and aims to restore physical and economic stability and the basic functioning of government to Solomon Islands. The operation has already secured real gains in re-establishing basic law and order and stabilising government finances. Australia's approach draws on significant contributions from the AusAID, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Defence, Treasury, Department of Finance, and Attorney-General's Department.”

The development of a secure and prosperous Papua New Guinea also remained a high priority and Australia had renewed efforts through the Enhanced Cooperation Program to help Papua New Guinea overcome major constraints to stability and growth. Like in Solomon Islands, the Enhanced Cooperation Program was a truly whole-of-government initiative.

In 2003-04, activities aimed at reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development concentrated on five guiding themes with the aim of building effective partnerships and delivering

Australia's aid program with excellence:
promoting improved governance;
assisting developing countries maximise the benefits of globalisation;
supporting stability through the delivery of basic services;
strengthening regional security and
promoting sustainable approaches to managing natural resources.

The report details aid program activities; for example, improving drinking water quality; working with Indonesia on law enforcement agencies in South East Asia to address transnational crime; global development; Millennium Development Goals; and HIV/AIDS with reference to PNG.

RECOGNISING THE ROLE OF NGOS

The report states Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) are recognised for their strong links with both Australian and recipient country communities and that by working with effective NGOs, AusAID aims to achieve quality aid outcomes and to extend the reach of the aid program to the communities with which Australian NGOs work. In 2003-04, the aid program provided \$28.6 million to support Australian NGOs through the AusAID-NGO cooperation program (ANCP).

ANCP subsidises the activities of NGOs to alleviate poverty in developing countries in a direct and tangible manner. Under the program, AusAID supplements funds provided by the Australian community, increasing the effectiveness of NGO activities and enabling NGOs to respond to their own regional and sectoral priorities.

In addition to ANCP, the report says AusAID entered into cooperation agreements during the year with Australian NGOs for programs in Africa, Vietnam and Solomon Islands under its country programs. Cooperation agreements identify where the Australian Government, through AusAID, and NGOs can cooperate based on streamlined and accountable processes. AusAID and Australian NGOs are working together on longer-term cooperation agreements directly aligned with specific AusAID country program outcomes.

The report says AusAID continues to engage Australian NGOs on the advancement of development issues through regular executive-level consultations and through the Committee for Development Cooperation and the Australian Council for International Development. In 2003-04, AusAID and the Committee for Development Cooperation reviewed AusAID's NGO accreditation process by assessing the relevance, adequacy, efficiency and effectiveness of the current system. The review also considered options to incorporate assessments of development impact into accreditation.

REPORT: <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/anrep/rep04/s2d.html>

NEW UN INSTRUMENT ENABLING PEOPLE TO SPEAK OUT ON RIGHTS

The top United Nations human rights official has hailed the adoption of a new legal instrument which will enable people to submit complaints on violations of their economic, social and cultural rights to an international human rights body (18/6/08).

The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights will "provide an important platform to expose abuses that are often linked to poverty, discrimination and neglect, and that victims frequently endure in silence and helplessness," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour said.

"It will provide a way for individuals, who may otherwise be isolated and powerless, to make the international community aware of their situation," she said, calling the adoption of the text by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council "a highly significant achievement."

Ms Arbour noted that the lack of a complaint procedure for economic, social and cultural rights has been “a missing piece in the international human rights protection system,” since the Covenant – which has 158 states parties – opened for signature in 1966.

“As we are celebrating the 60-year anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Optional Protocol reaffirms our commitment to a unified and comprehensive vision of human rights, sending a strong, unequivocal message about the equal value and importance of all human rights,” she stated.

The Protocol is expected to get the final approval by the General Assembly later this year. It will enter into force once it has been ratified by 10 states.

The adoption of the Optional Protocol was among a series of actions taken by the Human Rights Council, which was scheduled to wrap up its eighth regular session. It also decided to extend the terms of office of seven of its Special Procedures mandate holders – rapporteurs, experts and working groups which the council can use to explore either specific country situations or thematic issues – and is expected to appoint several more.

ACTIVITIES OF SECRETARY-GENERAL IN SAUDI ARABIA

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, this week where he was greeted by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal at the airport. They discussed a number of issues in the wider region, including Somalia, Lebanon and the Middle East peace process.

Following that meeting, the Secretary-General met for over an hour with King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. They discussed what the Secretary-General later described as the linked problems of rising fuel prices, rising food prices and climate change, and what could be done.

“The issues of food prices, fuel prices and climate change should be addressed in a comprehensive manner,” the Secretary-General [told reporters](#) on Sunday as he described his meeting with the King, adding that he was grateful that the King was convening a high-level meeting of major oil producers and consumers on this issue in Saudi Arabia.

The Secretary-General and the King also discussed Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the king’s proposal for inter-faith dialogue among the world’s religions.

King Abdullah especially welcomed the progress made by the Somali parties last week in the Doha talks, under the auspices of Special Representative Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, and said that the parties could sign the agreement in Saudi Arabia at any time. The date of the signing will be fixed immediately, the Secretary-General said.

The Secretary-General followed that discussion on Saturday night by meeting with Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. They discussed further the Saudi King’s proposal for a dialogue among the world’s religious leaders and scholars, and also talked about cooperation between their respective organizations.

The Secretary-General started his meetings on Sunday by discussing Lebanon with the leader of that country’s Progressive Socialist Party, Walid Jumblatt. The Secretary-General conveyed his hope that the Lebanese parties would soon form a government, and they also discussed the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

He later met with the Saudi Interior Minister, Prince Nayef Bin Abdul Aziz, and they talked about the Counter-Terrorism Centre based in the country and the follow-up to the General Assembly’s adoption in 2006 of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Mr Ban’s last meeting before departing Jeddah was with Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud to discuss oil prices, Iraq, Lebanon, the Middle East peace process and Somalia.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2008/sgt2611.doc.htm>

STAFF MEMBER RELEASED AFTER ABDUCTION

A staff member serving with the United Nations-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was abducted by armed Arab militiamen, assaulted and stripped of his belongings before being eventually released (18/6/08).

The mission said in a press statement that the man was attacked just before noon and three of his colleagues were also held at gunpoint, close to both the UNAMID military base and the airport in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur state.

The staff member is now in a stable condition after being repeatedly beaten with rifles during the attack, which only ended when a member of the Sudan National Security intervened and the militiamen released the peacekeeper.

The militia had been moving in a convoy of about 1,000 men on camels, horses and in four-wheel-drive vehicles, on its way to the local headquarters of the Sudanese armed forces.

“UNAMID avoided opening fire in response to avoid further aggravating the situation and in consideration of the lives of the civilian population in that area,” according to the mission’s statement.

“UNAMID condemns, in the strongest terms, the attack on its peacekeepers. The mission is deployed to help the people of Darfur achieve peace and stability. In their attempt to resolve the conflict in Darfur, peacekeepers should not, in any way, be made party to the conflict.”

The mission and UN security officials said they are continuing to monitor the situation across Darfur, where [UNAMID](#) has been in place since the start of the year to try to end a brutal conflict that has pitted rebels against government forces and allied Arab militiamen, known as the Janjaweed, since 2003.

The new head of the Department of Field Support, Under-Secretary-General Susanna Malcorra, has begun her visit to Darfur, an impoverished region on Sudan’s western flank.

The Secretary-General’s Special Representative Victor Da Silva Angelo, who has just completed a field visit to the affected area, expressed his gratitude to the Irish and Dutch contingent of the European Union force (EUFOR) for the protection they provided to UN and aid workers in recent days.

Mr Angelo, who is also head of the UN mission in the Central African Republic and Chad ([MINURCAT](#)), said in a statement that the EUFOR contingents also responded with professionalism in Abeché and throughout the country.

“The SRSG considers the EUFOR mandate to be critical for enhancing security in eastern Chad and welcomes the reinforcement of the cooperation between EUFOR, MINURCAT and the Government of Chad as an essential element for a sustainable solution to the existing challenges,” he said. UN aid workers have been instructed to redeploy so they can provide assistance to both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Darfurian refugees living in camps around the town of Goz Beida.

JAPAN VISIT REASSERTS COOPERATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda of Japan and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd met in Tokyo on June 12 to reaffirm the particular importance of the relationship between Japan and Australia, and confirmed their commitment to strengthen further the comprehensive strategic, security and economic partnership between Japan and Australia.

They underlined the need to reach a positive outcome at the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit in July to accelerate negotiations in the framework of the United Nations and confirmed their commitment to working with others in the Major Economies process on a shared vision for a long term global emissions reduction goal and other important elements.

Australia highly appreciated the contribution of Japan's Cool Earth Promotion Program as an important input to address the challenge of global climate change, Mr Rudd said. They both acknowledged the close bilateral engagement occurring between the two countries through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), particularly in the 'Umbrella Group', the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP), APEC and the East Asia Summit.

Among other topics discussed were security cooperation, economic relations, commitment to Pacific islands, world food security, the East Asia Summit (EAS) and APEC.

TRANSCRIPT: http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Release/2008/media_release_0309.cfm.

FRIENDSHIP WITH INDONESIA AND DEMOCRACY ENDORSED

Indonesia and Australia had a very strong friendship, not just between each nation but also the new phase of cooperation now between Indonesia and Australia in the counsels of the world, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said at Djakarta in a joint press conference with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Among proposals discussed were the expansion of security cooperation within the framework of the Lombok Treaty and a joint proposal to the next meeting of APEC on cooperation on counter disaster organisation and management in the Asia-Pacific region.

"Indonesia has experienced a tsunami," Mr Rudd said. "The people of Burma (experienced) the terrible impact of the cyclone. The people of western China (suffered) the earthquake, most recently. We don't know where a natural disaster will hit next. But, between us, we believe we can take a good and strong proposal, consistent with the mandate we've received from APEC to do so, when APEC next meets in Lima at the end of the year."

It was also agreed that officials would work to bring about a successful conclusion to the current free trade negotiations between Australia and New Zealand and ASEAN and he thanked Indonesia for its active participation.

Bilateral and regional cooperation, and global cooperation, on climate change were discussed and the Australia-Indonesia Carbon Forest Partnership signed. It was hoped to build on "the proposals we put together when we attend the G8 outreach meeting on climate change in Hokkaido, Japan in only a few weeks time," he said.

Finally, "we also discussed the great challenge that we face with democracy and the future of interfaith dialogue. I thank very much the President for his kind invitation to co-chair the Bali Conference on Democracy. It is an honour for him to have extended that invitation to me. And I accept it gladly. Beyond that, we discussed at some length where we take our existing interfaith dialogue between our two countries, and expand that more broadly across the world.

UN CELEBRATES WRITINGS AND INFLUENCE OF PERSIAN POET

18 June 2008 – The writings of Abu Abdullah Jafar ibn Mohammad Rudaki, the poet considered to have laid the foundations of Persian classical literature, should serve as an inspiration to international efforts to combat extremism and attempts to divide peoples and cultures, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today.

[Speaking](#) at United Nations Headquarters in New York at a commemoration ceremony on the 1150th anniversary of the birth of Rudaki, Mr. Ban said it was fitting that the world body, given its goals, should celebrate the life of a poet "who so beautifully extolled the virtues of good and justice.

"With simplicity and elegance, Rudaki pioneered a great tradition, laying the foundation for Persian classical literature," the Secretary-General said. "He took poetry from the realm of the abstract into contemporary life. And, in the process, he shed new philosophical light on society. Rudaki is truly the 'Sultan of Poets'."

Mr. Ban said Rudaki's influence is particularly important today, given the work of the UN-backed Alliance of Civilizations, "our initiative to counter extremism and heal the divisions that threaten our world."

Today's commemoration, which was attended by many scholars and artists, was organized by the permanent representatives of Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

B. CLIMATE CHANGE

CLIMATE CHANGE FUELLING CONFLICT AND INCREASED REFUGEES: UN

UNHCR High Commissioner Antonio Guterres says increased competition for water resources is leading to more conflict in Darfur, the ABC/AFP reported (18/6/08).

The fountains in Trafalgar Square are surrounded by plastic tents, aid agency four-wheel drives and a frighteningly real looking ruin of a house, complete with smouldering remains and torn clothing.

The mock refugee camp in the centre of London is the UN Refugee agency's publicity push and has captured the attention of passing school children.

The UNHCR says climate change is expected to drive increasing numbers of people from their homes as more conflicts are fuelled by water scarcity and a lack of food.

They also say the number of displaced people in the world is at an unprecedented level; last year the total number jumped to just over 37 million, an increase of more than three million.

The former Portuguese prime minister, Antonio Guterres, is now the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees. He says climate change is an ever-growing problem, fuelling conflict and thus indirectly fuelling the growth in refugee numbers, as in the case of Darfur.

"In Darfur, in the past years rainfall has always been decreasing, population has been growing," he said. "There is an increased competition for water resources. We need a political solution for Darfur, but that solution will not be stable, if at the same time we don't solve the underlying problems of dwindling water resources."

"What climate change is doing is in many circumstances reducing resources, increasing the competition for resources and because of that, triggering or amplifying conflicts."

Mr Guterres says he has no doubt climate change will contribute more to conflict and thus to the number of refugees.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/18/2278553.htm>

INDONESIA AND AUSTRALIA PARTNER TO FOLLOW BALI PLAN PATH

"As close neighbours and partners in this global effort, we - the President of the Republic of Indonesia and the Prime Minister of Australia - reaffirm our resolve to respond to the serious challenge that climate change poses to our countries and to all countries of the world," Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said at a joint press Djakarta conference (13/6/08).

"We welcome with enthusiasm the significant progress made at the Bali Climate Change Conference, including the call for a shared vision for long-term cooperative actions, including a long-term global goal for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. We believe the leaders of all countries —developing and developed—must support and build on the achievements in Bali to ensure that an agreement is reached through the United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change (UNFCCC) on an effective future international response to climate change at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009.

“An important element for an effective international response is acceptance of a collective goal that will provide a framework for our future efforts. To add momentum to the progress made during the Bali Climate Change Conference, we urge all leaders to agree on a long-term global goal for emissions reductions as stipulated in the Bali Action Plan,” he said.

“Today we have agreed to develop a Roadmap for Access to International Carbon Markets, which will model how a developed country like Australia and a developing country partner like Indonesia can work together towards participation in international forest carbon markets. We have asked our relevant ministers to work together to develop the Roadmap in time for the Australia-Indonesia Ministerial Forum, which will be held later this year in Canberra.

“This will be supported by a new Indonesia - Australia Forest Carbon Partnership. The partnership will assist Indonesia in reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, building on the collaboration that Indonesia and Australia have already developed in this area. It will also support negotiations to give effect to the Roadmap, by including incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in a future international climate change agreement under the UNFCCC.

“Indonesia and Australia will continue practical cooperation in other areas to address climate change and its impacts, including in the exploration of opportunities to reduce emissions through better urban waste management and through support for the modelling of climate change impacts to assist in adaptation planning,” he said. [REPORT: http://www.pm.gov.au/media/](http://www.pm.gov.au/media/)

TROPICAL FOREST SUSTAINABILITY: A CLIMATE CHANGE BOON

The authors – Dr Pep Canadell from CSIRO and the Global Carbon Project, and Dr Michael Raupach from CSIRO – say the billions of tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) absorbed annually by the world’s forests represents an ‘economic subsidy’ for climate change mitigation worth hundreds of billions of dollars (13/6/08).

However, concerns about the permanence of forest carbon stocks, challenges in quantifying changes in the size of those stocks, and concerns about the environmental and socio-economic impacts of reforestation programs, have limited the adoption of policies designed to foster forestry activities.

“With political will and the involvement of tropical regions, forests can contribute to both climate change protection through carbon sequestration and also enhanced economic, environmental and socio-cultural benefits,” Dr Canadell says.

“Forestry activities have the economic potential to offset 2-4 per cent of projected CO₂ emissions by 2030, with tropical regions accounting for nearly two thirds of the total offset. A key opportunity is the reduction of carbon emissions from deforestation and degradation in tropical regions,” he says.

An estimated 13 million hectares of the world’s forested areas – almost exclusively in the tropical regions – are deforested annually. Dr Raupach says, however, reducing rates of deforestation by 50 per cent by 2050, and stopping further deforestation when countries reach 50 per cent of their current forested area, would avoid emissions equivalent to six years of current fossil fuel emissions by the end of this century.

[DETAILS: http://www.csiro.au/news/TropicalForestsAndClimateChange.html](http://www.csiro.au/news/TropicalForestsAndClimateChange.html)

GREENPEACE ENERGY REPORT ‘A MUST READ’ FOR POLITICIANS

Greenpeace's Energy [R]evolution report was launched at Parliament House, Canberra, calling on both the government and opposition to get behind the report's positive yet conservative

analysis of the potential for fast and deep emissions cuts (16/6/08).

Australian Greens climate change spokesperson, Senator Christine Milne said "Greenpeace's energy scenario is the latest in a line of credible analyses to show the enormous potential of energy efficiency, renewable energy and a shift to cleaner transport to see Australia leap frog coal and cut our emissions by almost half as soon as 2020, putting us on track to complete decarbonisation.

"This conservative analysis, by Greenpeace and very highly regarded energy expert, Dr Hugh Saddler, shows how Australia could meet a 40 per cent renewable energy target by 2020, twice as high as the target set by the Rudd Government. We believe that solar thermal technologies could raise renewables significantly above even that level, and I have introduced a Private Member's Bill for a comprehensive national feed-in tariff which would see this massive uptake of zero emissions energy become a reality." [DETAILS](#): Tim Hollo on 0437 587 562.

C. HUMAN RIGHTS

UN: MYANMAR 'ONGOING SYSTEMATIC VIOLATIONS'

The UN Human Rights Council has condemned "ongoing systematic violations of human rights" in Myanmar and called on the government to stop making politically motivated arrests and to release all political prisoners immediately (18/6/08).

In a resolution adopted without a vote, the council also called on the government of Myanmar to fully implement commitments it made to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that it would grant relief workers "immediate, full and unhindered access" to people in need in the wake of last month's catastrophic Cyclone Nargis.

It called on the government to refrain from sending victims of the disaster back to areas where they would not have access to emergency relief, and to ensure that any returns are voluntary, safe and carried out with dignity.

The resolution, introduced before the Geneva-based council by the European Union, also condemned the recruitment of child soldiers by both government forces and non-state armed groups and urged "an absolute an immediate stop of this appalling activity."

In addition, it called for an independent investigation into reports of human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, acts of torture and forced labour, and called for those responsible for such crimes to be brought to justice.

The resolution also called on the government "to engage in a real process of dialogue and national reconciliation with the full and genuine participation of representatives of all political parties and ethnic groups who have been excluded from the political process."

Introducing the resolution on behalf of the EU, Slovenian representative Andrej Logar said previous resolutions had not been implemented by Myanmar and many political prisoners remained in detention.

The recent constitutional referendum was conducted in complete disregard of basic standards on such issues as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, he said.

Myanmar's representative U Wunna Maung Lwin described the resolution as politically motivated and lopsided and said powerful states were trying to influence matters through political interference.

The representative said Myanmar was working with the international community in the response effort to Cyclone Nargis, which struck the country on 2-3 May, and was also making efforts on the political front, such as with the recent holding of the constitutional referendum.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon briefed the General Assembly on his recent trip to Myanmar. He stressed that the humanitarian tragedy wrought by the cyclone should not be politicised, and he planned to remain focused on the issue, drawing on the efforts of his Special Adviser, Ibrahim Gambari.

CHINESE MAN SUICIDES AFTER FORCED RETURN

The suicide of a man who was forcibly returned to China by Australian immigration authorities has prompted calls by refugee advocates for better treatment of people seeking protection visas, the ABC reported (16/6/08).

The man, known as Mr Zhang, was beaten and tortured when he was deported to China a year ago. He spent almost a decade arguing his case for asylum, repeatedly telling Australian authorities he was at risk because of his involvement with pro-democracy groups in China. Immigration Minister Chris Evans said this week he was seeking more information about his fate. [REPORT: http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/16/2275279.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/16/2275279.htm)

RUDD 'DUMPS TIBET' GREENS CLAIM

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had dumped Tibet and will be at the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics with leaders who have Tibet clamped under military control, Australian Greens Leader Bob Brown said (19/6/08).

"It was so predictable," Senator Brown said. "The lead up to the Olympic Games is the best opportunity for world leaders to apply diplomatic pressure on Beijing to enter into meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama, but Mr Rudd, like Mr Howard before him, has dumped the Tibetans in favour of good times gatherings with the Beijing communist bosses," he said.

[DETAILS: Ebony Bennett 0409 164 603](#)

PROGRESS ON ASYLUM 'BUT MORE TO BE DONE'

As the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) prepares to begin annual inspections of immigration detention centres, Human Rights Commissioner Graeme Innes took time today, during International Refugee Week, to reflect on some of changes which have taken place in Australia's refugee system.

The so-called 'Pacific Solution' ended in February with the closure of the detention centre in Nauru and Temporary Protection Visas had been discontinued. Last week, the government announced that the Federal Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Migration would conduct a wide-ranging inquiry into immigration in Australia with a view to integrating "a humanitarian approach that treats all people with dignity" into Australian policy on overseas arrivals.

"We have repeatedly highlighted the fact that mandatory and indefinite detention has a debilitating effect on the mental health of detainees," he said. "HREOC has long advocated for the implementation of alternatives to immigration detention, including the issue of bridging visas and residence determinations that would allow people to live in the community, as well as the removal of restrictive bridging visa conditions issued to some asylum seekers which have led to poverty and homelessness."

Every year HREOC undertakes inspections of immigration detention centres to monitor the conditions for compliance with internationally-recognised human rights obligations. It is beginning to conduct inspections around Australia, as well as at Christmas Island later.

[DETAILS: Brinsley Marlay on 02 9284 9656 or 0430 366 529.](#)

UNHCR REPORTS 25.1M REFUGEES - HIGHEST NUMBER YET

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provided assistance to 25.1 million people in 2007 – an all-time high – according to its latest annual global snapshot, released (17/6/08).

“After a five-year decline in the number of refugees between 2001 and 2005, we have now seen two years of increases, and that’s a concern,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) António Guterres [said](#) in London. Using figures collected from 150 countries, the report says there were a total of 11.4 million refugees outside their countries, as well as 26 million others displaced internally by conflict or persecution at the end of 2007.

“We are now faced with a complex mix of global challenges that could threaten even more forced displacement in the future,” Mr Guterres said. “They range from multiple new conflict-related emergencies in world hotspots to bad governance, climate-induced environmental degradation that increases competition for scarce resources, and extreme price hikes that have hit the poor the hardest and are generating instability in many places.”

MANY AFGHANS AND IRAQIS SEEK ASYLUM

Afghanistan and Iraq were the leading countries of refugee origin, the ABC reported (18/6/08). In recent years, resettlement in Afghanistan had seen numbers drop, but in 2007 the total cared for by the UNHCR jumped by 3 million people, and the UN says the number is likely to rise. There are 3.1 million Afghan refugees, mostly now in Pakistan and Iran and 2.3 million Iraqis, with many of them now in Syria and Jordan. In addition there are also 2.4 million people still in Iraq who have been forced to leave their homes.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/18/2277891.htm>

AUSTRALIA'S CITIZENSHIP TEST 'DISCRIMINATORY, FLAWED'

The head of a review into Australia's citizenship test says the standard of English required is too high and the structure of the test is flawed, the ABC reported (15/6/08).

The former head of the Foreign Affairs Department, Richard Woolcott, also said he did not see the need for potential citizens to know the details of Australia's distant past or former sports people. Speaking on ABC Radio's [Sunday Profile](#) program, Mr Woolcott foreshadowed major changes to the test.

"Citizens need to have what is called basic English and there's no doubt that the booklet on which the test is based is way way above basic English," he said.

POLICE 'WITHHELD FACTS' ON MOHAMED HANEEF

It was alleged that the Australian Federal Police withheld key pieces of evidence that would have helped exonerate Mohamed Haneef and instead presented courts and prosecutors with information that was selective and riddled with factual inaccuracies, The Australian reported (19/6/08).

In a paper summarising the Haneef legal team's submission to the Clarke Inquiry into the arrest and detention of the Indian-born doctor, his barrister, Stephen Keim SC, was reported to have said he and colleagues were "startled" by the number of factual inaccuracies they encountered when compiling the submission.

"Every major attempt by government agencies to place known facts on the record appeared fraught with error," Mr Keim claimed.

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23887711-601,00.html>

EX-PM'S DEPARTMENT 'INVOLVED IN HANEEF CASE' CLAIM

Former prime minister John Howard's department became involved in the handling of the Mohamed Haneef affair just days after the Indian-born doctor was arrested over a UK terror plot, a tribunal has heard, Macquarie News reported (17/6/08).

At a hearing before the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) in Brisbane, it was claimed representatives of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet met with immigration and foreign affairs officials on July 4, 2007, two days after Dr Haneef's arrest.

Within hours of the magistrate's decision to grant Dr Haneef bail, the then immigration minister Kevin Andrews cancelled the Gold Coast-based doctor's work visa, preventing his release. The case later collapsed and Dr Haneef was permitted to return to his family in Bangalore.

REPORT: http://livenews.com.au/Articles/2008/06/17/Howards_dept_involved_in_Haneef_case

SUPPORT FOR UN CONVENTION ON RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Federal Parliament's Treaties Committee has recommended that Australia ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

"The committee has taken the slightly unusual step of tabling its recommendation prior to the final report on this inquiry to allow ratification of this convention to proceed as quickly as possible," Committee chairman Kelvin Thomson said.

The Attorney General and the Human Rights Commissioner had told the committee the advantages that early ratification of this treaty will provide for Australia, he said. Through timely ratification, Australia will have the opportunity to participate in selection of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which will monitor and promote implementation of the convention.'

"As an active party in convention negotiations, the committee considered it was important that Australia continue to take a leading role in promoting the rights of people with disabilities. One way to do this is to ensure we can participate in the nomination process for the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' Mr Thomson said.

The convention will promote, protect and ensure the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people with disabilities. Parties to the convention will be obliged to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability and to enhance the inclusion and participation of people with a disability in society. He said the convention reflects and affirms the protections already existing under Australia's domestic laws with widespread support.

REPORT 92 and convention background: www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct.htm or Committee Secretariat on 02 6277 4002.

BACKGROUND: Committee Secretary on 02 6277 4642.

A PLACE OF SAFETY

Above all, protection is about ensuring those people who flee their homes because of persecution and conflict are given a place of safety, that their rights are respected and they receive shelter and life-saving assistance was marked by World Refugee Day (June 20), said Richard Towle, Regional Representative, UNHCR Regional Office for Australia, NZ, PNG and the Pacific.

"But we cannot protect refugees if their plight remains invisible, and the responsibility for protection is global. We can all play a part - the UN, governments, civil society, and individuals. This week, UNHCR is calling on everyone to show their support for refugees," he said.

With the generous pro bono support of Sydney-based advertising agency Morris and Partners, UNHCR has developed a public service announcement - Put your hands up for refugees.

The campaign is on line at <http://www.unhcr.org.au/WorldRefugeeDay2008.shtml>

"Whether it's by welcoming refugees to your community, supporting policies that ensure refugees can find safe haven, or helping agencies like UNHCR, everyone can show their support," he said.

DETAILS: UNHCR Regional Office for Australia, NZ, PNG and the Pacific, 3 Lyons Place, Lyons, Canberra, 2606; www.unhcr.org.au.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Events in every state and territory would celebrate the remarkable journeys of the people who come as refugees under Australia's Humanitarian Program,' Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, said (15/6/08), marking Refugee Week.

"Every new Australian citizen has a special story, but I think all Australians would agree that the people who arrive here as refugees add particularly vibrant threads to the material that is building our nation."

Many humanitarian entrants would become Australian citizens at Refugee Week ceremonies throughout Australia, he said. Australia consistently ranked among the world's top three resettlement countries – along with the US and Canada – in providing comprehensive resettlement programs for refugees and others in humanitarian need, he said.

DETAILS: <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2008/ce08054.htm>.

SYSTEMIC LEGAL PROBLEMS ON CAPE YORK MUST BE FIXED

Queensland Chief Justice Paul de Jersey and the Court of Appeal repaired what all right-thinking people recognised as an appalling miscarriage of justice, The Australian reported (14/6/08).

"In imposing custodial sentences on five of the nine males who raped a 10-year-old girl at the Cape York community of Aurukun in 2006, the court sent a clear message that rape - anywhere, at any time and in any culture - is an abominable crime that warrants severe punishment. Three men, aged 25, 18 and 17 at the time of the rape, received six-year sentences. They will be eligible for parole in June 2010. One boy, aged 14 at the time of the offence, was detained for three years and another, aged 13 at the time, was detained for two years. All six juveniles involved had convictions recorded."

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23859846-16382,00.html>

PUSHING FOR COMPENSATION

The Australian Greens have backed a reparations tribunal for the Stolen Generations, highlighting the need for compensation and promised to continue to pursue legislation to put such a scheme in place (16/6/08).

"The Greens strongly believe all the recommendations of the Bringing Them Home report should be implemented including the provision of compensation in recognising the harm suffered by those Indigenous people taken from their families," said the Greens spokesperson on Indigenous Affairs, Senator Rachel Siewert.

"I have specific concerns about the \$20,000 cap on compensation in the Democrats' Stolen Generation Compensation Bill. It is not appropriate for such a low cap to be placed through legislation on the compensation to be received," she said. The Greens preferred a broader, more responsive reparations scheme, with the level of reparations determined by a tribunal.

DETAILS: Chris Twomey on 0407 725 025.

COUNTRIES IN SYDNEY DISCUSS CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

Law enforcement representatives from 47 countries in Sydney this week discussed strategy to combat crimes against children at an Interpol meeting hosted by the Australian Federal Police (AFP). AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty said the 26th Annual Interpol Specialist Meeting on Crimes Against Children was timely as it followed the resolution last week of Operation Centurion which led to more than 100 Australians being charged with accessing child pornography images online (12/6/08). DETAILS:

http://www.afp.gov.au/media_releases/national/2008/protecting_the_worlds_children_on_agenda_at_afp_conference_in_sydney.html.

FIVE-YEAR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP WITH INDONESIA

A strengthened five-year development partnership with Indonesia to tackle poverty and promote regional peace, stability and prosperity has been agreed. Australia will provide up to an expected \$2.5 billion in development assistance to Indonesia between 2009 and 2013.

DETAILS: http://www.pm.gov.au/media/release/2008/media_release_0313.cfm

DR EBADI CRITICISES SWISS FOREIGN MINISTER OVER IRAN VISIT

Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi has criticised Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey over her recent controversial trip to Iran, swissinfo reported. The lawyer and human rights campaigner was in Geneva taking part in a panel discussion on human rights abuses in Iran (16/6/08).

Shirin Ebadi, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her work on human rights and democracy, said she disagreed with Calmy-Rey's conduct during her visit. Dr Ebadi has spoken out on human rights issues in Iran and has defended clients in a number of high profile rights cases.

During a one-day trip to Tehran in March, Calmy-Rey held talks on Iran's nuclear policy and on human rights, and attended the signing of an agreement on gas supply between Tehran and a private Swiss energy company, EGL. The gas deal brought furious responses from several quarters – most notably Israel, Jewish organisations and the United States.

The Swiss foreign minister rejected criticism of her visit; she said was a model of diplomacy and business working hand in hand. She denied allegations that she was used by the Iranian authorities in an attempt to bypass international sanctions.

REPORT: <http://www.swissinfo.org/eng/front.html?siteSect=109&ty=st&sid=9194023&front=br>

ANTI-POVERTY WEEK OCTOBER 12-18 2008

Anti-Poverty Week this year starts on October 12 until October 18. The UN International Anti-Poverty Day is to be celebrated on October 17.

The 2008 week will focus on poverty around the world, especially in the poorest countries but also in wealthier countries, such as Australia. Its main aims are to strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship around the world and within Australia; and to encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems, including action by individuals, communities, organisations and governments.

Interest has been growing steadily in Australia in recent years and activities such as public lectures, workshops, conferences, debates, concerts, displays, sports days, media briefings and other events have been organised, reports Rachel Kelly of Anti-Poverty Week 2008.

Last year, more than 300 organisations were involved in activities, with a total participation of more than 10,000 people around the country and more than 400 media references. Everyone who wants to reduce poverty and hardship is being encouraged to organise activities during the week or join those already being organised. Official opening activities will be organised for Sunday October 12 and October 13.

It is hoped local anti-poverty forums can be organised on Wednesday October 15. She says it would be helpful if all organisers could provide details of plans for posting on the special website: www.antipovertyweek.org.au The website includes basic fact sheets, promotional material and links to sources of information and ideas about ways of reducing poverty and hardship.

DETAILS: on 1-300-797-290; apw@antipovertyweek.org.au and 02 9385 2850.

D. PEACE & SECURITY

AFRICA

ZIMBABWEAN VIOLENCE THREATENS CREDIBILITY OF NEW POLLS – BAN

The current violence, intimidation and arrest of opposition leaders in Zimbabwe are not conducive to credible elections, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, calling for an immediate halt to hostilities ahead of the presidential run-off round set for next week (18/6/08).

“Should these conditions continue to prevail, the legitimacy of the election outcomes would be in question,” Mr Ban said in an informal briefing to the General Assembly. He expressed his “profound alarm” at the situation in the Southern African nation, which has witnessed deadly political violence since the first round of the presidential election on March 29.

Compounding the political crisis is “an already deep social, economic and humanitarian crisis,” in a country where as many as four million people were in need of help, he said.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27072&Cr=zimbabwe&Cr1=>

Diplomatic efforts are under way to try to find an agreement between Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and the opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai as political violence mounts. South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki returned this week to Zimbabwe to try to revive talks between the two men, the BBC reported.

It is believed efforts are under way to convince the leaders to form a government of national unity. But the Opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) says it expects little to come of the visit.

The MDC says its supporters continue to be targeted by pro-Mugabe militia, while Mr Tsvangirai is being forced to run his election campaign underground. Pan-African Parliamentary observers in Zimbabwe say it is doubtful that next week's poll will be free or fair.

A senior UN political envoy has held talks with Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe at the start of his visit to the Southern African country, aimed at reducing political tensions ahead of the run-off round of the presidential election later this month, the UN News reported (17/6/08).

Haile Menkerios, Assistant-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, arrived in Harare for a five-day visit to Zimbabwe, which has been beset by deadly political violence since the first round of the presidential election on March 29.

Mr Menkerios discussed the current political climate with Mr Mugabe, according to a UN spokesperson. He also held talks with Foreign Minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi and he is expected to meet with leaders of other political parties and stakeholders during the remainder of his visit.

In the run-off race, scheduled for June 27, Mr Mugabe will face Morgan Tsvangirai, a candidate from the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), after the two men polled the highest number of votes in the first round.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour expressed shock late last month at reports that many MDC activists have been killed or injured in recent weeks and that human rights defenders and staff with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have also been harassed.

KENYA PM CALLS FOR MUGABE STEPS DOWN

Kenya's Prime Minister Raila Odinga has called on world leaders to pressure Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe to step down (18/6/08). In a speech and news conference in

Washington DC, Mr Odinga said that it makes no sense for Zimbabwe to hold a runoff, because citizens cannot have confidence that the election's first round was fair.

Mr Odinga sharply criticised President Mugabe and called the runoff a "complete sham."

"The question is: do we have conditions for free and fair elections right now?" he said. "The answer is no." Mr Odinga is meeting in Washington with US officials and representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/kenya-pm-calls-for-mugabe-steps-down/2008/06/18/1213468454554.html>

FORTY AFRICAN LEADERS CALL FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTION

Forty African leaders, including Kofi Annan and Desmond Tutu, have said in an open letter that it is "crucial" the presidential run-off election in Zimbabwe is seen as "free and fair".

The call came as the country's President, Robert Mugabe, warned that veterans of Zimbabwe's 1970s liberation war were prepared to take up arms again rather than see the opposition win the polls scheduled for June 27, state media reported.

The letter, signed by former heads of state, business leaders, academics and diplomats, reads: "It is crucial for the interests of both Zimbabwe and Africa that the upcoming elections are free and fair. Zimbabweans fought for liberation in order to be able to determine their own future."

The signatories included Mr Annan, former UN secretary-general, and his predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, Archbishops Tutu and John Sentamu and 17 former African heads of state or government, as well as several artists such as the singer Angelique Kidjo.

They called for an end to the violence and intimidation that has marked the run-up to the new poll and insisted that an "adequate number of independent election observers" be provided "both during the election process and to verify the results".

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/06/13/1213321620152.html>

ASIA

DR ATUL KHARE, UN SRSG TO EAST TIMOR, IN TALKS

The UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) to East Timor, Dr Atul Khare, who heads the UN Integrated Mission in East Timor assisting the Government of East Timor with stability, national reconciliation, and democratic governance, met with Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon this week (16/6/08).

SRSG also works to strengthen key institutions; facilitate relief and recovery; and aid justice and reconciliation in East Timor. Under discussion were the security situation in East Timor and the work of the Australian-led International Stabilisation Force (ISF) as well as the importance of the UN Police mission in East Timor and its future composition.

"I am pleased that Dr Khare and I share the view that any future drawdown of the UN Police mission in East Timor needs to be based on the achievement of performance benchmarks by the East Timorese Police," the Defence Minister said.

Through leadership of the ISF, Australia remained committed to the stability and prosperity of East Timor. This stability could only be guaranteed in the long term by East Timorese security forces that were adequately trained, equipped and prepared for the task. Australia and the ISF welcomed the partnership of the United Nations in achieving the task.

DETAILS: <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/fitzgibbontpl.cfm?CurrentId=7851>

KARZAI THREATENS PAKISTAN OVER BORDER

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has threatened to send troops over the border into Pakistan to confront militants based there, the BBC reported (15/6/08).

He said that when militants crossed over from Pakistan to kill Afghans and coalition troops, his nation had the right to retaliate in "self-defence".

Mr Karzai's remarks came two days after Taliban fighters attacked an Afghan jail, freeing hundreds of prisoners. Pakistan warned it would not tolerate outside interference in its affairs.

MIDDLE EAST

TRUCE AGREED BY ISRAEL AND HAMAS: PALESTINIANS

Israel and militant group Hamas have agreed to end months of bitter clashes with a six-month truce starting on Thursday, Palestinian officials say, the BBC reported (17/6/08). A Hamas official said he was confident all militant groups in Gaza would abide by the agreement, brokered by Egypt.

Earlier at least six Palestinians were reportedly killed in Israeli air strikes in southern Gaza. Israel said it had targeted "terror operatives". Hamas took over Gaza in June 2007, driving out forces loyal to Fatah, the political faction led by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. Since then, Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the international community have tried to isolate Hamas.

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7459200.stm

BAN WELCOMES TRUCE

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the announced cessation of violence relating to Israel and the Gaza Strip (18/6/08).

"The Secretary-General hopes that these efforts will both provide security and an easing of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and end rocket and mortar attacks against Israeli targets," his spokesperson said in a [statement](#).

He also hoped this cessation of violence would lead to a controlled and sustained opening of the Gaza crossings for humanitarian and commercial purposes. He congratulated Egypt on its "persistent efforts to achieve calm through this agreement."

AT LEAST 51 DEAD IN BAGHDAD BOMBING

A car bomb set to explode during the busiest time of day killed at least 51 people and wounded 75 Tuesday evening as shoppers were strolling through a Shiite neighborhood market in Baghdad, the New York Times reported (17/6/08). It was the deadliest attack in the Iraqi capital in more than three months. REPORT: <http://www.nytimes.com/?emc=na>

EU AGREES ON STRONGER IRAN SANCTIONS

European Union nations have agreed on the need for new sanctions to discourage Iran from developing nuclear weapons, targeting the country's oil and gas sectors in what would be the strongest punishment yet, The Australian (17/6/08) reported.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced earlier at a London news conference with US President George W Bush that Britain will freeze the assets of Iran's largest bank, Bank Melli, and that the EU would target Iran's oil and gas sectors.

"Action will start today in a new phase of sanctions on oil and gas," Mr Brown said. "We will take any necessary action so that Iran is aware of the choice it needs to make."

EMBASSY WARNS BRITONS IN UAE OF TERROR THREAT

Britain has warned its nationals living in or visiting the United Arab Emirates that terrorists may be planning indiscriminate attacks at any time, the London Guardian reported (17/6/08).

A statement posted on the website of the British embassy in Abu Dhabi, the UAE capital, said the country now faces "a high threat of terrorism". The UAE is a conservative Muslim country but has become a major regional hub attracting millions of tourists each year, mainly to the bustling city-state of Dubai - which is known for its liberal lifestyle. It also hosts regular visits by US navy ships, and is likely to be the first Arab country to send an ambassador to Iraq.

REPORT: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jun/17/terrorism>

E. HEALTH & MEANS

AVIAN INFLUENZA THREAT, GLOBAL PREPAREDNESS

The massive global effort to control highly pathogenic avian influenza had not only led to improved responses to outbreaks in poultry, it had motivated governments to outline or improve contingency plans to mitigate the direct medical and economic effects of possible flu epidemics among humans, or other threats, the UN System Influenza Coordinator said (17/6/08).

Dr David Nabarro said that while "intensive government response" had led to improvements in many countries, in 2008 there had, nevertheless, been outbreaks among poultry, especially in places where the H5N1 bird flu virus had become entrenched, including Indonesia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Egypt and, to some extent, Nigeria, although the situation in that country had eased.

He said the UN was "very concerned" about the situation in Bangladesh and in Indonesia, where the concentration seemed to be in poultry populations in western Java and there had been reports of human infections.

"But, if we look at the rest of the world, I can continue to report that the situation is really improving," he said, especially since countries had begun to invest massively in improving the functioning of veterinary services and "bio-security" in the rearing of poultry

Praising the UK Government and the Republic of Korea for recently mounting quick and successful responses to bird flu outbreaks in those countries, as well as financial sector exercises in Australia and the US to prepare for the economic impacts of potential avian influenza crises, he said that all those were clear examples of one of the most important ongoing realisations: diseases from animals had the capacity to affect human lives and livelihoods.

REPORT: http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs//2008/080617_Nabarro.doc.htm

WORLD'S TOP VACCINE SCIENTISTS TO DISCUSS LATEST RESEARCH

Vaccines are critical tools in the fight to prevent high-burden infectious diseases in all age groups living in both industrialised and developing countries. Vaccine and public health experts will gather in Paris to review the promise of and challenges related to the latest vaccine research, what new products are expected and to discuss the way forward. The eighth World Health Organisation Global Vaccine Research Forum in Paris takes place from June 29 to July 2.

DETAILS: http://www.who.int/vaccine_research/about/gvrf/en/index.html.

FOOD

UN INTERNET GAME 'FEEDS' MYANMAR SURVIVORS

Survivors of the cyclone which ravaged Myanmar last month will soon be receiving rice generated by the popular United Nations-backed Internet game that allows players to expand their word skills while helping to feed the world's hungry (17/6/08).

FreeRice.com, in which players donate 20 grains of rice to the UN World Food Program (WFP) every time they answer a question correctly, has already generated over 36 billion grains of rice – enough for more than 3.7 million meals.

Two consignments of rice for Myanmar have been paid for by YUM! and Unilever, the latest companies to help fund the FreeRice initiative.

WFP will be distributing the rice to many of the 755,000 people it is aiming to feed as part of relief efforts across Myanmar in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, which struck the South-East Asian nation on May 2-3.

In a related development, the UN World Health Organisation ([WHO](#)) said that Myanmar's health system was "back on its feet" following last month's tragedy thanks to an all-out response by the government, the UN and the international community.

The agency noted that within the first 10 days of the disaster, medical supplies had been provided to all major hospitals. Since then, teams have fanned out beyond the major centres and were now examining patients in some of the remote areas.

At the same time, WHO said that a major health concern continues to be the quality and availability of water. The agency is disinfecting some 6 million litres of water daily, enough for approximately two million people.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR BANGLADESH

A total of \$1.2 million in additional humanitarian assistance to meet the essential needs of vulnerable communities in Bangladesh is being provided by Australia.

"We will provide \$700,000 through the World Food Program (WFP) to help meet food aid needs of communities still enduring the effects of Cyclone Sidr, which struck late last year, killing more than 3,000 people," said Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullan.

The WFP has appealed for further funds for its program to bridge significant food shortages until the harvest later this year. As well as food rations, this assistance will help rebuild livelihoods through cash-for-work activities and support school feeding programs.

"We've seen over past weeks, the devastating effects of Cyclone Nargis on the people of Burma," said Mr McMullan. "In Bangladesh, communities which survived Cyclone Sidr are now being hit again by increasing food prices, making returning to normal life, work and school much harder."

REPORT: http://www.ausaid.gov.au/media/release.cfm?BC=Latest&ID=6541_1788_9236_5964_241

MILLIONS OF ZIMBABWEANS AT RISK OF HUNGER: UN AGENCIES

The lack of fertiliser and seeds, economic constraints and adverse weather have led to food insecurity in Zimbabwe and threatens to plunge five million people into hunger by early next year, warns a new United Nations report which [calls for](#) emergency action by the Government and the international community (18/6/08).

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation ([FAO](#)) and the World Food Program ([WFP](#)) estimate that some two million people in rural and urban areas will be food insecure between July and September of this year.

That number is expected to rise to 3.8 million people between October "and peaking to about 5.1 million at the height of the hungry season between January and March 2009."

In a special joint report released today – "[FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to Zimbabwe](#)" – the agencies note that maize production in 2008 is estimated at 575,000 tonnes, some 28 per cent lower than last year.

Meanwhile, cereal supply is expected to be about 40 per cent lower than in 2007. "The food insecure population will require food assistance amounting to some 395,000 tonnes of cereals in 2008/09," states the report.

In addition, the agencies say that “newly-settled farmers cultivate only about half of the prime land allocated to them,” owing to factors such as shortages of equipment and fuel, lack of infrastructure and absenteeism on the part of some new settlers.

The decrease in food production, coupled with the world’s highest inflation rate, has eroded the purchasing power of households “dramatically” and increased food insecurity, according to the report.

The agencies call for emergency assistance by the Government and the international community, including the supply of timely and quality seed and fertilizer. They also recommend opening up trading in cereals to private traders to ensure that cereals can be imported and moved quickly to areas of need and reform of the grain marketing system.

In addition, the report suggests that the international community and the Government work together to promote investment in agriculture and promote sustainable food production and overall food security. The UN is currently assisting more than four million people in the country, about a third of Zimbabwe’s population.

F. MEDIA MATTERS

BAN KI-MOON UNVEILS MEMORIAL TO JOURNALISTS

A 10m (32ft) glass and steel cone on top of BBC Broadcasting House in central London will shine a beam of light into the sky every night at 2200, the BBC reported. It is dedicated to all news journalists and those who have worked with them, including drivers and translators. Over the past 10 years an estimated two war reporters per week have died, with many more killed covering corruption.

Relatives of some of the victims joined the UN Secretary General Ban for the dedication ceremony. The inauguration followed the recent deaths of two BBC journalists, Abdul Samad Rohani and Nasteh Dahir Faraah, in Afghanistan and Somalia.

Mr Ban said the light memorial stood "in tribute to all those who have sacrificed their lives so that the rest of us could be informed ... But it is also for those who survive, those who are out there right now - risking their lives to report what they uncover in the face of deadly threats," he said.

Rodney Pinder, director of the International News Safety Institute (INSI), which works for more safety for journalists, said: "These men and women are the unsung heroes of democracy, for without a free press there can be no freedom." This shaft of light in the capital of international journalism is a visual reminder of their sacrifice."

BBC Chairman Sir Michael Lyons drew attention to the risks taken by many journalists in the course of their work. He said: "The implicit contract, whereby journalists place their lives at risk to help us understand the world and its events better, needs to be reaffirmed. At moments like this that sacrifice is properly valued and the loss is widely shared."

The sculpture, entitled 'Breathing', is by Spanish artist Jaume Plensa. It was specially commissioned and selected as a result of an international competition for the BBC's public art scheme. The BBC also commissioned a poem to complement the structure by ex-war correspondent and poet, James Fenton.

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7456036.stm

RUSSIANS CHARGED OVER ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA MURDER

Russian investigators have charged four men in connection with the murder of the investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya, adding that the preliminary inquiry into her death was now "over", the London Guardian reported. (18/6/08).

The investigators' committee said it had charged three men with involvement in the killing of Politkovskaya, who was shot dead outside her Moscow apartment in October 2006.

It also charged an officer from the Federal Security Service (FSB) - Russia's post-KGB spy agency - with extortion and abuse of office, the committee said in a statement. All four have been in prison since August.

The developments, however, left several major questions unanswered, the report commented. The committee has so far apparently been unable to identify who ordered Politkovskaya's execution. Officials have publicly accused one 34-year-old Chechen but so far he has eluded arrest. Two of those charged are also from Chechnya. The third suspect is a police officer.

The fourth man, a lieutenant colonel in the FSB, was charged in relation to other crimes. Officials have previously accused him of supplying the killers with Politkovskaya's address.

REPORT: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jun/18/russia?gusrc=rss&feed=media>

AFGHAN WOMAN JOURNALIST THREATENED: A woman journalist, Jameela Rishteen Qadiry, was reported to have received telephone calls threatening her with the same fate as that of murdered BBC journalist Abdul Samad Rohani in Afghanistan (13/6/08).

According to information received from the Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA), Ms Qadiry, a reporter for Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty (RFERL), was given the warning in two anonymous phone calls within minutes of each other on June 12.

Her reporting, particularly on issues to do with the sensitive border between Afghanistan and Iran, was identified by the caller as the immediate reason for the threats. She has worked with RFERL for five years. For much of this time she was located in the most violence-prone provinces of Kandahar and Helmand and transferred recently to the city of Herat in Afghanistan's west.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) endorsed a comment at a memorial for Mr Rohani in Kabul on June 12 that continuing threats faced by journalists in Afghanistan represented a clear and present danger for the entire community's right to know.

"We have taken note of the Ministry for Information and Culture's condemnation of Rohani's murder and call upon the authorities in Afghanistan to follow up with investigations that will bring the perpetrators of this outrage to justice," said IFJ Asia-Pacific.

DECLARATION BY AFGHAN MEDIA: The IFJ endorsed a declaration adopted at the AIJA-CPAJ memorial gathering on June 12 which calls for immediate and accountable action from the authorities.

It seeks an investigation by a legally empowered and independent entity into Mr Rohani's murder, with transparent procedures and findings to be shared with Rohani's family and journalists in Afghanistan:

an immediate announcement that his family will receive financial support, including support for the future educational needs of his children;
an acknowledgment by the national government that threats to journalists have increased greatly in 2008 and require a public commitment to the safety of journalists in the country;
and that there should be constituted a commission with statutory powers to defend the rights of journalists and the public right to information with an advisory commission to provide legal support and advice for journalists facing threats and other crisis situations.

"The decision by journalists in Afghanistan to mark a day of remembrance for Rohani every year and to institute an award in his memory is a tribute to the enduring contributions that Rohani made to journalism, despite his tragically shortened life," said IFJ Asia-Pacific. The IFJ has urged

Afghan authorities to heed the AIJA-CPAJ call that all journalists be provided comprehensive life insurance cover and essential safety training to cope with all hazards.
DETAILS: IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

MUSLIM MILITANTS RELEASE PHILIPPINE JOURNALISTS

Islamic militants released two Philippine journalists and their guide after holding them for more than a week on a remote southern island, police and the journalists' employer said, the ABC reported (18/6/08).

Those released by the Abu Sayyaf group were Ces Drilon - one of the country's best known television journalists - cameraman Jimmy Encarnacion and a professor, Octavio Dinampo, who was acting as their guide when they were abducted on June 8.

The Abu Sayyaf, infamous for beheading some of its victims, had demanded a 15 million pesos (\$358,000) ransom. A local senator who took part in the negotiations for their release told local radio the captors had threatened to decapitate Mr Encarnacion. The Abu Sayyaf has about 350 members and relies on ransoms to fund its operations.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/18/2277901.htm?section=justin>

CAMBODIA JOURNALISTS LAUNCH CHARTER

Cambodian Association for the Protection of Journalists (CAPJ) launched a Charter for Reporting the Khmer Rouge Trials in Cambodia in Phnom Penh (17/6/08).

The charter calls on journalists and the media to consider carefully their role in reporting on the trials of accused Khmer Rouge war criminals being conducted by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). Journalists are urged to inform the Cambodian public about the trials while carefully avoiding "emotional, one-sided or inflammatory coverage".

The new agenda for reporting in Cambodia was unanimously endorsed by the approximately 90 people attending a Reporting the Khmer Rouge Trials Summit.

The summit was also attended by Information Ministry Secretary of State Thach Phen, representatives from IFJ and CAPJ and other organisations, as well as a broad cross-section of journalists from across Cambodia. Vigorous panel discussions considered the problems of reporting in both English and Khmer, and the role of journalists in reporting fairly on the accused as well as the victims.

A Media Guide for Journalists on Reporting the Khmer Rouge Trials was launched. The summit, charter and media guide are part of a year-long support program conducted by the IFJ and CAPJ, an IFJ affiliate, with the support of the US Institute of Peace (USIP).

CHARTER for Reporting the Khmer Rouge Trials: <http://www.ifj.org/assets/docs/124/042/cecfc7c-63d702a.pdf> and **DETAILS:** IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919

SRI LANKAN MINISTRY PROPOSES 'GUIDELINES'

Sri Lanka's Defence Ministry proposes "guidelines" for the media that would effectively throttle media independence and deprive the public of the right to reliable and authentic information on public issues, the IFJ said (19/6/08).

The Free Media Movement (FMM) reported that guidelines proposed in an editorial on the ministry's website argues that critical media scrutiny of military issues risks national security and is akin to supporting terrorism. The IFJ joins the FMM in calling on the government and the ministry to withdraw the guidelines immediately.

The editorial was posted after another on May 31 that called on "all members of the armed forces to unite and guard against" a "treacherous media campaign [being run] against them". Journalists were accused of "terrorist propaganda".

Journalists who cover defence issues have reported being subject to a series of attacks, threats and intimidation in the past month. On May 22, Keith Noyahr, deputy editor and defence writer for *The Nation*, was abducted and violently beaten. On May 29, the home of senior defence reporter Sirimevan Kasturiarachchi, of the *Divaina*, was stormed by an unknown group and he was warned to stop reporting on all matters related to the Sri Lankan Army and defence personnel.

The latest editorial expresses “serious concern” over the “unethical measures” used by “so-called” defence writers to obtain information. It reiterates the earlier threat that any journalist who writes critically about the conduct of the armed forces and the security establishment in Sri Lanka will be branded by the government as a traitor.

The proposed guidelines stipulate, among other things, that the media should not:
Be critical of military strategy or seek to analyse it.
Scrutinise promotions and transfers within the armed forces.
Question military procurements and the processes adopted for these.
Espouse or discuss anti-war positions.
Obtain information from military officers other than officially designated spokesmen.

JOURNALIST SPENDS 100 DAYS IN DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE: Five leading Sri Lankan journalists’ organisations are demanding that senior Tamil journalist J.S. Tissainayagam, who spent his 100th day in detention on June 15, be released as no evidence has been provided to sustain a charge against him (16/6/08).

Tissainayagam, the editor of the newly formed OutreachSL.com news website, was arrested by the Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) of the Sri Lankan police force on March 7 2008. The reason for his arrest is unknown because he has not been charged. Grave concerns for Tissainayagam’s health and mental well-being.

FURTHER THREATS AGAINST JOURNALIST: According to the Free Media Movement (FMM), an IFJ affiliate, Frederica Jansz, the former deputy editor of the *Sunday Leader*, editor of monthly magazine *Montage* and a coordinator with the International News Safety Institute (INSI), was threatened by an unknown Sinhalese speaker who warned her to end her “unnecessary work” or face the consequences on June 14.

Ms Jansz reported several indirect threats against her during May, including the presence of a large vehicle outside her house with its lights on and engine revving at 4.30am on May 28 and a dismembered chicken left in front of her office in early May. [DETAILS:](#) IFJ Asia-Pacific said.

STATE MEDIA HEAD ‘THREAT’ CLAIM: Senior officials associated with state institutions in Sri Lanka continued to issue extreme threats against independent journalists in the country, the IFJ reported (13/6/08).

According to the Free Media Movement (FMM), a head of a state broadcasting agency had publicly threatened and sought to incite violence against journalists’ leader Poddala Jayantha, as well as BBC journalist Elmo Fernando, in a June radio broadcast.

Mr Jayantha is the general secretary of the Sri Lankan Working Journalists’ Association (SLWJA), the largest journalists’ organisation in the country.

In a letter to Sri Lanka’s Minister for Mass Media and Information, Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, the IFJ called on the government to uphold its responsibility for the behaviour of its appointees.

PHILIPPINES JOURNALISTS RELEASED

Two abducted ABN-CBS journalists Ces Drilon, Jimmy Encarnacion and Angelo Valderama, as well as university professor Octavio Dinampo were released on June 17.

Ms Drilon and her media crew were reported missing on Jolo island, Sulu archipelago, on June 8. They were reportedly abducted by the Abu Sayyaf militant organisation as they prepared to interview members of the group.

The Philippines (NUJP) acknowledged the tireless efforts of rescue teams, the military and the police to secure the safety of the abducted team with a special mention of Indanan town Mayor Alvarez Isnaji, Vice Governor Lady Anne Sahidullah and Senator Loren Legarda.

With five journalists killed in the country in 2007, the Philippines is described as among the most dangerous locations for journalists in the Asia-Pacific region.

G. OTHER NEWS

'NO SIGNS OF STARVATION' IN BURMA

More than six weeks have passed since [Cyclone Nargis](#) swept through the Irrawaddy Delta in southern Myanmar, leaving a trail of flattened villages and broken lives and arousing international sympathy that turned to anguish as the military government obstructed foreign aid, the New York Times reported (18/6/08).

Now doctors and aid workers returning from remote areas of the delta are offering a less pessimistic picture of the human cost of the delay in reaching survivors.

They say they have seen no signs of starvation or widespread outbreaks of disease. While it is estimated that the cyclone may have killed 130,000 people, the number of lives lost specifically because of the junta's slow response to the disaster appears to have been smaller than expected.

Relief workers here continue to criticise the government's secretive posture and obsession with security, its restrictions on foreign aid experts and the weeks of dawdling that left bloated bodies befouling waterways and survivors marooned with little food. But the specific character of the cyclone, the hardiness of villagers and aid from private citizens helped prevent further death and sickness, aid workers say.

Most of the people killed by the cyclone, which struck on May 2-3, were drowned. But those who survived were not likely to need urgent medical attention, doctors say.

"We saw very, very few serious injuries," said Frank Smithuis, manager of the substantial mission of [Doctors Without Borders](#) in Myanmar. "You were dead or you were in OK shape."

The cyclone swept away bamboo huts throughout the delta; in the hardest-hit villages, it left almost no trace of habitation. Some survivors carried away by floods found themselves many miles from home when the waters receded. [REPORT:](#)
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/18/world/asia/18myanmar.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin

AID WORKERS NEED MORE SUSTAINED ACCESS IN MYANMAR: UN

The United Nations humanitarian wing says authorities in Myanmar are making some progress in granting visas to aid workers seeking access after last month's devastating cyclone but much more needs to be done to ensure help reaches those living in the hardest-hit areas (16/6/08).

About 195 visas have now been issued to UN staff alone, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and a joint assessment team of 250 people – involving UN agencies, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and 18 Government ministries – is on the ground in affected areas.

That needs assessment is likely to provide preliminary findings by 25 June, but [OCHA](#) said it may still be some time before a clear picture of the situation is completed.

OCHA said that in the meantime international relief workers still need much more sustained access to the Ayeyarwady Delta area, which was hardest-hit by Cyclone Nargis and the subsequent tidal wave that struck on 2-3 May.

Some workers are currently limited to stays of only two or three days at a time, and there is a particularly strong need for skilled technical staff such as sanitation engineers, hygiene promoters and water plant technicians.

More than 134,000 people are dead or missing as a result of Cyclone Nargis and the subsequent tidal wave, and as many as 2.4 million people were affected and now need humanitarian assistance.

The UN World Food Program ([WFP](#)), which has dispatched at least 11,000 tons of food assistance in the past six weeks, now has 10 chartered helicopters flying in the Delta. This allows critical supplies to arrive directly at remote villages and previously unreachable areas, such as Bogale and Labutta.

WARNING THAT INDONESIA COULD FACE CLASH OF RELIGIOUS FAITHS

Warnings that soaring tensions between Christians and Muslims in the Indonesian Province of Papua could soon erupt into conflict were discussed on the ABC's The World Today (17/6/08)

In a new report, the International Crisis Group has warned that there is a widely held perception among Christians in Papua that Jakarta was deliberately implementing a policy of Islamisation. The group warned that an outbreak of violence between hardline Muslim groups and exclusivist Christians could draw in militants from Java.

In an ABC interview with Geoff Thompson this week Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said there was nothing inevitable about the clash of civilisation, but in fact there were huge commonalities which needed to be built on.

The International Crisis Group's Jakarta-based senior adviser, Sidney Jones, said Communal tensions between Muslims and Christians was one aspect of the problem that deserved more attention because if it was not managed effectively could erupt into localised conflict, or we can see greater support. ... "There's just not an awareness at all of the fact that hardline groups from both communities, both Christian and Islam, are present now in Papua," he said.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2008/s2277405.htm>

On the ABC Religious Report (18/6/08) the discussion centred on radical Islam in Indonesia and how religious pluralism enshrined in the doctrine of Pancasila was coming under direct attack. Recently the Indonesian Government issued a joint ministerial decree telling the heretical Muslim Ahmadiyya movement to 'stop spreading interpretations and activities' which deviate from orthodox Islam. That decree has implications for other minorities as well, including liberal and reformist Muslims, and the moderate Wahid Institute (named for former president Abdurrahman Wahid) has said the country is on the brink of becoming an Islamic state.

DETAILS: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/religionreport/stories/2008/2278057.htm>

ATOM EXPERT REJECTS WEAPONS 'LIES'

Disgraced Pakistani nuclear scientist AQ Khan has vigorously denied claims he provided a Swiss smuggling ring with blueprints for an advanced warhead, the BBC reporter (17/6/08).

Dr Khan dismissed as "lies" the allegations made on Monday by former UN arms inspector David Albright. Mr Khan said the claims were a ploy to ensure he would be kept under house arrest, where he has been since admitting selling secrets in 2004. In recent interviews he has retracted his confessions and denied wrongdoing.

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7459903.stm

MSF CALLS FOR MORE HELP FOR MOUNT ELGON PEOPLE

The international medical humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is calling for an immediate increase in assistance for the people of Mount Elgon in western Kenya, and an end to the indiscriminate violence they have been enduring for almost two years (17/6/08).

Since August 2006, the civilian population of Mount Elgon has been trapped in the violent conflict between the Sabot Land Defence Force (SLDF) militia, which took up arms over a land allocation scheme it considers unfair, and the Kenyan authorities. Tens of thousands have been displaced. Many have lived through atrocities, mutilation, and loss.

MSF said today they continue to struggle to cope. In an overall environment of insecurity, people lack access to basic services, clothing, sufficient food, shelter and blankets. Many dwell in poor shelters where they are exposed to the cold nights of the highlands, and depend on the little assistance available and what help from local communities they receive to survive.

DETAILS: http://www.msf.org/source/countries/africa/kenya/2008/MSF_MtElgon_May2008.pdf

RULING AUSTRALIA'S WAVES

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, the government-funded defence think tank, has published a timely paper in its Strategic Insights series titled *Policing our ocean domain: Establishing an Australian coast guard*.

It draws attention to the little-considered fact that Australia "rules the waves" to some extent over almost 12 per cent of the earth's surface. Quite apart from the obvious national defence interest in policing this vast area, Australia has also responsibilities for it under the terms of various UN agreements. For instance, through our membership of the UN's International Maritime Organisation, Australia is the Security Forces Authority for the area, responsible for dealing with acts of violence against ships within its search and rescue area, which is also covered by the international conventions for the Safety of Lives at Sea; Maritime Search and Rescue; the Convention on International Civil Aviation; and the UN's Convention on the Law of the Sea. Far from being a matter simply for the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Australia's vast ocean territory embraces some 24 federal agencies, a large number of agencies in each state as well as the courts. DETAILS: www.aspi.org.au or call 02 6270 5100

FORESTS AND WORLD HERITAGE LISTING

One of the common calls to prevent logging is to have a forest area declared a World Heritage site. However, the bar for such a leap is often too high. This is spelt out in some detail in the recently published *Report to the Australian and Tasmanian Governments on the Second Five Year Review of Progress with Implementation of the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement*. The Federal and Tasmanian governments agreed in the late '90s to cooperate fully in any future proposed areas – none has been proposed. In 2003, the previous federal government "significantly revised the legislative arrangements for National and World Heritage listing."

UNESCO, which administers the World Heritage List, has asked states parties to give priority to categories of places under-represented on the list. Currently Australia is compiling a list of possible nominations including a serial site for Australia's convict heritage, which includes five sites in Tasmania. Eucalypt areas being considered for the National Heritage list include NSW's Ku-ring-gai National Park and the Royal National Park, Sydney; the Stirling Ranges National Park, WA.

The report notes that, at the request of UNESCO, Australia submitted reports to the World Heritage Centre relating to forestry activities near the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. DETAILS: www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/pubs/tas-wilderness.pdf and www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/tas-state-party-report-feb08.html

COERCIVE POWERS

For every citizen, human rights stalwart and for countless public servants coercive information-gathering powers are of grave importance. The Administrative Review Council has recently published its Report No.48 – *The Coercive Information-gathering Powers of Government Agencies* [ISBN 1 921241 36 5].

The investigators looked at six coercive-information gatherers – the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, the Australian Taxation Office, Centrelink and Medicare Australia – and set out principles as a guide to government agencies to ensure fair, efficient and effective use of their powers. The report found inconsistencies and uncertainties that require clarification.

AUSTRALIA'S PART-TIMERS

The Productivity Commission has published a staff working paper, *Part Time Employment: the Australian experience* [ISBN 978 1 74037 256 5] which examines the wide range of impacts of part time work on different age groupings of men and women; on employers, regions, people with disabilities and careers. It cites the UN's International Labour Organisation definition of part time labour among several others.

OFFSHORE RIG SAFETY: The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism has published the report of the independent review team into its review of the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority Operational Activities [ISBN 0 642 726 23x]. While not cited directly, Australia's membership of the International Labour Organisation is relevant, as is Australia's responsibilities under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The publication is not helped by sporting two different page numbers on a number of pages.

ILO GOVERNING BODY

The CEO of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Peter Anderson, has been re-elected as an employer representative for a second three-year term to the governing body of the UN's International Labour Organisation, in Geneva.

The new Federal Government in Australia was looking to inject renewed vigour into our trans-Tasman relationship, Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard told the Australian and New Zealand Leadership Forum (13/6/08).

Saying many issues Australia and New Zealand were a shared common cause, "We are thus keen to secure New Zealand's input, support and engagement on issues where we can work effectively together, both in domestic and international contexts.

"Our federal constitution has focused our national reform efforts around a new era of inter-state cooperation through the Council of Australian Governments, known as COAG. While our system obviously differs with New Zealand's more unitary state, I know that New Zealand participates actively in many COAG forums where we embrace similar challenges and goals.

She cited:

Global challenges like climate change, energy security and migration;

Regional challenges like maintaining democracy and stability in the Pacific, and building a wider Asia-Pacific Community which brings in all the key players, including the United States, Japan, China, India and Indonesia;

and domestic challenges like investing in the education and health of our people to ensure we prosper in the world-wide human capital revolution.

She said the government was committed to a new era of revitalised engagement and cooperation with Pacific island countries, based on principles of mutual respect and responsibility. A key element of this strategy was close collaboration with New Zealand.

"The Prime Minister's Port Moresby Declaration of 6 March this year affirms Australia's commitment to the Pacific. A key element is Pacific Partnerships for Development, through which Australia will provide increased development assistance over time in return for commitments from individual governments to improve governance, increase investment in economic infrastructure and achieve better outcomes in health and education.

"Working closely with New Zealand, we are also promoting closer economic integration of Pacific Island countries with Australia and New Zealand where our Closer Economic Relations agreement serves as a model.

"We see such integration as crucial to the region's development and long-term sustainability. We are also looking at creative options such as establishing an Australian seasonal labour mobility scheme for Pacific Island countries. In this regard, we have found New Zealand's experience instructive. We have very much appreciated the willingness of the New Zealand Government and other stakeholders to discuss with us the NZ Regional Seasonal Employment scheme.

"Looking to the wider region, we have to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Asia Pacific Century. As Prime Minister Rudd said last week, global economic and strategic weight is shifting rapidly to our part of the world. And it's in our interests to try to shape the outcome.

"This means we need strong global and regional partnerships and institutions to underpin stability. It was with that in mind that last week that the Prime Minister signalled his intention to engage neighbouring countries in a dialogue about establishing a potential Asia Pacific Community as a structure for discussing security, economic and environmental issues of joint concern.

"It's a long and involved process that will require much dialogue. And it's our full intention to engage closely with our friends across the Tasman as we start to explore the possibility further," she said. **REPORT:** http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0311.cfm.

DIPLOMATIC APPOINTMENTS

Paul Grigson is to be Australia's new Ambassador to Thailand. Mr Grigson is a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

DETAILS: http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s096_08.html

John Richardson, a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and was recently Assistant Secretary, APEC Branch (2006-08), has been appointed Ambassador to Argentina. **DETAILS** http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s095_08.html.

Robert Tyson is to be Australia's new Ambassador to Iraq and is expected to take up his appointment in August 2008. Mr Tyson is a career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and is currently Australia's Ambassador to the Russian Federation.

DETAILS: http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s094_08.html

H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

'A NEW ASEAN' SAYS ASEAN SECRETARY GENERAL

The Cyclone Nargis disaster in Burma showed the world that a revitalised Association of South East Asian Nations can "rise to the occasion," ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan said, the Bangkok Post reported (18/6/08). According to Mr Surin a new ASEAN had emerged from its achievements. "We are being baptised by Cyclone Nargis," he told the 5th ASEAN Leadership Forum in Singapore ... Recalling the frustration and anguish of the World Bank and many Western countries which sent ships and planes packed with relief supplies, he said he was repeatedly asked, "Can ASEAN do something?" "With 2.4 million people teetering between survival and death, ASEAN became the mechanism for getting aid to the worst-hit areas such as the Irrawaddy Delta in the south, helping sort out objections to helicopters and sending in nearly

300,000 volunteers," he said. "The teams have been given full support and reached the areas where they wanted to go ... That's a new ASEAN ready to take on responsibility."

ARTICLE: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/>

SINCE IRAQ, THE WORLD IS SCARED TO HELP

The Burmese Government's criminally neglectful response to last month's cyclone, and the world's response to that response, illustrate three grim realities today: totalitarian governments are alive and well; their neighbours are reluctant to pressure them to change; and the notion of national sovereignty as sacred is gaining ground, helped in no small part by the disastrous results of the American invasion of Iraq, Madeleine Albright writes (Sydney Morning Herald, 13/6/08). Indeed, many of the world's necessary interventions in the decade before the invasion - in places like Haiti and the Balkans - would seem impossible in today's climate ... A decade ago, when Burma joined the Association of South-East Asian Nations, I was assured by leaders in the region that they would push the junta to open its economy and move in the direction of democracy.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/06/12/1212863837120.html>

OFFICIALS DEFIED WARNINGS ON HARSH INTERROGATION

Military psychologists helped develop aggressive interrogation methods, including the use of snarling dogs and nudity, that were approved despite concerns they could be illegal, The Age reported (18/6/08). Then defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld approved the harsh techniques despite military lawyers warning they could be against the law, an investigation by the Senate Armed Services Committee has found. Officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the findings have not been formally released.

ARTICLE: <http://www.theage.com.au/world/officials-defied-warnings-on-harsh-interrogation-20080617-2s5q.html>

INTELLIGENCE FAILURE: THE POSTWAR PIPEDREAM

The US Senate intelligence committee released its two-part [report](#) this month exploring pre-war intelligence on Iraq and its use by the Bush administration. The New Republic asked James Martin, a Paul Mellon fellow at Cambridge University who writes on international security issues, to wade through the 172-page report. He is posting his findings over a few days:

Perhaps the most damning conclusion of the committee's report on prewar intelligence is that the Bush administration failed to take into account CIA and DIA suggestions that post-invasion Iraq would require a significant long-term US troop presence to quell violent Baathist attempts to return to power, al-Qaida-related terrorist activity, and inter-ethnic/tribal violence. Though this is not the first time such ineptitude has been reported, the committee provides a particularly searing indictment of the administration's post-invasion planning.

MARTIN (18/6/08): http://blogs.tnr.com/tnr/blogs/the_plank/archive/2008/06/18/intelligence-failure-the-postwar-pipedream.aspx

LET'S NOT FORGET THE SIEV-X

"My name is Amal, in English it means hope." *Hope*, a documentary by Steve Thomas and Sue Brooks, is Amal Hassan Basry's story. Through Amal's journey, *Hope* embraces both the resilience and the fragility of all human beings who, through no fault of their own, find themselves exiled from their homes and forced to make dangerous journeys to find a safe haven for themselves and their children. In October 2001, an Indonesian fishing boat now referred to as SIEV-X (Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel, "X" for unknown) went down in the sea on its way to Australia. For 22 hours in a dark and unknown ocean, Amal Basry held tightly to a dead woman's body to stay afloat, believing her son and all the other passengers had died. Amal talked to the woman throughout the night, "waiting for the angel of death" to also take her away. Survivors estimate that about 100 people were still alive in the sea after the boat capsized but only 45, including Amal, were found breathing when fishing vessels arrived on the scene more than 20 hours later. Among the 353 passengers known to have died were 146 children, 142 women and 65 men; they were all seeking asylum in Australia.

OLO WEBSITE: <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7502>

DEALS WITH IRAQ ARE SET TO BRING OIL GIANTS BACK

Four Western oil companies are in the final stages of negotiations this month on contracts that will return them to [Iraq](#), 36 years after losing their oil concession to nationalisation as [Saddam Hussein](#) rose to power, the New York Times reports (19/6/08). [Exxon Mobil](#), Shell, Total and [BP](#) — the original partners in the Iraq Petroleum Company — along with [Chevron](#) and a number of smaller oil companies, are in talks with Iraq's Oil Ministry for no-bid contracts to service Iraq's largest fields, according to ministry officials, oil company officials and an American diplomat. The deals, expected to be announced on June 30, will lay the foundation for the first commercial work for the major companies in Iraq since the American invasion, and open a new and potentially lucrative country for their operations.

ARTICLE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/19/world/middleeast/19iraq.html?th&emc=th>

I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENT

MURRAY-DARLING 'ALMOST BEYOND RECOVERY'

A leaked scientific report on the Murray-Darling Basin warns parts of the river system are "beyond the point of recovery" unless they get water by October, the ABC reported (18/6/08).

The scientific panel presented the report to the Murray-Darling ministerial council in May. It warns of vegetation loss, dried-out wetlands and the unique ecology of the lower lakes, the Coorong and the Murray mouth being lost unless flows were returned by October.

The federal and state water ministers will not discuss options to save the system until a meeting in November and David Paton from the University of Adelaide was reported as saying that was too late. **REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/18/2277890.htm>

Water Minister Penny Wong denied that federal and state governments were acting too slowly in dealing with the crisis as scientists predicted lower reaches of the river faced "complete ecological collapse" within months, The Australian reported (19/6/08).

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23887065-2702,00.html>

RIVER HEALTH CHECK SHOWS LONG-TERM DEGRADATION

The first Murray-Darling Basin wide river health check – a report card on the ecological health of 23 river valleys - has found evidence of long term environmental and ecological degradation. The study, which spanned four states and 96,000 km of rivers and streams, ranks the valleys' river health from best to worst.

The report was released (19/6/08) by Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) CEO Dr Wendy Craik and one of the authors, Dr John Harris. This is the first in a triennial series of reports analysing the trends in the rivers of the basin, in an on-going collaboration between MDBC and governments of the six basin jurisdictions.

The assessment used data gathered by state agencies in 2004–07 on hydrology, fish and macroinvertebrates as indicators of river health.

Dr Craik said data experts, ecologists and fish and macroinvertebrate specialists from MDBC and state agencies selected the sites, determined protocols and the data to be collected.

"They collated the data, generated the databases and then hand them over to the Independent Sustainable Rivers Audit Group (ISRAG) – a panel of four independent ecologists who interpreted it and wrote the report." The panel included Dr Peter Davies (chairman), Dr John Harris, Dr Terry Hillman and Associate Professor Keith Walker.

The report is the culmination of a three-year systematic assessment of the ecological health of the river ecosystems. Dr Craik said the study found that valleys in the northern basin were generally in better health than in the southern part of the basin.

DETAILS: www.mdbc.gov.au

SATELLITE CAMERA TO MONITOR CONGO BASIN

Plans to use a state-of-the-art camera onboard a satellite to monitor deforestation levels in Africa's Congo Basin have been unveiled, the BBC reported (17/6/08). The high resolution RALCam3 camera, designed and built by UK scientists, will provide the first detailed view of the area's rate of forest cover loss.

Part of a £108m joint-initiative by the UK and Norwegian governments, the Congo Basin Forest Fund aims to curb climate change by preventing deforestation in the region.

UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown said: "We are pledging to work together to secure the future of one of the world's last remaining ancient forests. Preserving our forests is vital if we are going to reduce global emissions and tackle climate change."

The Congo rainforest is the second largest in the world, containing more than a quarter of the planet's remaining tropical rainforest. It is also home to more than 50m people, and supports an estimated 10,000 plant species, 1,000 types of birds and 400 different kinds of mammals.

A UN study warned that unless action was taken to tackle deforestation in the region, more than 66 per cent of the rainforest would be lost by 2040.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7459472.stm>

AUSTRALIA TO WORK WITH PACIFIC ON LAND POLICY REFORM

Australia will provide \$54 million for a Pacific Land Program to support governments in the region that wish to strengthen or improve their land systems.

The funding would assist governments dealing with complex issues relating to land policy reform, said Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullan (12/6/08).

He said Australia will only support reforms that recognise the continuing importance of customary tenure; and, second, land policy reform must be driven by Pacific Island governments and communities, not by donors.

Mr McMullan was in Vanuatu for a Pacific land policy conference, The Making Land Work conference.

"Pacific governments are under pressure to reconcile new and competing interests relating to land ownership and land use with the customary systems that have offered their people a form of safety net for countless generations," he said. "These pressures include new technologies, rapid population growth and social change. Our program is designed to provide support to governments undertaking reforms to strengthen and improve their land systems and deal with these pressures."

The Pacific Land Program is expected to increase the skills and knowledge of people working in land departments and non-government organisations assist in dispute resolution and help customary owners negotiate on a more even basis with investors and developers.

The program will initially provide support to Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and East Timor (Timor-Leste).

DETAILS: Sabina Curatolo (Mr McMullan's Office) on 0400 318 205; Elizabeth James (AusAID) on 0407 280 188.

Out of the blue, a letter looking for support has come from Friends of World Heritage at:<http://www.friendsofworldheritage.org/issues/preserve-and-protect/earthquake-western-china.html>

The message says the people in China's south-western Sichuan province are still feeling aftershocks from the 7.9 magnitude earthquake that devastated the region on May 12. Over 69,000 people have died as a result, and millions have been left homeless. Massive damage to roads and infrastructure will make recovery in the hardest-hit regions long and difficult.

Among the places severely damaged by the quake are [several World Heritage sites](#), including the Sichuan Giant Panda Sanctuaries and Mount Qingcheng and the Dujiangyan Irrigation System (located only 50km from the epicenter). Photos show massive damage to roads, buildings and panda habitats: [photo update from our colleagues on the ground](#).

The UN Foundation says it is the No.1 private supporter of World Heritage conservation. DETAILS: [Friends of World Heritage](#); www.unfoundation.org.

HONEY BEE BUGS AND SMITING THE MITE

More Than Honey: the future of the Australian honey bee and pollination industries report has been released. It addresses concerns about the increasing challenges facing the industry and pollination dependent industries in the face of bio-security threats, such as the bee mite, *Varroa destructor*, declining access to floral resources, and the economic challenges facing the industry. The report also addresses research and training needs of the industry that plays a key role for Australia's multi-billion dollar agricultural sector.

REPORT: *More Than Honey* <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/pir/honeybee/report.htm>

DROPLET NO. 12

Droplets explore ideas and propositions, which, if developed further, might improve water use. They develop ideas and search for the fundamental concepts and building blocks that one might consider if not constrained by prior decisions.

A sustainable cap: What might it look like? In the latest droplet, four principles for the development of a Sustainable Cap are identified.

DETAILS: <http://www.myoung.net.au/water/> and Mike Young, University of Adelaide, droplets@adelaide.edu.au; Jim McColl, CSIRO Land and Water, Jim.McColl@csiro.au