

WORLDNEWS



Greece on Fire

A hot summer in Greece burst into deadly flames in late August, resulting in widespread fires that killed 67 people and burned nearly a half-million acres. Southern Greece, where the flames reached the birthplace of the Olympic Games in Ancient Olympia, was the worst area affected. In the village of Artemida, 23 people, including a mother and her four children, died on Aug. 24. "It is a national tragedy," said President Karolos Papoulias, whose reelection bid went to the polls in mid-September. "This is a national catastrophe." A group of 55 Israeli firefighters were sent to one of the worst fires in Krestena, near Ancient Olympia. According to the European Commission's European Forest Fire Information System, 454,447 acres of forests, groves and scrubland were burned between Aug. 24-26.

Plane Crash in Phuket

At least 88 people were killed when a plane operated by Thai budget airline One-Two-Go skidded off a runway in heavy rain on the island of Phuket. Survivors of the flight from Bangkok to Phuket described how the plane smashed through a wall and broke up, before bursting into flames. About 130 people, mostly foreigners, were on board the plane. An estimated 40 people escaped the burning wreckage. Survivors say the pilot circled the area hoping for the weather to clear before making his final disastrous approach. The McDonnell Douglas MD-82 aircraft was approaching the airport when the pilot asked to abort the landing, an aviation official told Thai television. "The control tower allowed it but the aircraft fell to the runway and the body broke," he said.



Identical Quadruplets in Canada

A Canadian woman has given birth to rare identical quadruplets. Karen Jepp of Calgary gave birth to the four girls -- Autumn, Brooke, Calissa and Dahlia -- at a hospital in Montana as a result of a shortage of neonatal care facilities in Alberta. "Right now, we tell them apart with labels over their beds," said the father, J.P. Jepp. The babies were born at 31 weeks' gestation. Doctors say the chances of having naturally-conceived identical quadruplets is one in 13 million.

Arctic Ice Melting Fast

Research by the U.S. National Snow and Ice Data Center indicates a dramatic increase in the melting rate of Arctic sea ice could result in an ice-free Arctic in less than 25 years. A comparison of sea ice area on September 5, 1979 and September 5, 2007 shows a decline of 42 per cent. The prevailing view among climate scientists was that an ice-free Arctic ocean would occur in the 2070-2100 time frame. This pro-



jection is now being radically revised. Dr. Mark Serreze of the National Snow and Ice Data Center, said: "If you asked me a couple of years ago when the Arctic could lose all of its ice, then I would have said 2100, or 2070 maybe. But now I think that 2030 is a reasonable estimate." The melting of the Arctic sea ice will not raise ocean levels appreciably. The biggest concern about Arctic sea ice loss is the warmer average temperatures it will bring to the Arctic because of the absence of white reflective ice. Warmer temperatures will accelerate the melting of the Greenland ice sheet, which holds enough water to raise sea level 20 feet.

African Floods

Torrential downpours and flash floods across Africa submerged whole towns and washed away bridges, farms and schools. This summer's rains killed at least 150 people, displaced hundreds of thousands and prompted the UN to warn of a rising risk of disease outbreaks. In eastern Uganda, nine people were reported killed and 150,000 were made homeless. Another 400,000, mostly subsistence farmers, had their fields flooded or roads washed away and the rains are forecast to worsen in the next month. Ghana in west Africa was also heavily hit. Three regions in the north, the country's traditional breadbasket, were declared an official disaster zone after whole towns and villages were submerged. Torrential rains between July and August killed at least 18 persons and displaced a quarter of a million.



France Warns of Iran War

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner says the world should prepare for war over Iran's nuclear programme. "We have to prepare for the worst, and the worst is war," Mr Kouchner said in an interview on French TV and radio in mid-September. Iran's nuclear programme was also expected to be one of the main issues for the UN nuclear watchdog's annual conference, in Vienna. Iran denies it is trying to acquire nuclear weapons, and says it only wants nuclear power to generate electricity for civilian purposes. But it has repeatedly rejected UN demands to give up the enrichment of uranium, which the U.S. and other Western states fear is being diverted to a nuclear weapons project.

Germany Reverses Cruise Ban

The German government has reversed a decision to ban actor Tom Cruise and the makers of his new movie from a World War II memorial site. In Valkyrie, Cruise plays Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, who was executed for plotting to kill Adolf Hitler in 1944. A request to film at the site of his execution was initially rejected. A defence ministry spokesman said



the change of heart came after officials were convinced the film would portray post-war Germany in a good light. When the ban was first imposed, rumours circulated that it was because of Germany's hostility towards Cruise's religion, Scientology. But a government spokesman later said it was "because the dignity of this place should not be violated". The building, known as the Bendler Block, is now a memorial for Third Reich resistance fighters.

Top Ten Most Polluted

A list of the world's most polluted places has been published by a U.S.-based independent environmental group. The Blacksmith Institute's top 10 towns and cities included sites in ex-Soviet republics, Russia, China and India. Peru and Zambia were also listed. The annual review, which debuted in 2006, is listed alphabetically, and the sites are unranked "given the wide range of location sizes, populations and pollution dynamics". Making the list are: Sumgayit, Azerbaijan; Linfen, China; Tianying, China; Sukinda, India; Vapi, India; La Oroya, Peru; Dzerzhinsk, Russia; Norilsk, Russia; Chernobyl, Ukraine;

A Mermaid's Tale

A New Zealand woman with no legs is having a mermaid's tail made to help her swim. Nadya Vessey, a woman in her 50s from Auckland, is having the tail made by the company behind the special effects in the movies Lord of the Rings and King Kong. She was born with a condition that meant her legs would never develop properly. She began swimming after she had her first leg amputated at seven. Despite having her other leg amputated at 16, she swam competitively in high school and now swims as often as she can. The tail will be moulded on to a pair of wetsuit shorts to make it easy to put on and take off. Vessey says it will allow her to propel herself through the water as if she was a mermaid.



Hero Gets Sacked

A Florida man was besieged with job offers after he was fired for saving a woman from an armed robber. Juan Canales, 42, lost his job as a waiter with a Thai restaurant in Fort Lauderdale after his boss got sick of the media attention. But he quickly received new job offers once the story of his firing was reported in the local press. Canales was fired after subduing a knife-wielding robber who tried to steal a Honda car from a woman customer. He disarmed the man then, with the help of three other men, managed to hold the robber down until police arrived. Canales then spent an hour talking to police and the media. He returned to work but when the lunch shift ended, his



boss fired him.

Ananova: Bee Stings Boob Job

A Taiwanese woman's breast implant was reportedly burst by a bee sting. The 31-year-old woman was wearing a low-cut dress while riding her motorcycle when her right breast was stung by a bee. "My right breast disappeared in only two days," said the woman, who received the implant three years ago, according to Southern China City News. Surgeon Zeng Dingchang said it was "very strange" for the saline implant to deflate because of a bee sting. "She is very skinny, and the implant made the skin of her breast even thinner, and therefore easy to penetrate," he said. The surgeon has now performed a replacement implanted operation but warns that acupuncture or yoga could cause it to burst again.



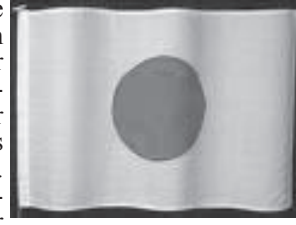
Proud to be Ugly

A monument to ugly people has been unveiled in Italy. The World Association of Ugly People, founded in Italy and which now has branches all over the world, had the monument built in the northern town of Piobbico. The monument, depicting an unknown person looking at their own reflection in the mirror, was unveiled during the annual meeting of the association. Telesforo Lacobelli, the president of the association, said: "The motto of our association is that a person is what he is and not what he looks like. Hence our monument. It is not a monument to a good looking film star or dashing war hero, but to a person who is just as beautiful -- but only on the inside."



Man gives PM the finger

A Japanese man has been arrested after he sent his severed little finger to the country's prime minister. Yoshihiro Tanjo, 54, a leader of a right-wing group, filmed himself as he cut off the top part of his finger and included the DVD and a protest letter in his package to Shinzo Abe. He was unhappy that Mr. Abe stayed away from the Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo on the anniversary of Japan's surrender in the Second World War. "I thought they would ignore me if I just sent the letter, so I put my little finger in as well," Kyodo reportedly said. Police charged Tanjo with intimidation tactics. "In the DVD there were very graphic images of him chopping off a part of his finger, which he had filmed himself," a Kurashiki police spokesman said. "The man is detained here with part of his finger gone, cut at the first joint, I'd say."



Sources: New Scientist, BBC, Ananova.com, CBC