World Briefing

AFRICA

Zimbabwe: Arrests in Government Crackdown

The government intensified its crackdown on critics and opponents, as a newspaper editor was arrested in connection with an article critical of the government's policies. The editor of the independent newspaper The Standard, who was charged with inciting violence, was released after a few days. The move is seen as a further attempt to silence opposition voices in the country.

Somalia: Militiamen Kill U.N. Aid Worker

A truck driver working for the United Nations World Food Program was killed while delivering food to several villages in southern Somalia. The attack was carried out by militiamen who demanded ransom money from the aid agency.

ASIA

Olympic Torch Reaches Summit of Everest

A team of climbers carried the Olympic torch up the north face of Mount Everest to the summit. Over 50,000 people have climbed Mount Everest, and the torch symbolizes the spirit of the Olympic Games.

Italy: Starving the Pigeons of St. Mark's Square

A group of feeding birds are starving in St. Mark's Square, reportedly due to the high cost of bread. The city has recently lifted the ban on feeding the pigeons, but the problem continues.

EUROPE

Britain: Jihadi Cleric Released on Bail

An appeal panel ordered the release on bail of Abu Qatada, a Muslim preacher from Jordan once described by a Swiss judge as Osama bin Laden's right-hand man. The decision is expected to be overturned by higher courts.

In Lake, Signs of Slow Shift From Savannah to Sahara

By KENNETH CHANG

Six thousand years ago, northern Africa was a place of trees, grasslands, lakes and people. Today, it is the Sahara—a desert area larger than Australia.

Lake You, in northeastern Chad, has remained a lake through the millennia and is still a lake today, surrounded by the desert. Although little rain falls, Lake You’s water is replenished from an underground aquifer.

Scientists drilled a column of sediment from the bottom of Lake You, in northeastern Chad, to study the history of the Sahara.

Data about what was happening on land is sparse, because blowing sands do not preserve a clear geological record of the lake. But at Lake You, ancient water from underground aquifers that filled during the humid period, which began 10,000 years ago, is still flowing into the lake. It is enough in order to do the lake to evaporate every year, Dr. Kripalani said. Only a few millimeters of rain fall a year.

Dr. Kripalani said he hoped to return to Lake You next year to test a core that could trace the climate history back 12,000 years.

EUROPE

I Must Have Been Crazy, ’ Austrian Says of Child’s Captivity

By MARK LANDLER

FRANKFURT—Josef Fritzl, the 73-year-old Austrian who imprisoned and raped his daughter for 24 years, said he knew his actions were wrong but denied that he was a “beast,” and that he thought constantly about freeing her.

The magazine quoted Mr. Fritzl as saying to his lawyer, Reinhard Mayer, “With each week that I held my daughter captive, I said, ‘my actions got crazier.”

Still, while admitting a lifetime of unalterable abuse, Mr. Fritzl never reached a point where he wanted to end his life. He was charged with murder and sentenced to life in prison.

In his account, Mr. Fritzl decried the brutal treatment he had received and accused his parents of neglecting him.

Mr. Fritzl is symptomatic of a trend toward “epidemiological” abuse, where children are taken into care and placed in institutions or foster homes.

Mr. Fritzl’s case has been followed closely by human rights groups and activists, who have called for greater awareness of the issue.

Mr. Fritzl was finally caught by police in 2003, when his daughter escaped and was able to call her mother.

The government has since enacted new laws to prevent similar cases from happening again.