

Airlines condemn 'European Mess'

BBC NEWS

The body that represents the world's airlines, IATA, has criticised Europe's governments for the way they closed air space because of volcanic ash.

The head of the airline industry body, Giovanni Bisignani, told the BBC: "This is a European embarrassment and it's a European mess."

Millions of passengers have been affected by the crisis, which is now into its fifth day.

Britain ordered three Royal Navy ships to help bring home stranded nationals.

And the French railway company SNCF has said it will offer reduced fares and 80,000 extra seats between Paris and London this week.

MAJOR EU AIRPORTS YESTERDAY

London Heathrow: **Closed**

Frankfurt: **Closed after reopening on a limited basis for several hours on Sunday**

Paris Charles de Gaulle: **Closed**

Schiphol, Amsterdam: **Closed**

Rome: **Leonardo Da Vinci International and Ciampino Airports: open, limited service**

Madrid: **Madrid-Barajas Airport open, but excessive delays**

European aviation control agency Eurocontrol said only about 30 percent of the normal number of flights -- 8,000 to 9,000 -- would operate in Europe on Monday.

Mr Bisignani, of the International Air Transport Association, has said the scale of the crisis facing the airline industry is now greater than at the time of the 9/11 attacks on the US.

"The decision that Europe has made is with no risk assessment, no consultation, no co-ordination, no leadership," he said.

"Europeans are still using a system based on a theoretical model which does not work... instead of using a system and taking decisions on facts and on risk assessment."

He said airspace closures were costing airlines \$200m (£130m) a day in lost revenue.

F-16 fighters damaged by volcanic ash

AP, Brussels

A senior Western diplomat says several Nato F-16 fighters suffered engine damage after flying through the volcanic ash cloud covering large parts of Europe.

The official declined to provide more details on the military flights, except to say that glasslike deposits were found inside the planes' engines after they landed over European airspace.

Last week, two Finnish Air Force F-18 fighter-bombers suffered similar damage while flying through the ash plume.

Forecast scope of ash up to 20,000ft



A Thai armed soldier takes up position on a walkway at the entrance to Silom road in the financial district of Bangkok yesterday. Hundreds of Thai troops, many of them armed, were deployed on the streets of Bangkok to protect the city's financial heart from anti-government rallies.

PHOTO: AFP

Recount of Baghdad poll ordered

BBC NEWS

Iraqi election officials have ordered a manual recount of votes cast in Baghdad after complaints from the incumbent prime minister.

The recount, ordered by a review panel, covers 68 seats in the 325-seat parliament, and could alter the final result of the poll.

The March 7 election was narrowly won by former PM Iyad Allawi, who leads the Iraqiyyalist.

But incumbent Nouri Maliki had demanded a recount of votes cast in Baghdad.

Electoral commissioner Hamdiya al-Husseini said the manual recount would begin immediately but she was not sure how long it would take.

Mr Maliki had alleged the electronic system of vote counting was unreliable.

Mr Allawi's group won 91 seats, two more than Mr Maliki's State of Law coalition, sparking weeks of negotiations between parties to form a coalition government.

Thai troops on streets to protect financial hub

AFP, Bangkok

Thai security forces swooped on central Bangkok yesterday wielding weapons and razor wire to block "Red Shirt" protesters from taking their anti-government campaign to the capital's financial hub.

Thousands of soldiers and riot police, many armed with assault rifles and shotguns, were deployed in the Silom business district close to the Reds' rally base in the capital's retail heartland.

Some soldiers hunkered down with their weapons on pedestrian walkways located above Silom's major thoroughfare, while below smartly dressed office workers stepped carefully around razor wire rolled out along sidewalks.

The deployment was the first by the military on the tense streets of Bangkok since a failed crackdown on the protesters nine days ago left 25 people dead and more than 800 injured.

"Today we can see the authorities have protected Silom from an invasion," said Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, who is resisting calls from the Red Shirts to stand down and announce fresh elections.

Abhisit said the government knew "the people are suffering" but that he could not set a time frame for the ending of a month of demonstrations that have caused massive disruption to business and tourism.

Army spokesman Sunsern Kaewkumnerd warned that the troops were equipped with live ammunition and that the protest movement involving tens of thousands of red-clad demonstrators would be shut down "when we are ready".



SKorea's Lee vows strong action on ship sinking

AP, Seoul

An emotional President Lee Myung-bak vowed yesterday that South Korea would respond "resolutely and unwaveringly" against those behind the deadly sinking of a naval ship near the tense maritime border with North Korea.

Seoul has not openly blamed Pyongyang for the March 26 explosion that broke the 1,200-ton Cheonan in two during a routine patrol, killing at least 38 of the 104 sailors on board.

Iran sentences 3 opposition activists to prison

AP, Tehran, Iran

Iran has sentenced three prominent political activists to six years in prison each for involvement in the country's post-election turmoil, the official IRNA news agency reported yesterday.

The three are among more than 100 opposition figures who were put on a mass trial in the wake of the country's disputed June presidential elections. The trial has led to a dozen death sentences so far.

IRNA said the activists -- Mohsen Mirdamadi, Mostafa Tajzadeh and Davood Soleimani -- were convicted of spreading propaganda against Iran. The court also banned them from any kind of political activity for 10 years.

The Iranian opposition, led by Mir Hossein Mousavi, charges that the re-election of

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was fraudulent and that Mousavi was the rightful winner.

In the latest developments in the government push to silence reformist voices, a pro-reform newspaper was ordered shut down over charges of questioning the election and criticizing government officials.

The semi-official Fars news agency reported on Monday that the Press Supervisory Board ordered the Bahar daily closed for "spreading doubts on fundamental issues such as elections, questioning the pillars of the system and libel against state officials."

It didn't provide further details, but government closure of media outlets has become common in the past decade, during which time more than 120 independent and liberal newspapers and magazines have been banned.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Weather delays shuttle's return

BBC NEWS

Nasa has passed on the first opportunity to bring shuttle Discovery back to Earth because of poor weather at the Kennedy Space Center.

Low cloud and light rain around the Florida spaceport break the agency's landing rules for the orbiter.

Mission Control says a second opportunity for Discovery exists at 1023 local time (1423 GMT).

Discovery has spent two weeks at the space station, stockpiling it with supplies, experiments and spare parts.

US confirms 2 al-Qaida leaders killed in Iraq

AP, Baghdad

The US military confirms the two leaders of al-Qaida in Iraq have been killed in a joint operation with Iraqi forces.

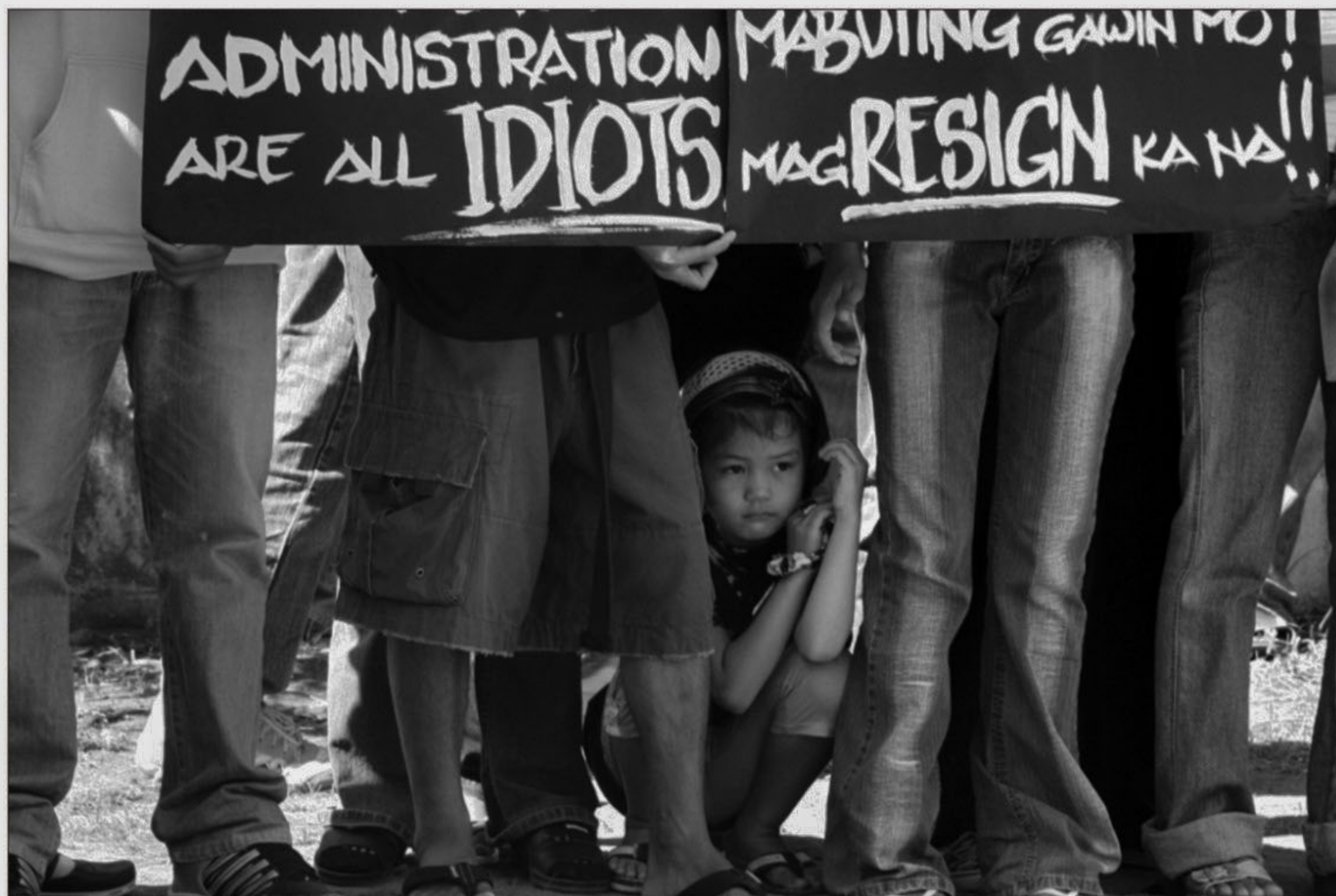
Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki announced the killings of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri earlier Monday at a news conference in Baghdad and showed reporters photographs of their bloody corpses.

Israeli defense minister says occupation must end

AP, Jerusalem

Israel must recognise that the world will not put up with decades more of Israeli rule over the Palestinian people, the country's defence minister said in unusually frank remarks Monday.

Ehud Barak's comments came against the backdrop of severe friction between the US and Israel's hawkish government over an impasse in peacemaking.



Relatives of Maguindanao massacre victims stage a rally in front of the Hall of Justice in General Santos City, in the Philippines' southern island of Mindanao yesterday, criticising Justice Secretary Alberto Agra's order to drop charges against two members of a powerful Muslim clan accused of orchestrating the country's worst political murders.

PHOTO: AFP

3 rescued, 5 days after China quake killed 2,000

AP, Jiegu, China

Rescuers pulled three people alive from the rubble yesterday, five days after an earthquake killed nearly 2,000 people in a Tibetan region of western China. Aid convoys clogged the main road into the remote mountainous area.

China Central Television said a 4-year-old girl and an elderly woman had been trapped since Wednesday under a bed in a collapsed mud house in a village about 13 miles (20 kilometres) from the hardest-hit town of Jiegu, until rescuers dug them out Monday morning.

Relatives kept Wu Jian Cuomao, 68, and Cairen Baji alive by sending them food and water through gaps in the rubble with the help of bamboo poles, state broadcaster CCTV said. The report showed a team of rescuers lifting the white-haired woman onto a stretcher, throwing a thick blanket over her and putting her in an ambulance. The child was seen wrapped in a blanket in the arms of a rescuer.

Cuba's 'seed man' wins world eco prize

AP, Bauta, Cuba

Humberto Rios Labrada's campaign to let Cuban farmers choose the crops and seed varieties best for their lands helped him win one of the 2010 Goldman Environmental Prizes -- known as the "green Nobels" -- yesterday.

Rios wants to make Cuban farms more sustainable by giving farmers more autonomy.

Bereaved Kaczynski twin keeps Poland guessing

AFP, Warsaw

Reeling from the death of his identical twin, Polish conservative opposition leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski is keeping the nation guessing about a potential bid to succeed his late brother as head of state.

Jaroslaw has made no public statements since his brother Lech Kaczynski, sister-in-law Maria and 94 others including close political colleagues perished in the April 10 crash in Russia en route to the World War II memorial ceremony.

The former prime minister, 60, is an icon for supporters of Poland's Law and Justice (PiS) party, the political force he forged on a fractious

right-wing scene with Lech.

He has been tipped as its likely candidate in a snap presidential election expected on June 20.

"I'm convinced that Jaroslaw Kaczynski will stand for president," political scientist Stanislaw Mocek told AFP.

"For one, he will want in a sense to fulfil the political destiny of his late brother. On the other, PiS doesn't have any other candidate with enough clout," he said.

Mocek noted that the party's approval ratings were around 25 percent before the crash. "The next opinion polls will show if any floating voters have switched into its camp on a wave of emotion," he said.

Climate activists gather in Bolivia

Mother Earth rights celebration Apr 22

BBC NEWS

Delegates are gathering in the Bolivian city of Cochabamba for a grassroots alternative to last year's UN climate change summit in Copenhagen.

The meeting will also celebrate the rights of Mother Earth on April 22.

Bolivian President Evo Morales was one of several leaders who refused to sign the Copenhagen climate change deal.

He is set to use this week's talks to propose a world referendum to ask up to two billion people their views on how to tackle climate change.

Several thousand people are expected in Cochabamba for what is billed as the People's World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth.

The meeting, which runs until Thursday, aims to bring together indigenous and civil society movements, scientists, activists and government delegations.

Mr Morales proposed the Cochabamba meeting in the wake of the climate change summit in Copenhagen last December, arguing that the views of developing countries were largely ignored.

The talks will have no direct bearing on the UN climate talks, but the idea is to give a voice to the world's poorest people - those most affected by climate change - and to make governments more aware of their plight.

"Our experience in the last process of negotiation over the last year and a half is that things are moving in a bad direction," Pablo Solon, Bolivia's ambassador to the UN, told the BBC.

"I would say this is the only scenario to make a balance between the pressure that at this moment the corporations are putting on the government versus the pressure that can emerge, can arise from civil society."



Request for Proposal

Katalyst is seeking proposal from interested software companies/call centre operators/content developers/ICT companies or any other organization to implement a project for developing and disseminating tourism related content of Bangladesh using ICT platforms.

Interested parties are requested to download the relevant detail information from this URL: http://www.katalyst.com.bd/abtus_procurement.php

Last date for reaching Request for Proposal in our Dhaka office is 1 May, 2010.