

Comprehensive News on Aceh and Nias Thursday 19 August 2005

Interactive humanitarian-related news on Aceh and Nias prepared by OCHA.

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At the end of each summary is usually the name of the source. It is clickable and will take you to the complete news item included in this document. Just below each of the titles of the complete news items will be a live link to the news source in the Internet. This service is provided Mondays to Fridays, except holidays, or when there are insurmountable difficulties.

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Internet news sources:

English

- The Jakarta Post: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/>
- Yahoo News: http://news.search.yahoo.com/news/search?ei=ISO-8859-1&va=&va vt=any&vp=&vp vt=any&vo=aceh+nias&vo vt=any&ve=&ve vt=any&datesort=1&pub=&timeago=&smoth=4&sday=17&emonth=5&eday=17&source=&location=&catfilt=&fl=1&vl=lang_en&vl=lang_id&n=100
- Google News: <http://news.google.com/news?as q=&svnum=10&as scoring=d&hl=en&ned=us&btn G=Google+Search&as epq=&as oq=aceh+nias&as eq=&as nsrc=&as nloc=&as o cct=any&as drrb=q&as qdr=&as mind=17&as minm=4&as maxd=17&as maxm=5>

Indonesian

- Serambi Indonesia <http://www.serambinews.com/>
- Kompas: <http://www.Kompas.com/>
- Berita Sore <http://www.beritasore.com/ant>

Highlight

1. Contrary to its existence, Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) on Thursday said it has no reconstruction plan to rebuild the devastated island of Nias.[\(kompas\)](#)
2. Rebel fighters promised Thursday to abide by an agreement to end a 29-year war in Indonesia's tsunami-ravaged Aceh province, but sought security guarantees before handing over their weapons.[\(AP\)](#)

Summary:

1. Dana Kemanusiaan Kompas (DKK), tsunami fund collecting agency established by Jakarta based Kompas daily, will implement its plan to build 3 educational infrastructures in Aceh.[\(Kompas\)](#)
2. Indonesian Minister of Cabinet Secretary TB Silalahi visited an Islamic elementary school belong to Muhammadiyah in Gunung Sitoli. There he announced that Indonesian president will fulfill request made by Novi Tanjung, the school student, which asked the president to rebuild her school.[\(SI\)](#)
3. A philanthropic foundation, based in the northeastern U.S. state of Vermont, has donated almost \$2 million to help rebuild schools and make other contributions to education.[\(VOA\)](#)
4. The peace agreement between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) faced its first test on Wednesday when plainclothes police threatened rebels who were released from the Jantho penitentiary in Aceh Besar regency.[\(JP\)](#)
5. Minister of Justice and Human Rights Hamid Awaluddin said on Thursday that the amnesties pledged by the government to members of the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) would be granted by the end of this month.[\(JP\)](#)
6. Mercy has built 200 houses in Wue Raya village under its tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation programme, and the surviving villagers will move into the homes at the end of September.[\(IR\)](#)
7. Malaysia has welcomed the Aceh peace agreement, signed between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM).[\(antara\)](#)
8. Aceh's Iskandar Muda Military Commander, Maj Gen Supiadin AS, has asked all parties to avoid making confusing statements after the signing of a peace agreement by the government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in Helsinki.[\(Antara\)](#)

BRR: Nias Has No Reconstruction Blueprint

<http://www.indonesia-relief.org/mod.php?mod=publisher&op=viewarticle&cid=20&artid=1553>

Contrary to its existence, Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) on Thursday said it has no reconstruction plan to rebuild the devastated island of Nias. As a consequence, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in Nias are left behind similar efforts in Aceh province.

The 'unique statement' made by William Sabandar, a man known as head of BRR's Office in Nias. Additionally he said that Nias wasn't included in blue print that "currently being made" by BRR, Bappenas, and World Bank.

As Nias didn't included in the blueprint, William said he and two other BRR officials have to create their own blueprint for Nias. "We have to create the blue print, make consolidation, and communicate it. As consequences, so far we could only touch elites among Nianese," he said.

According to William, the problem that he has to face in managing reconstruction efforts in Nias is not only about how to construct physical infrastructure, but also how to rebuild the island social institution.

As an example, he explained: "We came to a village where 100 houses destroyed by last March earthquake. We told them that we are ready to help them in constructing 30 houses and asked them to run the project. The people reject our offering, saying that they don't want to fight with each other because have to decide who should received the house. They say that it would be better if BRR implement the project and distribute the houses."

Indonesian government has provided Rp 431 billion for Nias reconstruction, but so far no progress has been made in Nias.

Head of Nias District Binahati Baeha admitted the lack of progress. "It's already five month since last March earthquake, but nothing positive made in Nias. We understand if people questioning our efforts, but we have to rebuild all aspect of Nias and it takes time."

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Aceh Rebels Seek Safety before Disarming

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,1280,-5219616,00.html>

(AP) - Rebel fighters promised Thursday to abide by an agreement to end a 29-year war in Indonesia's tsunami-ravaged Aceh province, but sought security guarantees before handing over their weapons.

Rebel spokesman Sofyan Dawood, speaking to reporters for the first time since a peace accord was signed Monday, also called the withdrawal of thousands of Indonesian troops from the region "crucial."

"Our safety is now in the hands of (European Union and Southeast Asian) peace monitors," he said at his jungle hideout, asking that they help protect the rebels when they start handing over their guns in mid-September.

The peace deal, which will help ease the flow of aid to victims of the Dec. 26 tsunami, was signed in Finland by Indonesian Justice and Human Rights Minister Hamid Awaluddin and exiled Free Aceh Movement leader Malik Mahmud after seven months of negotiations.

Though several earlier accords have collapsed - the most recent in 2003 - both sides say the chances of success are much higher this time.

In a sign of good faith, the government released more than 400 rebel fighters from prisons Wednesday to mark the country's Independence Day. Hundreds more will be freed as early as next week, almost all of them political prisoners, Awaluddin said.

As part of the agreement the rebels gave up their long-held demand for full independence and agreed to disarm.

In return, Jakarta offered Aceh a greater say in running its affairs through a "special autonomy" deal that gives its people the right to choose their own government.

It also promised to withdraw 27,000 of the 50,000 soldiers and police now in the region, and agreed to clear all major troop movements with the head of the 250-member international monitoring force.

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DKK-TV7 to Start Three Educational Infrastructure Projects

<http://www.indonesia-relief.org/mod.php?mod=publisher&op=viewarticle&cid=5&artid=1552>

Kompas – Dana Kemanusiaan Kompas (DKK), tsunami fund collecting agency established by Jakarta based Kompas daily, will implement its plan to build 3 educational infrastructures in Aceh. On Thursday, DKK signed agreement with state owned construction company, PT Pembangunan Perumahan, as contractor of the projects. The projects will cost Rp 33 billion (\$3.3 million).

President Director of Kelompok Kompas Gramedia (KKG) Jakob Oetama signed the agreement with Musyanif, President Director of PT Pembangunan Perumahan. On signing the agreement, Jakoeb announced that the money that will be used to finance the projects is not Kompas's money, but tsunami donation collected by the daily.

Additionally, its sister company, TV-7 (a television station), also channeled its tsunami donation to support the projects.

The first project is construction of mosque and apartment for lecturer of IAIN Ar-Raniri's post graduate program in Banda Aceh. The project cost Rp 5.48 billion. The second is construction of meeting hall and dormitory in University of Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, which cost Rp 8.1 billion. The last is construction of an integrated school (TK, SD, SMP, SMA) in Meulaboh, which cost Rp 19.4 billion.

Kompas is the biggest national daily in Indonesia. Serambi Indonesia daily in Aceh also owned by Kompas Group (KKG).

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President Supports Construction of Islamic School in Nias

<http://www.indonesia-relief.org/mod.php?mod=publisher&op=viewarticle&cid=5&artid=1554>

Sinar Indonesia Baru – After attending ceremony to inaugurate Indonesia's Independence Day in Nias, Indonesian Minister of Cabinet Secretary TB Silalahi visited an Islamic elementary school belong to Muhammadiyah in Gunung Sitoli. There he announced that Indonesian president will fulfill request made by Novi Tanjung, the school student, which asked the president to rebuild her school.

“Novi asked the president directly during his visit to this islamic school a few months ago. I came here to bring president message that he agreed to support reconstruction of this Muhammadiyah school,” said Silalahi, which visited the school accompanied by local leaders, including Head of Nias District Binahati Baeha, on Wednesday.

But Silalahi iterated that the president only ‘support’ the Islamic school reconstruction project. But it will be financed by several donors in Jakarta who committed to help rebuild the school. Silalahi said the donors already committed to provide Rp 1 billion, and the projects will start this month.

Silalahi also said that he just heard from Binahati Baeha that reconstruction in Nias district hasn't started yet. Baeha told him that local government wants to create a new blueprint for Nias, so they have to ask people not to rebuild their own house or building before the blueprint completed.

Nias reconstruction for the next 4 to 5 years, the retired General said, will need about Rp 7 trillion. For current year, the government has provided Rp 421 billion.

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US Philanthropy Helps Rebuild Schools in Tsunami-Ravaged Areas

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2005-08-18-voa59.cfm>

A philanthropic foundation, based in the northeastern U.S. state of Vermont, has donated almost \$2 million to help rebuild schools and make other contributions to education in areas of Indonesia and Thailand that were hit hard by the December tsunami.

The Freeman Foundation has long been involved in education and Asian-related philanthropic projects, supporting Asian Studies programs at U.S. universities, clearing landmines in Vietnam, and providing relief to earthquake victims in Thailand.

Every year, the foundation also brings 22 students from Asia to study at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. After the tsunami struck, the foundation canvassed the Wesleyan alumni in Indonesia and Thailand for their recommendations on how best to help.

Houghton Freeman, the head of the foundation, says the focus will be on education. "It will be for education. It may be scholarships. It may be schoolbooks. It may be rebuilding a schoolhouse. It may be bringing in teachers from other areas - whatever they think will do the best and the most good," he said.

The foundation asked the New York-based Institute of International Education to administer the donation.

The institute's Peggy Blumenthal says everything in the educational infrastructure needs rebuilding.

"Particularly in the coastal regions, where the entire communities were leveled, the first thing is just getting a place for the students to sit, and get together, and have pencils and pens, and have the teachers talk to them," she said. "Ultimately, it is to build structures. The first step is just getting people some place to continue going to school, and then to rebuild structures, and then to retrain teachers, because teachers were lost, as well as students and families."

The Freeman contribution will be used to help youngsters of all ages, from elementary through secondary school. In Indonesia, some of the funds will also be used to prepare older students for university entrance exams.

The Institute of International Education's representative in Indonesia, Irid Agoes, spoke with VOA Correspondent Nancy-Amelia Collins in Jakarta. Ms. Agoes says the donation will focus on four areas.

"First, is for helping the national examination preparation program in many places, around seven places in Aceh, and then the book donation that will be distributed to around five schools," she said. "So, they are sending around 3,000 sets of books to those schools, to high schools. And then, of course, the rehabilitation of school buildings in five schools in Banda Aceh, two schools in Aceh Besar, two schools also in Pidie, and the last

would be scholarship for high school students, around 800 students, and it's still now in the selection process, and 10 university students."

In addition to helping restart schools, the institute's Peggy Blumenthal says the program has another benefit, keeping the local Wesleyan graduates involved.

"This was actually part of the design that the Freeman Foundation had, which I think was so wise, to try to help returned students become more engaged with philanthropy in their own country, by giving them this very good experience of helping to identify the appropriate grant recipients, and to stay involved with the project. So, it is both a very timely gift to the countries, and also a way of having these alumnae become philanthropists in training," she said.

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Helsinki spirit put to a test in Aceh

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/detailheadlines.asp?fileid=20050818.@02&irec=1>

The peace agreement between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) faced its first test on Wednesday when plainclothes police threatened rebels who were released from the Jantho penitentiary in Aceh Besar regency.

One of the officers took a picture of a GAM prisoner, Jamal, near a rebel flag inside his cell, while two others pulled out and brandished their handguns at the departing prisoners.

Jamal is among 48 GAM inmates imprisoned in Jantho who received remissions on their sentences in conjunction with the independence anniversary. He was immediately free thanks to the sentence cut.

Other former prisoners chased after the gunmen, defying warnings from prison wardens.

The tensions intensified when the gunmen managed to escape and joined their colleagues, who were also equipped with rifles and waiting in a Kijang van outside the jail.

Families of the prisoners, mostly women, who had been waiting for a reunion, scattered in panic.

"We are not going to leave the prison unless there is a guarantee that we can walk unharmed," one of the GAM prisoners shouted, while the other began to break down the prison gate.

Aceh Besar Police are investigating the four officers in connection with the scuffle, while some GAM prisoners were on Wednesday night still refusing to leave the jail.

The government has awarded sentence cuts to 754 GAM prisoners across the country, 285 of them in Aceh.

More GAM prisoners will soon breathe the air of freedom following the signing of peace pact between the Indonesian government and the GAM leaders in Helsinki on Monday. A key point of the agreement stipulates an amnesty for GAM fighters and other political prisoners.

Also in Aceh Besar regency, villagers residing in a GAM stronghold in the Indrapuri subdistrict refused to celebrate the anniversary of independence, saying they would rather hoist GAM flags and part with Indonesia.

"We are still traumatized by the military, although a peace accord has been signed," a woman said.

She said dozens of her neighbors had been killed or had gone missing since the government imposed martial law on Aceh in mid-May of 2003. Most of the men in the village had also sought protection from GAM guerrillas, whose hideouts were located in several hilly areas nearby.

Another woman also claimed that soldiers came to their village early in the morning on Wednesday and forced them to raise the red-and-white flag.

"If we refused, they came into our house and took the flag and hoisted it themselves," she said.

In the rest of the province, the celebrations ran peacefully. In Banda Aceh, red-and-white flags have been flying since early in August.

A modest ceremony took place in the Blang Padang field, presided over by Iskandar Muda Military Commander Maj. Gen. Supiadin A.S.

"We would be grateful if GAM members participated in the celebration," Supiadin said. "I don't mind if they fail to attend (the ceremony) and decide to continue their struggle, but if they carry weapons we will treat them as criminals."

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Govt to grant amnesty to GAM members by Aug. 31

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/detailheadlines.asp?fileid=20050818.@02&irec=1>

Minister of Justice and Human Rights Hamid Awaluddin said on Thursday that the amnesties pledged by the government to members of the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) would be granted by the end of this month.

"Hopefully, all the amnesties will have been granted by Aug. 31 at the latest," he told reporters on the sidelines of a visit to Sukamiskin penitentiary in Bandung, West Java.

Hamid, who was also the chief negotiator for the Indonesian government at the informal talks with GAM to end the armed conflict in the oil-rich province, was visiting Sukamiskin prison to oversee the preparations for a ceremony marking the release of GAM members after the granting of amnesty.

During his visit, Hamid talked to 18 GAM members detained in Sukamiskin penitentiary, three of whom -- Tgk. Kamarulzaman, Amni bin Ahmad Yaki and Mohammad Usman Lampo -- are top figures in the rebel movement.

"I have come here to discuss how to return them to Aceh after the granting of amnesties," he said.

He said that the government would first seek approval from the House of Representatives before granting the amnesties.

"That's why the government and the House will hold a consultation meeting to discuss the amnesty as soon as possible," he said.

According to Hamid, there are 500 GAM prisoners held in jails across Java island.

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Mercy Malaysia Rebuilds Banda Aceh's Village

<http://www.indonesia-relief.org/mod.php?mod=publisher&op=viewarticle&cid=18&artid=1551>

Life is returning to Kampung Weu Raya in Banda Aceh in Sumatra which was destroyed by the Dec 26 tsunami last year thanks to the Malaysian Medical Relief Society (Mercy).

Mercy has built 200 houses in Wue Raya village under its tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation programme, and the surviving villagers will move into the homes at the end of September in time for the Ramadhan fast and Aidilfitri celebration, according to a Mercy statement, here Thursday.

The statement said the houses were built using a seismic resistant technology which would protect them in the earthquake-prone region.

A powerful undersea earthquake off Sumatra triggered the tsunami which swept across the Indian Ocean, crushing shorelines from Thailand to east Africa.

An estimated 220,000 people in north Sumatra, mostly in Aceh province, were killed or missing in the disaster which also left some 500,000 others homeless.

Besides the new houses, Mercy also repaired 14 partially damaged houses in the village, and completed essential infrastructures such as a community centre, water supply and sanitation facilities, access road and electrical wiring.

The rehabilitated village will be officially launched next month.

"This would signify a return to a state of normality in their lives after the tsunami," Mercy said.

The launching ceremony will be attended by Mercy president Datuk Dr Jemilah Mahmood, a representative of the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta, the acting Governor of Aceh Azwar Abubakar and the Mayor of Aceh Mawardi Nurdin

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MALAYSIA WELCOMES ACEH PEACE AGREEMENT

<http://www.antara.co.id/en/seenws/?id=5789>

Malaysia has welcomed the Aceh peace agreement, signed between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), and has said it hopes that it will be sustainable.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said that "with the involvement of the European Union (EU) and ASEAN to monitor and work together, I hope there will be durable and lasting peace".

Malaysia will send a team of between 25 and 30 people to monitor the implementation of the peace pact in Aceh, headed by "a very high ranking official", he said.

The Indonesian government and GAM signed on August 15 the peace pact in Helsinki, Finland, putting an end to a conflict that has left almost 15,000 people dead in Aceh, VNA reported.

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ACEH MILY COMMANDER ASKS ALL PARTIES NOT TO MAKE CONFUSING STATEMENTS

<http://www.antara.co.id/en/seenws/?id=5777>

Aceh's Iskandar Muda Military Commander, Maj Gen Supiadin AS, has asked all parties to avoid making confusing statements after the signing of a peace agreement by the government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in Helsinki, Finland, on August 15.

"I ask all parties to avoid making statements which can confuse the Acehnese people," Supiadin told newsmen after leading a ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of Indonesian independence here on Wednesday.

He also expressed hope nobody would make wrong interpretations of the content of the peace agreement between the government and GAM.

"Let us respect the content of the agreement instead of making different interpretations," the Iskandar Muda Military commander said, adding that the Acehnese people were yearning for lasting peace in their province.

According to Supiadin, security conditions across Aceh following the signing of the government-GAM peace agreement were quite conducive.

"Thanks God, I have not received any report of violence since the signing of the memorandum of understanding on peace in Aceh," Supiadin said.

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