



### Top Stories



#### Official Myanmar death toll increases to 78,000

Myanmar has raised the official death toll from the recent Cyclone Nargis to 77,738, with another 55,917 listed as missing. This is still below estimates from the United Nations and the Red Cross. The UN is working to improve access to Myanmar.

#### Asbestos victims file 6.6 billion yen class action lawsuit in Tokyo

Construction workers and next of kin of deceased workers filed a lawsuit in Tokyo, Japan Friday seeking damages of approximately 6.6 billion yen (about US\$444 million) from the government and manufacturers related to illnesses stemming from exposure to asbestos. 178 plaintiffs; including construction workers and family members filed the suit in Tokyo District Court against 46 building manufacturers and the Government of Japan.

#### United States Senator Ted Kennedy rushed to the hospital

The Democratic senator from Massachusetts was rushed to a local hospital, and later flown to

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another, after reportedly suffering stroke-like symptoms, doctors later concluding he had two seizures.

#### California Supreme Court strikes down ban on gay marriage

The Supreme Court of California in a 4-3 decision has struck down California's ban on gay marriage. The decision struck down two laws one from 1977 and another more recent one due to a referendum in 2000. Prior to this case, California allowed extensive benefits to gay couples that were in practice close to those given to heterosexual couples.

### Wikipedia Current Events

Big Brown wins the 2008 Preakness Stakes putting him in the running to become the first horse to win the Triple Crown since Affirmed in 1978.

- Portsmouth F.C. win the FA Cup defeating Cardiff City F.C. 1-0 in the 2008 FA Cup Final.
- An 11 week old dispute between American Axle and the United Auto Workers is settled, restoring the supply of parts to General Motors.
- More than 3,000 people are evacuated from Lafayette, Louisiana, after two of six derailed train cars start leaking hydrochloric acid.
- The President of the United States George W. Bush states that a Palestinian state can be

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"defined" by the end of his Presidency including the issue of borders and right to resettlement.

- U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy is rushed to Cape Cod Hospital from the Kennedy Compound and flown to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, after reportedly suffering stroke-like symptoms. Doctors later thought he had suffered two seizures.
- An assassination threat delays the return of Morgan Tsvangarai to Zimbabwe to contest a runoff election to decide the presidential election.
- Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, travels to Baghdad for meetings with Iraqi and United States officials.
- Islamic Courts Union rebels claim to have captured the town of Jilib in Somalia.
- 2008 Sichuan earthquake: China recommends the evacuation of seriously injured people from Beichuan due to concerns about rising water levels of a lake in the area.

#### United States Senator Ted Kennedy rushed to the hospital

United States Senator Ted Kennedy, a Democrat from Massachusetts, was rushed to Cape Cod Hospital from the Kennedy Compound, after reportedly suffering stroke-like symptoms. After two hours in the emergency room, he was flown to

Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. Doctors later concluded he had suffered two seizures, one at his home in Hyannis Port, and another en route to Massachusetts General Hospital from Cape Cod Hospital. It was reported that Kennedy was conscious and with family as doctors worked to determine the cause of the seizures.

### **Warsaw court requests testimony from Thatcher and Gorbachev**

A Warsaw court threw out an indictment against nine persons accused of illegally imposing martial law in communist Poland in December 1981. In handing the case back to National Remembrance Institute (IPN) prosecutors it pointed out "significant shortcomings" in the underlying investigation and requesting testimony from several world leaders from that time, including British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and later Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

The court also ordered the IPN to obtain documentation from various foreign archives, including Russian ones. It said the information presented in the indictment was incomplete, outdated and self-contradictory.

General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who headed the Polish government during martial law and who originally asked for testimony by world leaders to be included in the trial, declined to comment.

### **Lake near Bristol drained of water through vandalism**

All water has drained out of Marine Lake in Weston-Super-Mare, near Bristol, United Kingdom due to a recent attack by vandals.

Vandals forced open a sluice gate,

and this resulted in all water being drained from the lake. The gate was originally placed there as part of a £29m project carried out by North Somerset Council, which says that the project aims to "improve flood defences and regenerate Weston-super-Mare's seafront."

"This is due to a bit of mindless vandalism by people trying to force open one of the sluice gates," said a council spokesperson. "Presumably it was the same yobs who thought it would be fun to splatter mud over the nearby wall."

The council has said it is expected the water level will start to restore at the next high tide and is viewing CCTV footage to locate those responsible.

### **Asbestos victims file 6.6 billion yen class action lawsuit in Tokyo**

Construction workers and next of kin of deceased workers filed a lawsuit in Tokyo, Japan Friday seeking damages of approximately 6.6 billion yen (about US\$444 million) from the government and manufacturers related to illnesses stemming from exposure to asbestos. 178 plaintiffs; including construction workers and family members filed the suit in Tokyo District Court against 46 building manufacturers and the Government of Japan.

According to the Mainichi Daily News, the class action suit is the first that has been filed in Japan related to health damages caused by asbestos exposure at construction sites. The plaintiffs hail from the Japanese prefectures of Tokyo, Saitama and Chiba.

The plaintiffs claim that the

government and manufacturers knew of the dangers of asbestos inhalation but failed to take proper precautions, including ceasing to promote asbestos as a cheap fire retardant and banning production of the material.

They state that after inhaling asbestos in the workplace, 172 people have developed lung cancer or mesothelioma, and that almost half of those afflicted are now dead. Plaintiffs argue that the government and health ministry did not act quickly enough after international organizations issued warnings in 1972 that asbestos could be a carcinogen.

Plaintiffs also place blame with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry for sanctioning the use of asbestos under Japanese Industrial Standards, and with the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport for approving the use of materials comprised of asbestos and other substances under Japan's Building Standards Law.

"We will do our utmost until we win the suit." —Kazuo Miyajima

"We will do our utmost until we win the suit," said Kazuo Miyajima, 78, who heads the group of plaintiffs. Lawyers for the plaintiffs released a statement saying: "We seek complete relief for the victims by clarifying the liability of the state and the manufacturers."

Approximately 40 construction workers from Kanagawa Prefecture plan to file a similar lawsuit in June in Yokohama District Court.

After a 2005 revelation that residents who lived near a factory in Amagasaki, Hyogo Prefecture developed diseases related to asbestos, the government

implemented a law in 2006 which provides monetary assistance to asbestos victims and relatives of deceased family members. The plaintiffs argue that the amount of financial assistance given to families and victims of asbestos-related diseases is not sufficient.

Asbestos has been used in Japan as a fire retardant, for sound absorption, and for insulation. It was mixed in concrete and water and sprayed on walls and ceilings, but the practice of spraying asbestos in this manner was banned in Japan in 1975.

**Today in History**

1268 – Baibars and his Mamluk forces captured Antioch, capital of the crusader state, the Principality of Antioch.

1848 – During the aftermath of the March Revolution in the German Confederation, the Frankfurt Parliament opened in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt am Main.

1896 – The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the landmark case Plessy v. Ferguson, upholding the legality of racial segregation in public transportation under the "Separate but equal" doctrine.

1958 – The F-104 Starfighter, a supersonic interceptor aircraft, set a world speed record of 1,404.19 miles per hour (2,259.82 km/h).

1980 – The stratovolcano Mount St. Helens erupted, killing 57 people in southern Washington State, reducing hundreds of square miles to wasteland, and causing over a billion U.S. dollars in damages.

May 18 is Trinity Sunday (Western Christianity, 2008); International Museum Day

**Quote of the Day**

To save the world requires faith and courage: faith in reason, and courage to proclaim what reason shows to be true.

~ Bertrand Russell

**Word of the Day**

unanimous adj

1. Based on unanimity, complete assent or agreement.
2. Sharing the same views or opinions, and being in complete harmony or accord.

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