



Top Stories

Gonzales resigns



→U.S. Attorney General to leave office September 17

→Paul Clement to serve as acting Attorney General

Hot air balloon fire kills two, injures eleven in Canada

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Featured story

Horse flu spreads in Australia



The number of horses confirmed to be infected with Equine Influenza in

Australia has risen to 47. It appears the Australia wide ban on horse movements which expires on Wednesday may have to be extended.

Wikipedia Current Events

Indonesia's karate team has boycotted an Asian championship

Wikipedia Current Events

in Malaysia to protest the beating of one of its official referees by the local police.

•United States Attorney General Alberto Gonzales has announced his resignation.

•Ten people are arrested in Russia over the murder of investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya.

•Southeast Asian nations will seek \$2 billion to build a rail link between Kunming in China to Singapore.

•Continuation of an Equine influenza outbreak in Australia could threaten security at next weeks APEC meeting.

•A fire breaks out at the Jebel Ali port in the United Arab Emirates triggering explosions at a chemical storage depot.

•The Vatican establishes a low cost charter flight service to Catholic shrines in France, Poland, Spain and the Middle East for pilgrims.

•A report from the National People's Congress environment and resources protection committee finds that high levels of pollution in the Huai River and its tributaries poses a "threat to the water safety of one sixth of the country's 1.3 billion population".

•Former Deputy Prime Minister of the UK John Prescott announces he will retire as a Member of Parliament at the next election.

Finland offers helicopters, personnel to assist Greece with forest fires

The government of Finland has announced it will offer to send three specialist firefighting helicopters, 25 firefighters and 2-3 forest fire experts to Greece via the European Union to assist with the forest fire emergency Greece is currently experiencing.

Greece is currently in urgent need of fixed-wing aircraft with water-bombing capabilities, assets which Finland does not possess. If the Greek authorities deem Finland's offers to be suitable, they will be dispatched with immediate effect, within six hours of Greece requesting the rotorcraft and personnel.

It is thought that the men would most likely be put to use protecting built-up areas in an attempt to prevent the death toll, already over 60, from rising any higher.

The helicopters have been sourced via a private company. Finland said that the country could not commit to send the aircraft any sooner without arrangements being made to cover their removal from service, as otherwise safety in Finland would be severely jeopardised, with emergency aircraft unavailable should Finland experience any fires of its own.

The helicopters Finland have available can each carry up to 800 litres of water or foam retardant, whereas large firefighting planes

can carry tens of thousands of litres.

Finland had previously thought they would be unable to spare any help for Greece, and it was only after much sourcing of aircraft from the private sector that Finland was able to make the offer. Finland are also looking into whether they may be of assistance in reforestation efforts after the fires have been extuigished.

U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales resigns

US Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, after several months of controversy, today announced his resignation after 13 years of public service. He will leave office on September 17, 2007. While he did not elaborate on the circumstances of his departure, he referred to his tenure as a "remarkable journey" and said he had "lived the American dream."

Critics of the embattled Attorney General have called for his ousting for several months, largely over his conflicts with the US Congress over the Bush Administration's warrant-less wiretapping program, and his firing of nine US attorneys.

Observers have expressed surprise at the sudden announcement, as Gonzales had said as recently as the weekend of the 18th of August that he had planned to stay through the end of President Bush's second term.

Critics of the Attorney General, most notably Harry Reid, majority leader for the US Senate, have welcomed the announcement, as Gonzales had been one of the most controversial members of the Bush Administration.

President Bush spoke on his "close friend's" resignation saying that he

has reluctantly accepted the resignation, but noted that Gonzales' name had been "dragged through the mud for political reasons." Throughout the recent controversy Bush has stood next to Gonzales. Paul Clement, the current Solicitor General, will serve as the acting Attorney General until a replacement has been confirmed by the Senate.

U.S. Open Day 1 Report

The U.S. Open kicked off Day 1 with many epic tennis matches. The USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center was abuzz with tennis fans young and old heading out to see their favorite players play their round one matches.

Day Session

Swiss World #1 Roger Federer beat American Scoville Jenkins in straight sets, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4. #21 seed Juan Carlos Ferrero was upset by unseeded Feliciano López, 3-6, 4-6, 4-6. United States newcomer Donald Young won his first match against Australian Chris Guccione. Nikolay Davydenko defeated American Jesse Levine 6-4, 6-0, 6-1. #18 seed Marcos Baghdatis was upset by World #106 Max Mirnyi 6-3, 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 in an epic battle in which Mirnyi came back in the last set tiebreaker from 1-5 to win 8-6. Tommy Haas defeated Steve Darcis 6-7, 7-5, 6-3, 6-4. #19 seed Andy Murray, the British number one, comfortably defeated Uruguayan Pablo Cuevas 6-2, 6-3, 6-0.

World #1 Justine Henin progressed to the second round by defeating her opponent in straight sets. Jelena Janković defeated Olga Govortsova 6-2, 7-6. Marion Bartoli defeated American Alexa Glatch 6-1, 6-1.

Check back to Wikinews for more

match updates as well as the Evening Session results.

MLB: Houston Astros fire manager Phil Garner and GM Tim Purpura

The Houston Astros have fired manager Phil Garner and general manager Tim Purpura less than two years after leading the team to its first World Series appearance (2005).

Bench coach Cecil Cooper was appointed interim manager and team president Tal Smith will serve as interim general manager.

"I felt this was the time for a change," owner Drayton McLane said. "I just think we needed a fresh start."

Garner took over the Astros in the middle of the 2004 season after Jimmy Williams was fired. The Astros went 48-26 in the second half and won 36 of their last 46 games to win the NL wild card, then defeated Atlanta in the first round of the playoffs before losing to St. Louis in Game 7 of the NL Championship Series.

Garner managed Milwaukee from 1992-99 and Detroit from 2000-02. He has a 985-1,054 career record as a major league manager, including 277-252 with the Astros.

Purpura joined the organization in 1994 and directed player development and the Astros' six minor league affiliates before taking over from Gerry Hunsicker as GM before the 2005 season.

The Astros are currently in fifth place in the National League Central with a record of 58-73.

Hot air balloon fire kills two, injures eleven in Canada

A hot air balloon caught fire and

crashed in western Canada. Two people were killed and eleven were injured.

The disaster occurred as the airship was preparing to take off from Surrey, British Columbia, a suburb of Vancouver. An unknown source caused a fire in the basket of the tethered balloon, which then broke free and rose into the air.

Of the twelve passengers and one pilot on board at the time, eleven escaped the balloon with severe burns and other non-life-threatening injuries by jumping out in mid-air. The balloon then collapsed, crashing into a motorhome park with two people still trapped on board, who were killed in the subsequent fire. Four static caravans and two cars were also destroyed in the blaze.

The two deceased are believed to be a mother and daughter. Their family was on scene during the disaster and watched as the balloon burnt up and crashed.

Witness Don Randall, who photographed the accident, said "The thing went up about 400 feet (122m) in the air at which point it melted enough of the balloon it collapsed." "The basket was basically a fireball. It just dropped like a stone. I'm just thinking, 'Oh geez, I hope there's nobody in that thing. It's basically a burning death up there.'"

Bill Yearwood, an investigator with the Transportation Safety Board of Canada, told reporters what preliminary information was available: "The crew loaded 12 passengers and was preparing to launch when a fire erupted. The pilot asked the passengers to get out of the basket. The balloon was tethered at the time, but then broke and came loose. The balloon

climbed into the air before collapsing in a residential area in the park. They were all trying to get out. I can't tell you what exactly happened when the balloon was loosened from the tether."

Injured survivor Diana Rutledge questioned the pilot, Steve Pennock, 's actions after the fire broke out, pointing out that he was first off the balloon. "He was in perfect shape," she said. "I thought, what is this all about? Wouldn't he have stayed on to try to stop the fires?"

Joyce Genest, a resident at the park, also questioned procedure that day. "I stopped to watch the balloon get inflated," she said.

"Normally it takes 25 minutes and it's quite gorgeous to watch. They are never in a big hurry. This time they took about 10 minutes." She says the passengers then got straight into the balloon, an unusual occurrence. "Normally the pilot gets in and tests the gun twice and then everybody gets in," she said. "As soon as everybody was in, he hit the gun and the flame went sideways."

Cricket: England beat India in third one-day international

England have beaten India by 42 runs in the third One-Day International of the series at Edgbaston, Birmingham, England.

India won the toss and captain Rahul Dravid chose to send England in to bat first. England posted a score of 281-8 after fifty overs. After a bright start from opening batsmen Alastair Cook and Matt Prior, who shared a partnership of 76 runs, England were restricted by the Indian bowlers and Kevin Pietersen was stumped by wicket-keeper

Mahendra Singh Dhoni for just nine runs. Paul Collingwood scored 44 runs and Ian Bell finished on 79, while R P Singh was the best performing Indian bowler with 3-55.

In response, India faltered early on when Sachin Tendulkar was dismissed for just eight runs followed by Dinesh Karthik an over later for a duck. However Rahul Dravid and Sourav Ganguly shared a 104 run partnership, with both batsmen reaching their fifty, which was ended when Dravid was bowled by Chris Tremlett for 56. In his next over, Tremlett also removed Sourav Ganguly when he was caught behind for 72. India's run chase suffered further blows when Mahendra Singh Dhoni was dismissed for 13 and Yuvraj Singh run out for 45. India were bowled out for 239 runs, 43 runs short of the target. James Anderson was the pick of the England bowlers, taking 3-32.

England lead the seven match series 2-1. The fourth match will be played at Old Trafford, Manchester on August 30.

Prescott to stand down as MP

John Prescott, former Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom is to stand down as a Member of Parliament after the next general election.

Mr Prescott, 69, who has been MP for the constituency for Hull East for 37 years, made his announcement for at a weekend garden party. Stephen Brady, chairman of the local Labour association said, "John told us he would not be standing again. People paid tribute to his long service. It was an emotional event."

Prescott, recently took up the post

of head of the Parliamentary delegation to the Council of Europe. It is suspected he may enter the House of Lords and has been reported that he sold his memoirs for £300,000.

There has also been speculations over who will replace Prescott as an MP. Amongst the people who have been mentioned are Prescott's son David Prescott and Chris Leslie, an aide to Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Serbian firefighters shot at from Kosovo

Serbian firefighters battling fires in the Kuršumlija area, near the administrative line with Kosovo have reportedly been shot at by Albanians from the Podujevo municipality in Kosovo. Since then, firefighters were denied access to the area.

"Firefighters heard automatic gunfire and temporarily withdrew from the area, while the fire began to spread nearer to the Kuršumlija villages," a forestry engineer said.

Gift of footballs from United States offends Afghans inadvertently

The American military has been accused of offending people in Afghanistan when it distributed footballs, which had been printed with images of flags from around the world. One of the flags of Saudi Arabia which contains the shahadah, one of the five Pillars of Islam. Critics say that this is offensive. As a result, a protest in the Khost province of south east Afghanistan took place, where 100 people attended.

One Afghan MP, Mirwais Yasini said, "To have a verse of the Koran on something you kick with your foot would be an insult in any Muslim country."

The U.S. forces in Afghanistan indicated the balls were meant to be a gift to Afghan children. A spokeswoman said, "Unfortunately, there was something on those footballs we didn't immediately understand to be offensive and we regret that as we do not want to offend."

This is not the first time the flag has been used on a football. In 2002, there were protests when a planned football was to contain the Saudi Arabia flag for the 2002 Football World Cup.

Greece on fire, death toll exceeds 60

Fires continue to burn in Greece on Monday destroying everything in their path. Death toll has exceeded 60 with daily Greek newspapers Kathimerini and Ta Nea reporting reporting 61 and 63 deaths respectively. Ancient Olympia, birthplace of the Olympics, was also threatened but firefighters kept the site safe. The new museum of Olympia was saved in the last minute but part of the ancient stadium was not spared. The Greek Government has offered a 1 million Euro reward for anyone providing information which leads to the arrest of an arsonist. A Greek government statement read: "The reward is set between 100,000 and 1m euros for every [act] of arson, depending on whether death or serious injury occurred and the size of the damage."

Government Criticism

/The Greek government is under severe criticism for not doing enough to combat the raging fires. Greek newspaper Ta Nea is reporting that the government is facing collapse accusing it of lacking an organized plan to combat the fires. It adds that

there are tens of reports resulting from witnesses that demonstrate the ad hoc movement of fire fighting forces but also tragically, an absence of a plan for evacuating villages resulting in the unnecessarily increased death toll.

Foreign Help

Emergency workers and fire-fighting planes from other European Union countries have joined the battle against the fires, and more help is expected from countries outside the EU.

List of affected areas

Updated on August 26, 2007 at 22:00

- Arta: Under partial control.
- Pella: Kleisohori village in flames.
- Evros: Mikrakio in flames.
- Iliia: New fires in Prasadaki, Bartholomio, Makistos, Sekoula, Lalas, Leprea, Fanari.
- Messenia: Fires rage on in Tavgeto, Finikounta, Metaksades, Diavolitsi.
- Laconia: Fronts in the areas of: Geraki, Kallithea, Platanaki, Palaioxori, Oitilos, Aeropoli.
- Evia: Aliveri, Mesoxori, Traxili, Kremastos, Mistogeronta, Farana, Partheni, Gaia, Manikia.
- Zakynthos: Fire in Alikana.
- Arkadia: Araxomites, Asea, Leontari, Mavriki, Makrisi.
- Corinth: Improvement in sofiko, fires still burning in Kalentzi, Halki, Soulinari, Agia Triada, Milea.
- Argolis: Fire burning in the area of Lefkakia.
- Phthiotis: Perivoli, Asvestis, Dilofo, Zilefto.
- Thesprotia: Under partial control the fire in Tsamanda.
- Viotia: Kanalaki, Mazi.

- Corfu: New fire in the area of porta.

Horse flu spreads in Australia

The number of horses confirmed to be infected with Equine Influenza in Australia has risen to 47, all in the state of New South Wales. So far none of those confirmed infected have been thoroughbred race horses.

The NSW government has confirmed infections at the federal government's quarantine facility at Eastern Creek and Centennial Park in Sydney; at Cattai and Wilberforce in North-Western Sydney; and in Moonbi, Parkes, Berry and Wyong in regional NSW.

It is also feared that the outbreak may have spread to Warwick in Queensland where three horses from NSW showed flu-like symptoms during an equestrian event. Initial samples were tested in a laboratory in Brisbane revealing the three animals had been carrying the flu. Further testing will be conducted on samples from the horses in Victoria, although results are not expected until later this week. All 300 horses at the event have been quarantined.

There are also three suspected cases of the virus infecting thoroughbreds at Randwick racecourse in Sydney, if the horses test positive to the flu they will be the first thoroughbreds to be infected with the virus.

The Federal Agriculture Minister, Peter McGauran told ABC Radio this morning that while the source of the outbreak was not known, it is likely that the outbreak may have been caused by an equestrian event held in Maitland on the 18th and 19th of August.

"Everyone's been assuming it was the Centennial Park horses that travelled and infected horses in different parts of regional NSW," he said.

"It would appear at this stage that almost all, if not every horse affected has passed through a Maitland horse event on the weekend of the 18th and 19th, or come in contact with a Maitland horse."

Agriculture Minister of NSW, Ian Macdonald told reporters "It's early days yet, but a number of horses that attended an event at the property on that weekend are showing clinical signs of equine influenza".

"The NSW Chief Vet, Bruce Christie, has advised me that we need to locate and examine every single horse that entered and left the property."

At this stage it appears the Australia wide ban on horse movements which expires on Wednesday may have to be extended, at least in NSW and Queensland.

Nick Hogan, son of wrestling star Hulk Hogan 'seriously injured' in vehicle accident

Nick Hogan, 17, the son of wrestling star Hulk Hogan has been "seriously injured" in a vehicle accident along with one other unnamed individual. Both are reported to have been flown via helicopter to Bayfront Medical Center in St. Petersburg, Florida.

TMZ.com reports that police and witnesses say the accident occurred in Clearwater, Florida around 7:30 p.m. (eastern time) on Sunday night while Hogan was driving his Toyota Supra at a "very high rate of speed." He lost control

of his car and hit the center median, flipping which then slammed into a palm tree, resting on its back end.

The police said the two travelling in the car sustained "very very serious" injuries. They also said that the tree "destroyed the entire car".

A police officer was not far behind the car when it flipped over and radioed in for help. Firefighters had to use the 'jaws of life' to cut Hogan and the other individual free from the wreckage.

No call was made to 911 and the occupants conditions are not yet known.

Person from Indiana wins \$314 million Powerball jackpot

There was one ticket that matched all the numbers in last night's Poweball lottery game. The ticket was sold at the Speedway convenience store in eastern Indiana.

Lottery officials will not know who won the jackpot worth an estimated \$314 million until the winner comes forward.

The convenience store will receive \$100,000 for selling the winning ticket.

Last night's winning numbers were: 8, 23, 29, 35 and the Powerball was 19.

Also sold in Indiana was a ticket matching five of the six numbers, earning \$200,000.

The jackpot grew so huge because there was not a winner since early June.

The Powerball lottery game is sold in 19 states. Wednesday's jackpot

falls back down to \$15 million.

Today in History

1565 – Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founded St. Augustine in Spanish Florida, the oldest continually occupied European settlement in the continental United States.

1640 – Bishops' Wars: Scottish Covenanter forces led by Alexander Leslie defeated Charles I's English army at the Battle of Newburn near Newburn, England.

1845 – The first issue of the popular-science magazine Scientific American was published, currently the oldest continuously published magazine in the United States.

1850 – German composer Richard Wagner's romantic opera Lohengrin, featuring the Bridal Chorus, was first performed under the direction of Hungarian composer Franz Liszt in Weimar, Germany.

1963 – Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., describing his desire for a future where blacks and whites would coexist harmoniously as equals.

August 28 is Raksha Bandhan in Hinduism (2007).

Quote of the Day

The most futile thing in this world is any attempt, perhaps, at exact definition of character. All individuals are a bundle of contradictions — none more so than the most capable.
~ Theodore Dreiser

Word of the Day

obdurate; adj

1. Stubbornly persistent, generally in wrongdoing; refusing to reform or repent.
2. (obsolete) Physically hardened, toughened.

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