



Top Stories

Several hundred killed after stampede in Baghdad



Several hundred people have died after a stampede on a bridge in

Baghdad.

Total evacuation of New Orleans planned

As looters roam the flooded streets of New Orleans, the governor has announced a complete shut-down and evacuation of the city.

Featured story

Philippine impeachment unlikely to succeed



A Philippine congressional committee has voted to turn down all impeachment

petitions against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Wikipedia Current Events

- The federal government has declared a public health emergency for the Gulf Coast of the United States and launched one of the largest search and rescue missions in history.
- New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin states that "hundreds...most likely, thousands" may be dead in his city. The death toll in Biloxi stands at 110.

Wikipedia Current Events

- At least 25,000 refugees, particularly those currently in shelters in Greater New Orleans including the Louisiana Superdome, will be moved to the Reliant Astrodome in Houston, Texas.
- The United States will release oil from its Strategic Petroleum Reserve to help refineries whose operations have been badly hit by Hurricane Katrina.
- Al-Aaimmah bridge catastrophe, 2005: More than 965 people were crushed to death or died in a stampede on the Al-Aaimmah bridge over the river Tigris in Baghdad on Wednesday when thousands of Shia Muslims began marching to a shrine to the Imam Musa al-Kadhim. The stampede appears to have been caused by rumours of a series of Suicide Bombings, and the majority of victims appear to be women and children. Earlier 16 people in attendance died when insurgents fired mortars into the crowd.
- The relatives of the four Israeli Arabs killed on a bus in Galilee have been denied the usual terrorism compensation payments because their killer was a Jew, and thus not an "enemy of Israel" as defined by Israeli law.
- All Palestinian Authority Assets held in the United States have been frozen.
- A Philippine congressional committee has stopped all impeachment efforts against President Gloria Arroyo.

Philippine impeachment unlikely to succeed



President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

A Philippine congressional committee has voted to turn down all impeachment petitions against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. The opposition to the president, on boycott, was not present. The vote seems to have greatly undermined any chance of an impeachment of Arroyo.

Arroyo's critics say that she committed fraud during last year's presidential election. She has also been accused of bribing lawmakers in order to stop them from supporting complaints against her.

Edmundo Reyes, a pro-impeachment congressman, revealed that only six more signatures are needed to trigger a trial in the Philippine Senate. One-third of the legislative body - 79 members - must consent to the president's impeachment in order for a trial to occur. Currently, 73 lawmakers side with the opposition.

"Is there no one else?" asked an emotional Reyes. "Is there anyone else signing this for truth?"

The opposition has threatened to organize citizen protests demanding the president's removal. But Arroyo's Congress allies appear confident that they have destroyed the impeachment bid.

Carnival style protest held in Sydney



Protestors gathered in Customs Square to listen to speakers

The 30A protest in Sydney, Australia, occurred on Tuesday night in carnival style. The protest began around 5 p.m. at Customs Square, Circular Quay, with 1,000 to 2,000 people assembling to listen to speeches and music. After about an hour, the protestors marched along the Quay to the concrete and steel barricades preventing public access to the Opera House forecourt; where the carnival continued with music, drums, and dancing.

There were a wide variety of people present at the protest, including trade unionists, Christian groups, social justice groups, fair trade activists, and peace groups. Many people wore elaborate costumes, beat drums, played music, and sang.

All speakers emphasised the importance of protesting peacefully, encouraging protestors to avoid violence or confrontation at all costs. A number of speakers

thanked the police for their efforts.

At 6 p.m. the protesters marched towards the opera house, where there was a brief confrontation between police and protesters on the barricades. Music and dancing continued for a few hours after as people drifted away. The area was deserted by 9:30 p.m..

It was revealed during the evening that Tuesday evenings conference event was moved to a nearby ferry terminal because of security concerns.



Christians Against Greed gathered near Opera house

The main theme of the speeches was opposition to so-called neo-liberalism. The conference attendees were described as neo-liberals or "free market freaks", who support reduction of the minimum wage, reduction of welfare benefits, undermining of unions, and privatisation of essential services such as water.

Greens Senator Kerrie Nettle gave a rousing speech, accusing the conference delegates of failing to protect the environment and planning to privatise government services.

"The people inside that conference want to sell our public schools and hospitals," she said.

Some speakers also acknowledged

that the protest was taking place on Aboriginal land, and there was a moments silence to reflect on past and present crimes against Australian Aborigine's. The protesters chanted "Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land."



Police line in front of breached section of barricade

At about 6 p.m., as the speeches ended, the protesters left Customs Square and marched along Circular Quay to the barricades that had been erected at Maquarie St, to prevent the public from accessing the Opera House forecourt. A number of protesters began rocking the barricades and attempting to climb over. A flare was also thrown from the crowd over the barricades. After two or three minutes, the protesters were successful in causing one to lean over onto the ground. Police responded by using horses and batons to force the protesters back, and then forming a line of officers along the breached section to prevent anyone entering the exclusion zone. Police proceeded to make a small number of arrests.

The protesters continued their action in a peaceful manner from that point forward. The entire incident was over in less than five minutes.

Some protesters accused the police of using excessive force while making arrests. "As soon as

we reached the fence, a mass of people jumped on the fence and began shaking it. Some smoke bombs flew, police dogs were going crazy and shaking of the fence became more and more intense. The fence was pretty loose at this point. Suddenly the fence went DOWN!!! And the police began grabbing people who went over with it," said an eyewitness report on Sydney Indymedia. One protester was transported to hospital by ambulance after breaking his collarbone during the incident.

Italian petrol prices rocket to a record EUR 1.30 per litre

The price of petrol (gasoline) continues to rise in Italy. Today, a single litre (0.22 US gallons) of unleaded fuel (called green petrol in Italy) has reached EUR 1.295 (USD 5.98 per gallon).

There is constant speculation on the recent price rises, however much of this is the rise in oil prices which has reached USD 68.28 per barrel (1 barrel = 158.97 litres) of US crude. This has been helped by major market speculation, the war in Iraq, the recent hurricane in Louisiana (by stopping production in a major refinery) and the strengthening of the American dollar against the Euro.

Total evacuation of New Orleans planned

A state of emergency has been enacted in New Orleans in the U.S. state of Louisiana today, after the devastating Hurricane Katrina made landfall on Monday. There were earlier erroneous reports by the news media that martial law had been imposed. Mayor Ray Nagin fears that there may be "thousands" of fatalities in his city alone.

Many hospital staff are struggling to operate without power and supplies. As many as 2,500 patients from hospitals in Orleans Parish were to be evacuated, according to US Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt, but where they could be sent was still uncertain.

Looters are roaming the city and have already ransacked the city's upscale shopping district on Canal Street. They have been seen on news reports carrying huge bags of stolen goods. Governor Kathleen Blanco announced plans to completely shut down New Orleans and move everybody left there out of the area.

Ex- Mayor, Mark Morial, summed up his view by saying; "We've lost our city, I fear it's potentially like Pompeii."

Two of the city's levees on Lake Ponchartrain failed; one with a football-field size breach. Emergency workers dropped sandbags from helicopters into the levee's breaches, but the water kept coming.

"It appears that now the bowl is beginning to fill -- not rapidly but slowly," said Walter Maestri, an emergency operations manager. New floods swept through the center of New Orleans and water now covers 80 percent of the city with broken gas lines feeding raging fires. In some locations the water is now at a depth of 20 feet (six meters).

The famous French Quarter, initially less affected by flooding, finally also succumbed.

"Get out of town if you can." said Ed Freytag, a city worker at the temporary City Hall complex.

"We're damn close right now to that worst-case scenario," said Dave Cohen, a local radio host.

For those that were staying in the Superdome, officials have planned to move them to the long vacant Astrodome in Houston, Texas.

Several hundred killed after stampede in Baghdad



Pilgrims crossed east from Al Kazimiyah (Al Kadimiyah) over A'imma (Al-Aimma) bridge.

Ibrahim Jaafari, the Prime Minister of Iraq, has declared that Iraq will hold three days of national mourning following a stampede on a bridge in Baghdad which left several hundred people dead. The railings of a bridge over the River Tigris gave way under the weight of the crowd, and many people fell into the waters below.

Reuters and AP say 640 people have been killed and AFP puts the death toll at more than 630.

Bodies are still being pulled from the river, and officials in Baghdad expect the number killed to rise.

The people were walking towards the Kadhimiya mosque, a Shi'ite shrine. They were celebrating the martyrdom of Muslim religious figure Musa Al-Kadhim.

Some sources say the rush happened after a rumor of the presence of a suicide bomber passed through the crowd of up to one million.

Earlier, three to six mortar rounds were fired into the crowd, killing as many as 16 - a US Apache

gunship helicopter returned fire.

Rhode Island District Court freezes Palestinian Authority assets in the US

A Rhode Island district court has frozen all the US assets of the Palestinian Authority (PA), prompting Palestinian finance minister Salam Fayyad to request the aid of US Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice.

The frozen assets include US holdings in an investment fund worth \$1.3 billion, which was used to finance economic development, and \$30 million from the Palestinian Monetary Authority.

The ruling was passed upon the PA when they refused to compensate the relatives of a Jewish couple shot dead by members of Hamas in 1996.

US citizen Yaron Ungar and his wife Efrat were killed while returning from a wedding near the West Bank, when their car was shot at repeatedly, killing the couple. Three Hamas militants were jailed as a result.

A lawsuit was filed in 2000 against the Palestinian Authority, the PLO, Hamas, and Yasser Arafat in Rhode Island.

Yasser Arafat hired lawyer and former attorney general Ramsey Clark as his defense. In the case, Clark argued that the PA was a sovereign state, and that it deserved immunity from prosecution accorded to most countries. The court disagreed with this, and in 2004 they ruled that Palestine is not a state, and ordered them to pay the Ungars \$116 million. A federal appeals court upheld the verdict in March.

The head of Washington's PA office, Hasan Abdul Rahman said that his office had been "paralysed" by the verdict.

"It paralyzes the function of the office, and I think that is the intention of the plaintiffs." he told Associated Press shortly after the decision, and called upon the US administration to intervene.

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Today in History

1715: Louis XIV of France, the "Sun King", died after a reign of 72 years, longer than any other French or other major European monarch.

1923: The Great Kanto earthquake devastated Tokyo and Yokohama, killing about 100,000 people.

1939: Germany launched the Polish Campaign and attacked Poland at Wieluń and Westerplatte, starting World War II.

1951: Australia, New Zealand and the United States signed a mutual defense pact known as the ANZUS Treaty.

1983: The civilian airliner Korean Air Flight 007, carrying 246 passengers and 23 crew, was shot down by Soviet fighter aircraft.

September 01 is the start of the Liturgical year; Constitution Day in Slovakia.

Quote of the Day

"Seek goodness everywhere, and when it is found, bring it out of its hiding-place and let it be free and unashamed. Place in matter and in flesh the least of the values, for these are things that hold death and must pass away. Discover in all things that which shines and is beyond corruption.

Encourage virtue in whatever heart it may have been driven into secrecy and sorrow by the shame and terror of the world."

~ William Saroyan