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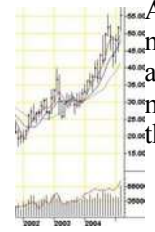
Iraqi constitution met by Sunni resistance

Most points of disagreement on Iraq's new constitution have been ironed out. The constitution should be ready before the Monday deadline, but Sunnis have still not agreed to any of the main points of the constitutional draft.



Prices at the pump spike overnight in U.S.

According to a AAA Texas motor club spokesman, additional price increases will more than likely continue into the weekend.



Israeli greenhouses to be preserved after Gaza pullout



A last minute deal reached Saturday dictates that about 1,000 Israeli settler greenhouses located in the Gaza strip will not be dismantled after Monday's pullout. Instead, they will remain standing and be placed in Palestinian control.

The deal allows one of the Gaza strip's largest employers to remain intact. Greenhouses in the region currently employ more than 4,000 people.

The deal was pioneered by envoy James Wolfenson. Mr. Wolfenson will purchase the greenhouses using funds amounting to US\$14 million. He will proceed to turn the properties over to Palestine.

Daniel Ayalon, Israeli ambassador to the United States, spoke optimistically of the greenhouse agreement. Said Mr. Ayalon, "As we leave Gaza, and some parts of the West Bank, we are not leaving scorched earth. On the contrary, we are leaving behind means for them to take over and immediately better their situation."

Iraqi constitution met by Sunni resistance

Most points of disagreement on Iraq's new constitution have been ironed out. The constitution should be ready before the Monday deadline the President Jalal Talabani said in an announcement Saturday morning.

"The meetings are still going on and we have gone forward," Talabani told reporters. "There is a meeting today and another meeting tomorrow and God willing we will finish the job tomorrow."



Abdel Aziz Hakim (file photo)

The largest disagreement is over the governing the Kurdish and Shiite areas of central and southern Iraq, as well as the role of Islam in the state.

Constitutional committee members have said the remaining major stumbling blocks were federalism, a Kurds-style autonomy given sudden Shiite support by the call from its leading politician Abdul Aziz al-Hakim. Sunni groups have called the move for federalism a deal breaker.

The controversy of the sudden call for federalism cast a doubt on the chances for the constitution draft meeting a Monday deadline. Sunnis fear that federal-autonomy zones will keep them from taking a share of the world's second largest known oil reserves that are concentrated in the Kurdish north and Shiite south.

But a Sunni participant Saleh al-Mutlaq said, "An in principle agreement has been reached late yesterday that Iraq's oil revenues will be shared between the Shia, the Kurds and the Sunnis." The federal government would receive a percentage of oil revenues, and the rest would go to each governorate according to its population size."

Sunnis have still not agreed to any of the main points of the constitutional draft, but Kurdish National Assembly member Mahmud Othman said that Kurdish and Shia

Featured story

Julian McGauran makes rude gesture to Australian Senate

Australian senator Julian McGauran made an "unseemly" gesture across the floor of the Senate whilst it was in session on August 11, apparently as a result of interjections about a division taking place.

Wikipedia Current Events

- German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has warned the US to back away from the possibility of military action against Iran over its nuclear programme.
- Ernest "Smokey" Smith is laid to rest in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada following the largest Canadian military funeral in recent history. Smith was the last surviving Canadian recipient of the Victoria Cross, the most prestigious honour that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces for valour. He died on 3 August at the age of 91.

groups could use their majority in the parliamentary to get the charter approved by Iraq's legislature.

The United States has played a strong role in the 71-member constitution committee writing the document described as the Transitional Administrative Law. U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad has acted as a broker between the Kurdish, Sunni Arab and Shiite Arab blocs.

Palestinians arrested in West Bank raids



During overnight raids, Israeli soldiers arrested 10 people, allegedly members of Islamic Jihad, a Palestinian militant group. The raids were conducted during two operations near the towns of Jenin and Nablus. An M-16 rifle was also discovered during the raid near Jenin.

Meanwhile, Hamas, a group friendly to Islamic Jihad, made a rare public appearance 2 days before the Israeli pull-out of settlers and troops from The Gaza Strip. They defied the Palestinian Authority by draping themselves in the colours of the group. On Friday, Palestinian Authority officials said only the Palestinian banner of red, black, green and white should be used to celebrate the withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territory.

Hamas are planning to run in the parliamentary elections to be held in January, next year.

Activists remember Burundi's Gatumba massacre



Human rights groups around the world are marking the first anniversary of the Gatumba massacre, in which more than 150 Congolese "Banyamulenge" Tutsis were killed, at a refugee camp in western Burundi.

"On this first anniversary of this unspeakable atrocity, we have the moral obligation to honour the memory of these people who were killed just because of their Tutsi ethnic origins", said Emmanuel Nkurunziza of the Burundian campaign group "Action Contre Genocide".

"The search for those responsible for the massacre continues", said the UN's mission to Burundi (ONUB), in a statement.

In the immediate aftermath of the Gatumba attack, the hardlined Hutu-extremist rebel group Palipehutu-FNL (FNL) claimed responsibility, saying that they had no fear of being held to account because they had become "untouchable". UN investigators suggest that Rwandan and Congolese militia groups may also have been involved in the attack. The FNL later claimed that the refugee camp was a military base. The UN has found no evidence for this claim, and human rights groups pointed out that nearly half of the dead were children.

2,000 people, including survivors and relatives of the dead, today attended a memorial service in Burundi, Reuters has reported.

"What happened on August 13 was a genocide... One year after the massacre nothing has been done... We demand that justice be done", Banyamulenge spokesman Binagana Amon is quoted as saying. Amon also criticised the United Nations for its "silence" over the attack.

The London-based "International Action Network on Small Arms" (IANSA) today paid tribute to the 156 victims of Gatumba, who included a local member of the organisation, Pastor Jaques Rutekereza.

"His deep faith gave him the courage to face his awful death, and the death of those he loved, with dignity and courage", IANSA said last year, in a statement honouring Rutekereza. "The world has lost a great man. It has lost a man of peace."

Rutekereza died with six of his children, according to IANSA.

Members of the Congolese diaspora have been active in the commemorations. The community in Portland, Maine has organised a weekend of events, including

public testimonies from those who lost loved ones in the attack, and a talk by John B. Robinson, who helped produce the film "Hotel Rwanda."

"We can't forget them", Georges Budagu told the Portland Press Herald.

"We want to make sure the United Nations and the United States use their influence to bring those people... to justice". Three of Budagu's cousins died in the massacre.

The UN, in turn, asked the Burundian authorities to do more to pursue the perpetrators:

"In the name of the victims, and as part of the effort to end impunity for the killings and massacres that have plagued this region for too many years, we urge the Government of Burundi to complete its investigation, issue the report of its findings and bring those responsible to justice."

The UN also repeated its call for Burundi to involve the International Criminal Court in the investigation. Previous efforts had stalled due to opposition to the Court within the UN Security Council.

Following the FNL's admission of responsibility for Gatumba, the Burundian government produced international arrest warrants for the group's leaders Agathon Rwasa and Pasteur Habimana. Regional heads condemned the group as a terrorist organisation, with South African's President Thabo Mbeki likening the FNL's ideology to that of the Nazis. Yet when Rwasa held a press conference in Tanzania in May, no attempt was made to arrest him. A ceasefire deal signed soon afterwards broke down within days.

Burundi's refugee minister Francoise Ngendahayo today said that her government is committed to seeing justice for the victims of Gatumba.

"Those responsible will be arrested but Burundi cannot do this work alone, we need the collaboration of the DR Congo and the UN", she told Reuters.

Burundi's President-elect recently suggested that the FNL could be allowed to join his government. Some analysts believe that offering the group an amnesty might help

bring peace to Burundi. Others argue that this could make the situation worse.

"For reasons of diplomacy, people are sitting at the exact same table as war criminals, and in some cases granting them immunity. If the atrocities are to end there must be at least some indications that justice will be done", Human Rights Watch spokesman Stephan Van Praet told Reuters, in the aftermath of Gatumba.

Action Contre Genocide's Emmanuel Nkurunziza today criticised the UN for what he called a "paradoxical" response to the massacre. Despite widespread international condemnation of the attack, the UN representative in Burundi Carolyn McAskie held face-to-face meetings with the FNL in Nairobi earlier this year.

"There was no repentance from these killers prior to the meeting; nonetheless, she went on to relay their so-called demands", he said.

Local media recently reported 300 civilian deaths at the hands of the FNL during June and July. An estimated 300,000 people, mostly civilians, have died in Burundi since civil war broke out in 1993.

Sri Lanka's foreign minister killed in sniper attack



Lakshman Kadirgamar, 1996

The Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Lakshman Kadirgamar, was fatally shot in the chest and head at his home on August 12. Two people have been arrested in connection with the attack but their identities have not been released.

The Inspector General of Police, Chandra Fernando told reporters, "It's the Tigers,"

blaming The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who have observed a ceasefire since 2002. The rebels currently deny involvement in the shooting.

Since the shooting Sri Lanka has declared a state of emergency. Many fear this assassination and resulting countrywide lock down could jeopardize the island's fragile peace process.

Under the emergency rule, the authorities can deploy troops whenever they wish, detain suspects of terrorist activities without charge, and search and demolish buildings at will.

Many world leaders including Jan Peterson, Norway's foreign minister and Condoleezza Rice, U.S. Secretary of State has called this a senseless crime. India has called the shooting a "terrorist crime" and promised any help that is needed to end this crisis in Sri Lanka.

Concerns about health situation in UK and Austria

A study in the UK has found that a so called "health inequality" gap between rich and poor, measured by infant mortality and life expectancy, has increased. Progress in narrowing the gap has been made on child poverty and improving housing, as well as cancer and heart disease death rates. Still, the life expectancy in the wealthiest areas of Britain is seven to eight years longer than the poorest areas.

The public health minister, Caroline Flint, said so-called "health trainers" would be provided for poorer areas (along with extra funding) in order to help people adopt "a healthier way of life". The government had pledged to reduce the inequality gap by 10% between 1997 and 2010.

Concerns have also been raised about the level of health care in Austria. Cancer and heart specialists have criticised the Austrian system. They argue that, due to lack of funds, patients are not treated as well as in other countries. Critics see these developments as leading to two-class medical care systems. Health minister Maria Rauch-Kallat has denied the allegations, saying that "everyone gets what they need". In a related move, non-monetary remunerations by pharmaceutical companies for doctors prescribing certain drugs have

also come under heavy criticism.

Talks with TGWU and Gate Gourmet to resume later today

The Transport and General Worker's Union and Gate Gourmet, the company that layed off 500 workers after workers staged unofficial strike action, will attend further talks held at a conciliation service by the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) on Saturday.

The director of Gate Gourmet, Richard Wells, denied that he was being "heavy-handed" over the dismissals. He insisted that the people affected were spoken to, and given written warnings before they were sacked.

As a result of British Airways (BA) staff at Heathrow joining Gate Gourmet's staff in the strike action, BA are running 50% of their short-haul flights, and 40% of their long haul flights today from 0600 BST/UTC+1. They are expecting to add more flights to the schedule as the day progresses, so passengers are advised to check the British Airways website.

Analysts said that the disruption may lose BA next to £40m because of the refunds that the company are paying out, loss of flight revenue, and the costs of accommodating passengers in nearby hotels.

Only passengers with confirmed reservations have been allowed to board flights at Heathrow. Barriers have been placed around Terminal 4 to stop people without reservations from joining flights. There are limited catering services on-board the flights.

British Airways advises passengers to telephone +44 (0)800 727 800 or check their website before travelling to the airport. They also said that they would refund customers that had to stay in a hotel on Friday night up to £100.

It is noted by passengers, though, that the advice line can be engaged for long periods, so users of the telephone line need to be patient.

Qantas, Finnair, GB Airways, Sri Lankan Airlines, and British Mediterranean are also

affected, as they were serviced by BA's ground staff. Their telephone numbers are listed below.

Ministry reveals the details of their new album

The famous industrial metal group Ministry has revealed that they are working on a new album that is due out sometime in April of 2006, entitled Rio Grande Blood. It is going to be the follow-up to last year's studio album The Houses of the Molé, which was not successful as any one of their breakthrough albums like 1992's Psalm 69: The Way to Succeed and the Way to Suck Eggs.

This year, the band has a remix album due out this September, entitled RaNtology, which includes the unreleased track "The Great Satan".

After the new album's release there will be 2 bands supporting their tour: RevCo and Spyder Baby.

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Today in History

1521 - Tlatoani Cuauhtémoc was captured and the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán fell to forces led by Conquistador Hernán Cortés after an extended siege.

1704 - The Battle of Blenheim, a pivotal event of the War of the Spanish Succession, took place. England and Austria claim victory over France and Bavaria.

1913 - Harry Brearley developed stainless steel.

1920 - The Battle of Warsaw began during the Polish-Soviet War.

1961 - Construction of the Berlin Wall, a long barrier separating West Berlin from East Berlin and the surrounding territory of East Germany, began.

August 14 is Independence Day for the Central African Republic

Quote of the Day

"I think, with never-ending gratitude, that the young women of today do not and can never know at what price their right to free speech and to speak at all in public has been earned." ~ Lucy Stone

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