

NEWS

National and world news in brief

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Florida prepares for wrath of Wilma

MIAMI, Florida: Thousands of residents prepare to flee as Hurricane Wilma inches ever closer to landfall on the Florida Coast.

Many hurricane veterans, who had at first decided to sit and wait this one out like any other, abruptly changed their minds after Wilma intensified into the strongest Atlantic hurricane on record on Wednesday. Even the Navy is not taking any chances as it evacuates personnel and equipment from its bases on the Florida Keys.

"You hear it was the biggest storm on record, and yeah, that was the clincher right there," said Mark Carara, whose family was vacationing in Florida. "It was time for us to go."

Hurricane Wilma has since weakened from its status as the most powerful hurricane into a smaller, but still exceedingly dangerous, Category 4 storm. Experts from the National Hurricane Center claim that Wilma may weaken further or re-intensify before making landfall in Mexico, Cuba or Florida. "Believe me, this is still a very, very powerful hurricane," said Max Mayfield, director of the center. "Don't minimize this just because it's no longer a Category 5."

At its strongest, Wilma has sustained winds of up to 175 miles per hour and is capable of dropping as much as 40 inches of rain in isolated areas.

Time running out in hard-hit Pakistan

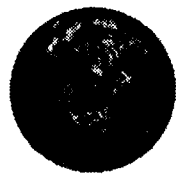
UNITED NATIONS: The earthquakes that affected Pakistan and surrounding areas on Oct. 8 have left millions homeless and in danger of death as winter approaches.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan reported that the situation is desperate and that the disaster has been overlooked by a large portion of the world.

"There are no excuses," said Annan. "If we are to show ourselves worthy of calling ourselves members of humankind, we must rise to this challenge. Our response will be no less than a measure of our humanity."

Only eight percent of needed relief materials have been pledged or donated for a disaster that happened over two weeks ago. Various relief agencies have declared that materials are desperately needed, including 45,000 winterized tents, millions of blankets and sleeping bags, water, sanitation equipment, food supplies and toiletries.

Annan said that the three million homeless now face "a second wave of massive death" as winter draws closer and important humanitarian goals have not been met.



Source: CNN.com, Yahoo! News

Bird flu spreads; world health concerns grow

LONDON, United Kingdom: The spread of the avian flu to parts of Europe has triggered emergency meetings of health officials all over the world.

While many had hoped that natural and geological barriers would keep the disease from spreading from Asia to Eastern Europe, cases recently detected in Romania have shown that those barriers have been breached.

This form of the flu, which has killed dozens of people in Asia, can for now only be transmitted directly from birds to humans with some difficulty. A growing fear among health officials is that, as the virus spreads through generations of reproduction, it will mutate into a form that will be easier to catch from avians and will be passable from human to human. If such mutations were to occur, the virus' resistance to antiviral drugs and vaccinations could cause a deadly worldwide epidemic.

World Health Organization officials, who are monitoring the situation and carrying out quarantines and bird exterminations, are trying to remain optimistic about the situation.

"The World Health Organization confirmed that there had been no increase in the risk of pandemic flu," said British Secretary of Health Patricia Hewitt. "But of course we have to ensure we are prepared in each of our countries."

"Cheeseburger bill" passes U.S. House of Representatives

WASHINGTON: A bill aimed at protecting retailers of fast food from obesity lawsuits was passed in the House and now moves on to the Senate.

Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), member of the House Judiciary Committee, claimed that the bill was an important and overdue piece of legislation. "As one judge put it, if a person knows or should know that eating copious orders of super-sized McDonald's products is unhealthy and could result in weight gain, it is not the place of the law to protect them from their own excesses."

The bill only protects food makers and fast-food service restaurants from sweeping class action lawsuits and not individual claims of food poisoning or false advertisement. However, some representatives still think the bill was unnecessary, citing the rapid growth of childhood obesity in recent years as a sign that reform is needed.

"Congress has allowed the need of big corporations before the need of our children," said Rep. Bob Filner, a Democrat from California.

The House bill passed easily 307-119, but success in the Senate is by no means assured, as a similar bill was passed in previous years never was approved by the Senate.

Behrend opens its doors prospective students welcome

By Ashley Bressler
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Prospective Behrend students will be coming to the campus for a weekend Open House this Saturday, Oct. 22. This time of year marks the annual migration of prospective students who are led in small guided groups supplied with a blue PSU folder in one hand and the infamous white, plastic bag reading "We Are Penn State" in the other.

Saturday's Open House will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be guided tours given throughout the day. Some of the tour spots include: on-campus housing (the traditional residence halls, Senat Hall, the suites, and the apartments), the Wintergarden, the Reed Union building, the Junker Center, the Roche Hall Engineering Complex, and the Nick and Hammermill buildings. The majority of the planned events will take place in the Reed Union Building and Erie Hall. There are 275 students registered, and approximately 800 will be attending. The vast majority of the attendees are high school, but some are adult learners and transfer students.

The parking lots will most likely be filled, so Police and Safety have issued that all cars in the Reed Union parking lot should be removed by 5 p.m. on Friday. The Reed Union and Erie Hall parking lots will be blocked off during the Open House hours to ensure that visitors have adequate parking. Parking in these designated lots will be reissued to students and faculty Saturday evening.

Some of the events that will be taking place on Saturday are traditional to Behrend Open Houses, such as the opportunity to have pictures taken with the Nittany Lion. There are some exciting new features as well. The campus tours will be given by the Lion Ambassadors and will take place from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The five schools, Sam and Irene Black School of Business, School of Engineering and Engineering Technology, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Science and the Education Pre-Certification Program, will all be giving presentations to the Open House attendees. The participants will be given the opportunity to eat lunch at either Dobbins dining hall or

Bruno's Café beginning at 11 a.m. An interesting addition this year will be a program aimed to increase the female population at Penn State Erie. Women who have registered have been invited to take part in a breakfast meeting with current, female, student volunteers. If the visiting women are interested, they can be paired up with one of the female students to correspond with as the year progresses and the pressure of choosing a college increases. In addition to the breakfast, the prospective women students will be given the opportunity to spend the night with a female volunteer who lives on campus. Through this program, Penn State Erie hopes to reach out to prospective women and show them that there is a place for each and every woman here at Penn State Erie! Hopefully the events of the open house will not cause any inconveniences to Behrend students, and the Behrend community will instead give the prospective students a deserving welcome to the wonders that Behrend has to offer.

Classifieds

"Charity isn't a good substitute for justice."

— Jonathan Kozol, American journalist and author (b. 1936)



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