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800 die in Baghdad shrine stampede

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Today's contents

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| The Article | 2 |
| Warm-ups | 3 |
| Before Reading / Listening | 4 |
| While Reading / Listening | 5 |
| After Reading | 6 |
| Discussion | 7 |
| Speaking | 8 |
| Listening Gap Fill | 9 |
| Homework | 10 |
| Answers | 11 |

1 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

800 die in Baghdad shrine stampede

BNE: Another tragedy befell the people of Baghdad today when at least 800 died in a stampede at a religious festival commemorating the revered Imam Musa al-Khadim. The victims, mostly women and children, were Shiite Muslim pilgrims, who were making their way to the Khadimiya shrine. The stampede was triggered by panic created by rumors that a suicide bomber was lurking among the hundreds of thousands of worshippers. People were already edgy due to a terrorist attack hours earlier that claimed seven lives. Insurgents fired a mortar round into the throngs of people near the shrine causing pandemonium and fear. The chaos and confusion spread and thousands tried to flee, resulting in the overwhelming loss of life.

Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari has declared a three-day period of mourning. In the aftermath of the tragedy, politicians were pointing fingers over who was responsible for the turmoil and deaths. Shiite festivals regularly draw huge crowds and are frequently targeted by Sunni extremists. An al-Qaeda-linked group claimed it carried out the rocket attack near the mosque. Some prominent Shiite clerics have accused Sunni insurgents of trying to open sectarian wounds to derail the fledgling constitution, which was presented to parliament earlier this week. Many in Iraq feel Sunnis are attempting to ignite a civil war. The tragedy is the single biggest confirmed loss of life in Iraq since the US-led invasion.

WARM-UPS

1. IRAQ NEWS: Do you often follow news of Iraq? What do you think about what's happening there every day? Do you ever hear good news coming out of Iraq?

2. PEOPLE AND PLACES: What do you know about the following people and places that are often in the news about Iraq? What part might they play in Iraq's future?

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| • Sunni | • Muktada al-Sadr |
| • Shiite | • Jalal Talabani |
| • Kurd | • Al-Qaeda |
| • Abu Musab al-Zarqawi | • George W. Bush |
| • Saddam Hussein | • Other _____ |

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Tragedy / Baghdad / stampede / religious festival / pilgrims / pandemonium / fear / chaos / confusion / mourning / fledgling constitution / civil war / US-led invasion

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. TRAGEDY: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "tragedy". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. GOOD NEWS: Here is some good news that might be printed in newspapers in the future. What do you think of these headlines? Are they possible?

- Iraqi people thank US troops
- No bombings in Iraq for 6 months
- President George W. Bush addresses Iraqi parliament
- Iraq and Israel sign peace deal
- Coalition forces leave Iraq after security returns
- Iraq becomes world's largest oil producer
- Saddam Hussein sentenced to life in prison
- Al-Qaeda declares new Iraq a success

6. QUICK DEBATE: Students A think Iraq will be in a state of turmoil for at least a decade. Students B think life in Iraq will settle down after elections take place. Change partners often.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Another tragedy befell the people of Baghdad at a religious festival. | T / F |
| b. The victims were predominantly Iraqi policemen. | T / F |
| c. A stampede was triggered by rumors of a suicide bomber. | T / F |
| d. A rocket that was fired into the crowd killed seven people. | T / F |
| e. Iraqi politicians are uniting to help appease the situation. | T / F |
| f. Shiite festivals are frequently targeted by Sunni extremists. | T / F |
| g. Al-Qaeda has denied any link with the deaths. | T / F |
| h. Many Sunnis feel Shiites are trying to start a civil war. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| a. befell | new |
| b. revered | escape |
| c. lurking | making accusations |
| d. pandemonium | venerated |
| e. flea | wake |
| f. aftermath | hiding |
| g. pointing fingers | upset |
| h. derail | happened to |
| i. fledgling | start |
| j. ignite | turmoil |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. Another tragedy befell | edgy due to a terrorist attack |
| b. pilgrims who were making their | by panic |
| c. The stampede was triggered | the throngs of people |
| d. People were already | ignite a civil war |
| e. fired a mortar round into | way to the Khadimiya shrine |
| f. declared a three-day | fingers over who was responsible |
| g. politicians were pointing | fledgling constitution |
| h. accused Sunni insurgents of trying | the people of Baghdad |
| i. derail the | period of mourning |
| j. Sunnis are attempting to | to open sectarian wounds |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

800 die in Baghdad shrine stampede

BNE: Another tragedy _____ the people of Baghdad today when at least 800 died in a stampede at a religious festival commemorating the _____ Imam Musa al-Khadim. The victims, mostly women and children, were Shiite Muslim _____, who were making their way to the Khadimiya shrine. The stampede was _____ by panic created by rumors that a suicide bomber was lurking among the hundreds of thousands of worshippers. People were already _____ due to a terrorist attack hours earlier that claimed seven lives. Insurgents fired a _____ round into the _____ of people near the shrine causing pandemonium and fear. The chaos and confusion spread and thousands tried to _____, resulting in the overwhelming loss of life.

Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari has declared a three-day period of _____. In the aftermath of the tragedy, politicians were pointing _____ over who was responsible for the turmoil and deaths. Shiite festivals regularly _____ huge crowds and are frequently targeted by Sunni extremists. An al-Qaeda-linked group claimed it carried out the _____ attack near the mosque. Some prominent Shiite _____ have accused Sunni insurgents of trying to open sectarian _____ to derail the fledgling constitution, which was presented to parliament earlier this week. Many in Iraq feel Sunnis are attempting to _____ a civil war. The tragedy is the single biggest _____ loss of life in Iraq since the US-led invasion.

triggered

revered

throngs

befell

mortar

flea

pilgrims

edgy

draw

ignite

mourning

confirmed

clerics

fingers

rocket

wounds

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'point' and 'finger'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "IRAQ" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about Iraq.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| • befell | • mourning |
| • revered | • turmoil |
| • triggered | • carried out |
| • lurking | • wounds |
| • throngs | • ignite |
| • flea | • confirmed |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What were your feelings after you read the article?
- d. Do you think the stampede will trigger more violence?
- e. What is the source or conflict between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq?
- f. Could anything have been done to have prevented this stampede?
- g. What do you imagine life is like in Baghdad for ordinary people?
- h. Do you think the situation in Iraq is getting better or worse?
- i. Would you have taken part in such a religious event in your own country if terrorist attacks had recently taken place?
- j. Have you ever been in crowds of tens or hundreds of thousands of people?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What should Iraqi politicians be doing now?
- d. Do you think Sunnis and Shiites will be able to patch up their differences and give Iraq a chance for peace?
- e. What do you think al-Qaeda is trying to achieve in Iraq?
- f. Do you think Iraqi people would prefer a return to life as it was under Saddam Hussein?
- g. When do you think security and democracy will take hold in Iraq?
- h. Do you think there is a strong possibility of civil war breaking out in Iraq?
- i. What advice would you give to George W. Bush over Iraq?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

CITIZEN INTERVIEW: In pairs / groups, write down questions you would like to ask an average Baghdad citizen about his/her life. The following ideas may be useful:

- The Khadimiya shrine stampede
- Sunnis and Shiites
- Al-Qaeda
- Security
- Democracy
- US forces
- Electricity
- Neighbors
- Saddam Hussein
- The future

Take turns in role playing the interviewer and the Baghdad citizen. Change partners and discuss what you heard from previous partners.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

800 die in Baghdad shrine stampede

BNE: Another tragedy _____ the people of Baghdad today when at least 800 died in a stampede at a religious festival commemorating the _____ Imam Musa al-Khadim. The victims, mostly women and children, were Shiite Muslim pilgrims, who were making their way to the Khadimiya shrine. The stampede was _____ by panic created by rumors that a suicide bomber was _____ among the hundreds of thousands of worshippers. People were already _____ due to a terrorist attack hours earlier that claimed seven lives. Insurgents fired a mortar round into the _____ of people near the shrine causing pandemonium and fear. The chaos and confusion spread and thousands tried to _____, resulting in the overwhelming loss of life.

Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari has declared a three-day period of _____. In the aftermath of the tragedy, politicians were pointing fingers over who was responsible for the _____ and deaths. Shiite festivals regularly draw huge crowds and are frequently _____ by Sunni extremists. An al-Qaeda-linked group claimed it carried out the _____ attack near the mosque. Some prominent Shiite _____ have accused Sunni insurgents of trying to open sectarian wounds to _____ the fledgling constitution, which was presented to parliament earlier this week. Many in Iraq feel Sunnis are attempting to _____ a civil war. The tragedy is the single biggest confirmed loss of life in Iraq since the US-_____ invasion.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the Baghdad stampede. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. SUNNI AND SHIA: Make a poster explaining the differences between the Shia and Sunni people and religions. What does each of them want in the new Iraq? Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out about similar things?

4. DIARY / JOURNAL: You are a resident of Baghdad. Write the diary / journal entry for one day in your life. Read what you wrote to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. F c. T d. T e. F f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| a. befell | happened to |
| b. revered | venerated |
| c. lurking | hiding |
| d. pandemonium | turmoil |
| e. flea | escape |
| f. aftermath | wake |
| g. pointing fingers | making accusations |
| h. derail | upset |
| i. fledgling | new |
| j. ignite | start |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. Another tragedy befell | the people of Baghdad |
| b. pilgrims who were making their | way to the Khadimiya shrine |
| c. The stampede was triggered | by panic |
| d. People were already | edgy due to a terrorist attack |
| e. fired a mortar round into | the throngs of people |
| f. declared a three-day | period of mourning |
| g. politicians were pointing | fingers over who was responsible |
| h. accused Sunni insurgents of trying | to open sectarian wounds |
| i. derail the | fledgling constitution |
| j. Sunnis are attempting to | ignite a civil war |

GAP FILL:

800 die in Baghdad shrine stampede

BNE: Another tragedy **befell** the people of Baghdad today when at least 800 died in a stampede at a religious festival commemorating the **revered** Imam Musa al-Khadim. The victims, mostly women and children, were Shiite Muslim **pilgrims**, who were making their way to the Khadimiya shrine. The stampede was **triggered** by panic created by rumors that a suicide bomber was lurking among the hundreds of thousands of worshippers. People were already **edgy** due to a terrorist attack hours earlier that claimed seven lives. Insurgents fired a **mortar** round into the **throngs** of people near the shrine causing pandemonium and fear. The chaos and confusion spread and thousands tried to **flea**, resulting in the overwhelming loss of life.

Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari has declared a three-day period of **mourning**. In the aftermath of the tragedy, politicians were pointing **fingers** over who was responsible for the turmoil and deaths. Shiite festivals regularly **draw** huge crowds and are frequently targeted by Sunni extremists. An al-Qaeda-linked group claimed it carried out the **rocket** attack near the mosque. Some prominent Shiite **clerics** have accused Sunni insurgents of trying to open sectarian **wounds** to derail the fledgling constitution, which was presented to parliament earlier this week. Many in Iraq feel Sunnis are attempting to **ignite** a civil war. The tragedy is the single biggest **confirmed** loss of life in Iraq since the US-led invasion.