



Top Stories

Zimbabwe votes in elections

A parliamentary election and a presidential election will be held

in Zimbabwe today. The parliamentary election is for both the House of Assembly and the Senate. In the presidential election, analysts in Zimbabwe have predicted a victory for incumbent Robert Mugabe.



Popular soap opera 'The Young and the Restless' celebrates 35 years on the air

Wikinews interviews three actresses of the popular U.S. daytime soap opera The Young and the Restless to commemorate the serial's 35th anniversary, which was celebrated Wednesday. Actresses Melody Thomas Scott, Michelle Stafford, and Tricia Cast took part in the largest Wikinews interview to date.



Around 240 Chilean protesters detained after anti-government demonstration

Around 240 demonstrators in the Chilean capital of Santiago were detained Friday after anti-government protests held against the country's



Credit: Gonzaloluengo (GFDL)

Top Stories

education system and increasingly free market policies.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Huge interest brings Wikileaks offline

The Wikileaks website, which publishes sensitive and censored material submitted by anonymous contributors, has experienced unprecedented levels of Internet traffic today through public interest. This interest has caused the website's servers to be unable to meet the enormous demand of over 164 gigabytes of download traffic within twenty-four hours, leading the site to be temporarily inaccessible.

Wikipedia Current Events

Sixteen Shiite militiamen are killed in airstrikes supporting Iraqi government forces during the Battle of Basra (2008).

- Libby Trickett of Australia sets a new world record for the 50 metres freestyle at the selection trials for the Australian swimming team at the 2008 Summer Olympics.
- Zimbabweans vote in the presidential and parliamentary elections.
- Cities around the world participate in Earth Hour, an international event that asks households and businesses to turn off their lights and non-essential electrical appliances between 8-9pm local time.

U.S. launches airstrikes against Basra militants

United States warplanes dropped two bombs on a suspected militant stronghold in Basra Saturday, as the Iraqi offensive aimed at driving out Shiite militants from the city reached its fifth day.

An Iraqi policeman says that the U.S. airstrike on a house in Basra's Hananiyah neighborhood killed 8 civilians. The U.S. military has not yet commented on the policeman's report, but British military spokesman Maj. Tom Holloway says the report is under investigation.

"We are aware of reports of incidents in the Basra area resulting in civilian casualties," Holloway said. "We are investigating the reports and do not have any further details at this time." British troops joined the fighting in Basra on Saturday, firing artillery and providing air support.

Meanwhile, Shiite cleric and Mahdi Army leader Muqtada al-Sadr called on his followers to defy the Iraqi government, which has ordered the militants to surrender their weapons. An initial 72-hour ultimatum was widely ignored, and the government has now given the militia until April 8 to give up their arms.

Salah al-Obaidi, a top aide to al-Sadr, said, "Muqtada al-Sadr has told us not to surrender our arms except to a state that can throw out the occupation," referring to

the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

In a speech today, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki did not mention al-Sadr's movement, and he said the purpose of the crackdown in Basra "was only to deal with these gangs", some of whom, he says, are "worse than al-Qaeda". Other Iraqi officials have also insisted that the Mahdi Army was not the target of the offensive.

"Our determination is strong," al-Maliki said. "We will not leave Basra until security is restored, those who break the law are punished and those who draw their weapons in the face of the state are punished."

Still, the crackdown has sparked a violent reaction from al-Sadr's supporters, as well as Shiites in other areas of Iraq. In Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood, a Shiite stronghold, Iraqi officials said that 75 people had been killed and nearly 500 were wounded in fighting between insurgents and security forces. Two Americans were killed by a roadside bomb in east Baghdad Saturday.

Some of the policemen in Sadr City are influenced by al-Sadr and are sympathetic to his movement. Around 40 Sadr City policemen handed over their weapons and ammunition to the Mahdi Army's local office, wearing masks to shield their identities. "We can't fight our brothers in the Mahdi Army, so we came here to submit our weapons," one policeman said.

U.S. helicopters launched airstrikes in Sadr City on Friday night, which they say killed 10 militants. This move was criticized by Nassar al-Rubaie, a Shiite member of Parliament. "We condemn the government asking

occupation forces to carry out airstrikes against our people," he said. "We say Iraq sovereignty will not be achieved through military operation against Iraqis, as Bush claimed, but it can be achieved through throwing the occupation forces out of Iraq."

New bridge lowered into position as East London line extension work progresses

Work to extend the East London railway line reached a significant milestone today as a new bridge was lowered into position over a street in Shoreditch, London. The line, previously part of the London Underground, is being extended to become part of the London Overground network.

The 350 tonne, 35 metre long tied arch bridge required the use of Britain's largest mobile crane to get it into position.

Transport for London project manager Barrie Noble said, "I've been in this business a good many years and have led a fair few extraordinary projects, but lifting this bridge in really will be something to behold."

"I can't say how proud I am of the team behind it, both the TfL engineers and the contractors we are using."

The bridge was manufactured in Chepstow, Wales and assembled on-site.

A section of Shoreditch High Street will remain closed over the weekend as the bridge is secured in place. The East London line closed in December 2007 and is due to reopen in stages from 2010.

Businesses and individuals worldwide turn lights off as part of Earth Hour 2008

Individuals and organisations around the world announced their support for the environment by turning off lights and electrical appliances between 8 and 9 pm for Earth Hour 2008.

In the city of origin, Sydney, Australia, the end of Earth Hour was celebrated with a fireworks show. Although many cities were not officially covered by Earth Hour, people from regions including Bristol, United Kingdom will turn off their lights for the event. Danish royal palaces went dark at the queen's command. One of these people told Wikinews that "it [Earth Hour] is a very important event as it helps to raise awareness of climate change worldwide."

This is the first time the movement went global. The first Earth Hour, held on March 31, 2007, saw more than 2.2 million residents and 2100 businesses in Sydney, Australia, switch off their lights.

British pop star Leona Lewis breaks US Billboard records

British pop star Leona Lewis has broken Billboard records in the United States to become the first British pop star to reach a number one spot on the music charts in over 20 years and became the third solo British artist ever to reach the top charts.

Lewis made the number one spot with her new hit single Bleeding Love. According to Billboard.com her single ranks number one in the top 100, the pop 100 and hottest digital songs.

"I'm so excited to be able to spend some time in the US and showcase my music to everyone here. Its

been a dream of mine since I was a little girl and I can't wait," said Lewis on her website.

The last singer from the UK to top the charts in the U.S. was Kim Wilde in 1987 when she did her own version of The Supremes 'You Keep Me Hangin' On.'

Lewis took the UK by storm when she won The X Factor (UK) in 2006 and became the biggest selling female artist of all time in the UK.

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There is no evidence that Wikileaks was forced offline by the Fitna video.

The film *Fitna*, directed and produced by Dutch politician Geert Wilders, has caused controversy for its presentation of Wilders' negative view of Islam as being committed to world domination and acts of terrorism. A trailer for the film was widely uploaded to many video sharing sites, including YouTube and Google Video; this met with anger from Islamic nations, the debacle culminating in Pakistan's government ordering the nation's internet service providers to block the YouTube site. This caused YouTube to be inaccessible to residents of other countries whose Internet service providers' equipment automatically

began routing traffic to YouTube via Pakistan Telecom's servers, due to their ban accidentally propagating to other providers. Ultimately, YouTube acquiesced to the demands made by Pakistan and other organisations, in exchange for access being restored. The site LiveLeak originally hosted a copy of the trailer, which has now been replaced with a video message stating that the lives of their staff have been put at risk due to hosting it.

As a consequence of this censorship, Wikileaks mirrored the video (this isn't completely true, the video on Wikileaks is hosted by Google), receiving heavy access traffic through hosting one of the few copies remaining on the Internet (this also isn't true, *Fitna* is widely available across the internet, although not currently from LiveLeak.) Wikinews has obtained an exclusive statement from a representative of Wikileaks, affirming that the site has not been taken off-line due to external pressure (the website Wikileaks is currently online though so it has either recovered or it was not taken offline), and is instead suffering technical problems due to this high demand. The representative gave the following statement: "It seems that due to a more than less overwhelming interest in the *Fitna* video and recent other media coverage from the protests in Tibet, as well as a few dozen new documents leaked on the portal in the last few days, parts of the portal have given up service and need a few warm words from a friendly Wikileaks operator. Please standby, the portal will be back soon."

Wikileaks gained recent public attention in the Bank Julius Baer

vs. Wikileaks lawsuit, following publication of leaked documents that were alleged to provide evidence of money laundering, tax evasion and asset hiding by Swiss financial institution Bank Julius Baer. The documents were uploaded by Rudolf Elmer, a former chief operating officer of the bank's Cayman Islands division, who was sacked following an investigation by the bank that involved polygraph testing. Bank Julius Baer sought an injunction against the operator of Wikileaks' domain name, Dynadot, to remove access to the site from the Wikileaks.org domain; this was granted by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. The site was consequently inaccessible through this domain, although access could be obtained through many alternate addresses. Following activity by organisations such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the American Civil Liberties Union, who sought to defend the right to free speech that Wikileaks relied upon, the lawsuit was dropped and access was restored.

Around 240 Chilean protesters detained after anti-government demonstration

Around 240 demonstrators in the Chilean capital of Santiago were detained Friday after anti-government protests held against the country's education system and increasingly free market policies.

The annual protests, organized by the Revolutionary Left Movement, held on the eve of the Day of the Youth Combatant. The day commemorates the deaths of Eduardo and Rafael Vergara, brothers who were assassinated on March 29, 1985 under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

The protesters, many of whom were students, reportedly threw rocks into Santiago's main street, prompting squads of riot police to spray tear gas into the crowds. Other protesters marched towards the presidential palace, but it was cordoned off and heavily guarded. Most of the 240 who were detained are expected to be released after their identities are confirmed.

In between skirmishes with police, some protesters handed out flyers explaining their views. They say the government has manipulated the education system to favor the rich. "We think this neo-liberal education system that the government has introduced should be stopped," said Saray Acevedo of the National Popular Coordinator of Students.

President Michelle Bachelet condemned the protests. "If one wants to pay homage to the tremendous tragedy of the Vergara brothers, during a period when Chile was not democratic, the right thing to do is guarantee that democracy means being able to express yourself but without violence," she said. "Democracy in Chile is solid and there is no justification for violence," Bachelet added.

Other Chileans who didn't take part in the demonstrations agree with some of the protesters' views. "There are so many problems," said Rodrigo Núñez, 39. "It is true education is expensive and marginalizes the poor. The cost of living is high. Electricity and gas prices are up. Look at how they protest in Argentina! I voted for this government and feel conned."

2 days before Friday's protests, a bomb exploded in a Santiago bank. Police blamed the attack on "anarchists", and they believe it

was connected to the annual protests.

Additional protests are planned for Saturday, when the Day of the Youth Combatant will be formally recognized.

Today in History

1282 – Sicilians began to rebel against the rule of the Angevin King Charles I of Naples, starting the War of the Sicilian Vespers.

1867 – U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward negotiated the purchase of Alaska for US\$7.2 million from Russia.

1912 – Sultan Abdelhafid signed the Treaty of Fez, making Morocco a French protectorate.

1940 – World War II: Wang Jingwei was installed by Japan as head of the puppet government in China.

1964 – Jeopardy!, the popular international game show created by Merv Griffin, made its debut on the NBC television network.

1981 – Trying to impress actress Jodie Foster, obsessed fan John Hinckley, Jr. shot and wounded U.S. President Ronald Reagan and three others outside the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C.

March 30 is Spiritual Baptist/Shouter Liberation Day in Trinidad and Tobago.

Quote of the Day

Word of the Day

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