



Top Stories

Democratic Republic of Congo adopts new constitution, plans elections



The Democratic Republic of the Congo adopted a new constitution on May 13, and elections are being planned for the first time in more than 40 years.

The Congo has been torn by five years of civil war. Peace was declared in 2003, but hunger and disease continue to trouble the country.

The U.S. State Department praised recent political developments in the African nation. Spokesman Richard Boucher made a statement that the new constitution "establishes a balance of powers between the branches of government, ensures protection and development of minorities, and provides for a limit of two presidential terms. We note the flexibility shown by all members of the transitional Congolese government in reaching this agreement."

Marshall Islands to request \$3 billion more from U.S. for health effects of nuclear testing



The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is petitioning for \$3 billion in additional compensation from the U.S. government, after receiving \$270 million in an agreement which expired in 2001.

The U.S. government performed a series of 67 tests of nuclear weapons in the Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1958. Fallout from the testing is claimed to have affected some of the island's near 60,000 inhabitants. "We're finding people on remote islands with high percentages of cancers," said RMI Foreign Minister Gerald Zackios.

Dissident meeting held in Cuba



It is reported that some 200 people gathered on Friday to open what has been touted as a rare

opposition assembly against the government of Cuba. The meeting was held uninterrupted by Cuban authorities, though several European lawmakers and journalists who had entered the country with tourist visas in order to attend the gathering, are said to have been expelled. Dubbed the Assembly for the Promotion of Civil Society, the meeting's intention was to discuss the promotion of a Western-style democracy in Cuba. Martha Beatriz Roque, described as a former political prisoner, was the event's lead organizer.

announced a quarantine of the Etoumbi and Mbomo districts. They are monitoring 84 suspected cases in the two regions. Jean-Vivien Mombouli, advisor to the Congolese Ministry of Health, pointed out the individuals may not actually have the virus; only one confirmed case of Ebola has been diagnosed thus far.

"We will wait for 21 days just to be sure then after that, if the person does not get sick, he is out of danger," Mr. Mombouli said of the patients. Ebola has a five to ten day incubation period.

Neighbouring Uganda has stepped up its surveillance in response to the outbreak.

No cure exists for Ebola, and between 50-90% of those who contract it die. Zaire/Congo has sustained the largest number, and most severe, outbreaks of the Ebola virus. Although no cure exists, work continues on a vaccine and it is in the human trial stages, as well as research into pharmaceutical treatments.

Weather



World's tallest geyser erupts



Ebola outbreak in Congo



Reuters reports that nine people have died from Ebola in the Republic of Congo this month. The outbreak is in the Cuvette-Ouest region near the Gabon border, where a previous outbreak had occurred in 2003.

Steamboat Geyser at Yellowstone National Park—the world's tallest geyser—erupted on 23 May 2005 at 2:40 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time. Steamboat Geyser has erupted only seven times since 1991.

The government of Congo and the United Nations World Health Organization have The geyser, an unpredictable and infrequent performer, throws a vertical

column of water in excess of 300 feet (90 meters). Prior to the current activity, Steamboat Geyser's most-recent eruption was on 22 October 2003—19 months ago.

The Yellowstone Public Affairs Office reported that the geyser erupted water for approximately 15-minutes, followed by sustained, powerful blasting of steam. As of 24 May 2005, 10:51 Mountain Daylight Time, the powerful steaming is finally waning.

According to Alan Glennon, a scientist at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Steamboat Geyser may discharge a hundred thousand gallons or more of water in a single eruption. By comparison, Old Faithful Geyser discharges 3,700 to 8,400 gallons during a typical 1.5 to 4.5 minute eruption.

Park officials are collecting visitor reports and examining evidence to assess the magnitude of Monday's eruption. The Yellowstone Public Affairs Office stated that the eruption, coupled with high winds, carried fine sand and debris up to a mile.

This article contains first-hand journalism by a Wikinews Reporter.

Preakness won by Afleet Alex, Kentucky Derby Winner Third

The 130th running of the Preakness Stakes was attended by a record crowd of 115,318 people in the historic Pimlico Downs. Favorite Afleet Alex evaded near disaster to win the \$1,000,000 graded stakes and the second leg of the triple crown. The race ended the hopes of long shot Giacomo for the triple crown, which includes the Kentucky Derby, The Preakness Stakes, and the Belmont Stakes.

At the top of the home stretch the front-runner Scrapy T bolted to the right in response to a whip change by his Jockey Ramon Dominguez. Afleet Alex was blocked by T's rump and his neck was forced to the left. The horse was forced to its knees but stayed on its feet, rocketing to the inside of Scrapy T to take the win

by 4 1/2 lengths going away. Scrapy T held on for second, Kentucky Derby winner Giacomo finished third, and Sun King took fourth.

The winner paid \$8.60. He topped a \$152.60 exacta (\$2), a \$872 triple (trifecta) (\$2) and a \$10,362.30 superfecta (\$1).

Particle accelerator reveals long-lost writings of Archimedes

Scientists at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center in Menlo Park, California are analyzing a 174-page text. The book had originally contained a copy of Archimedes' writings, but had been erased by a monk in the 12th century and reused as a prayer book. The particle accelerator is able to see small iron particles that were in the original ink.

The book is believed to have been originally copied from Archimedes' 3rd century BC Greek scrolls. About 80 percent of the text has been recovered, showing diagrams that may more closely resemble Archimedes' original work than has ever been seen before. The palimpsest includes "Method of Mechanical Theorems", a treatise that had been thought lost. In it, Archimedes describes his use of mechanics to establish his mathematical theorems. The palimpsest also includes the only original Greek version of "On Floating Bodies", which explains the physics of gravity and flotation.

It is projected that it may take three to four years to complete imaging of the book.

Fox News viewership drops by half in 6 months

Since the election, viewership in the coveted 25-54 age bracket of Fox News has fallen from over 1,000,000 in October to under 450,000 in April, according to TV Newser, a weblog focusing on television news.

Ratings for cable news stations have fallen globally since the election, but

most have since stabilized, thus it is anomalous that Fox is continuing to drop. CNN's ratings, as an example, increased 27% in April. FNC still leads CNN in this demographic by nearly 35% (450k to 300k) however, with CNN only managing to reverse its viewership decline in March 2005.

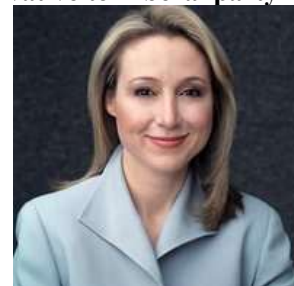
The FOX News Channel is a US cable and satellite news channel. It is owned by the Fox Entertainment Group, a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. As of January 2005, it is available to 85 million subscribers in the U.S. and to further viewers internationally, broadcasting primarily out of its New York City studios.

According to the BBC, FOX News' profits doubled due to "patriotic coverage" of the Iraq conflict, with as much as 300% increase in viewership, with 3.3 million average daily viewers.

The 2004 election coverage by FOX News ranked higher than the next two cable news competitors combined. For President Bush's address, FOX News rated 7.3 million viewers. NBC, CBS, and ABC rated 5.9, 5.0, and 5.1, respectively.

The reason for Fox News' fall in viewership is not clear, despite the industry-wide downward trend in viewership. Some speculate that the audience has turned to other news sources out of distrust or dislike of Fox News' reporting; others claim it to simply be a result in decreased interest in news in general; some suggest that other cable news channels have adopted Fox News' style and tenor.

Canadian MP crosses from Conservative to Liberal party



Belinda Stronach, Canadian MP for Newmarket-Aurora crossed the floor from the Conservatives to join the Liberals just days before a scheduled confidence vote in the Liberal government. She was immediately rewarded by being appointed to the cabinet as Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal.

"I've been uncomfortable for some time with the direction the Conservative party was taking," Stronach said. "I regret to say that I do not believe the party leader is truly sensitive to the needs of each part of the country and just how big and complex Canada really is."

She disagreed with the party on its stance on the federal budget, same-sex marriage, and Conservative leadership's alliance with the separatist Bloc Québécois to bring down the government.

Two days after Stronach switched parties, the ruling Liberals won a crucial vote for their budget by a single vote. If Stronach had not joined the Liberals and voted for the budget, the government would have fallen, forcing a new federal election.

Italian police under trial for events at 2001 G8 Genoa meeting

Italian police officers and prison guards have been ordered to stand trial for the alleged abuse of anti-globalization protesters during the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001. Over 250 people who attended the event have detailed verbal and physical abuse.

The police took detainees to a holding center outside the city, where they were verbally and physically abused, spat at and threatened with rape. In one alleged incident, the guards forced a woman's head down a toilet. Another allegation is that asphyxiating gas was sprayed at protesters in their cells.

Over 60 people were injured while being taken into custody, three critically. One 23-year old protester was shot dead. Twenty-five demonstrators are standing

trial on minor charges of looting and ransacking. The police alleged that 93 protesters were in possession of dangerous weapons and resisted arrest, yet Genoa prosecutors have dropped all charges against them.

Meanwhile, the police have been charged with planting evidence and fabricating charges against the demonstrators.

Unfortunately, due to delays in bringing the authorities to justice, the five-year statute of limitations is expected to expire on most of the more serious charges before rulings are given.

Chilean army recruits missing

The Chilean Army acknowledges that 65 recruits are currently missing in the Andes from a training exercise that was hit by severe snow storm. Colonel Carlos Mezano also reports 5 bodies have been recovered so far, apparently all had died from hypothermia.

433 soldiers of the Regiment "Los Ángeles" went missing Thursday on the Los Barros range in southern central Chile, close to Argentine border, approximately 600 km southeast of the capital of Santiago. 316 recruits completed the exercise and are reported to be safe. 47 are reported safe, though incommunicado, in a high mountain refuge. The remaining 65 are still missing.

General Juan Emilio Cheyre, Chief Commander of the Army declared, "A unit of this type, surprised by a tsunami of snow, is trained to stop, so it is possible that they are all camping [...] I do not want to raise false hopes. This is a unexpected situation, but to me a unit offers more hope than scattered soldiers."

Rescue efforts have encountered trouble due to severe bad weather. A 'no fly zone' has been established in the Andes region. The Army and the media are avoiding, for now, speculation over the number of possibly dead soldiers, but the general mood of the families is pessimistic and allegations of neglect by Army official have started to arise.

Most of the soldiers are men from the local area, from 18 to 19 years old.

Child released after spending entire life in Australian detention centre

A Malaysian woman and her three year old daughter were released from Villawood Detention Centre on bridging visas yesterday after media coverage in Australian and Malaysia. Naomi Long, who recently turned three, was born in the Centre. Her mother, Virginia Long, was detained after trying to leave Australia on a false passport four years ago.

The plight of the young girl was revealed on ABC Radio's PM program on March 5. Michael Dudley, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at Sydney Children's Hospital who has visited the mother and daughter, spoke on the program of the importance of children mixing with others their own age, and the harm that prolonged detention was doing to Naomi.

"I mean that's crucial to social development and emotional development in children and also, a sense of identity development and so on. She doesn't have that opportunity and she's also basically been brought up in prison, but in a highly abnormal environment with highly distressed people. It's not an environment conducive to child development," he said.

According to refugee advocate group ChilOut there are currently 28 children detained at Villawood, and 68 across all immigration detention facilities. The Federal Opposition Leader Kim Beasley has called for all children to be released.

"Kids don't belong in detention, full stop," he said.

According to ABC Online, Federal Liberal backbencher Petro Georgiou intends to introduce a private members bill against long-term mandatory detention, and detention of women and children. Prime Minister John Howard has indicated that he is mindful of the need for compassion, but he does not support a conscience vote.

"Mandatory detention is not a matter of conscience. It is a Government policy," Mr Howard was quoted as saying. Howard has been a staunch supporter of hardline immigration and asylum policies since the mid 80's.

National Aromanian Day celebrated

The Aromanian community worldwide celebrated its national day yesterday, March 23. The day commemorates 100 years since the Aromanian people were recognised by Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid II.

Aromanians are a distinct ethnic group currently living mainly in Southeastern Europe, especially Greece and Macedonia. The Aromanians are closely related to the Romanian people, both being descendants from the Latin peoples which lived in Southeastern Europe since the time of the Roman Empire. The Aromanian language, which is spoken by around 500,000 people internationally, is the closest language to Romanian.

Despite their relative size, Aromanians have very little, if no, minority rights. In Greece, for example, they are not recognised as a minority. In Romania, where there are an increasing number of Aromanians, many of them migrating from Greece, Macedonia and Albania, they are often considered as Romanians, because their language is partly mutually-intelligible with Romanian and their culture is relatively similar. However, there is currently a movement in Romania to give the Aromanians a status as a separate ethnic group, therefore entitling them to parliamentary representation and education in the Aromanian language, among other rights.

Kidnapped Romanian journalists return home

The three Romanian journalists kidnapped in Iraq on March 28 arrived in Bucharest yesterday afternoon, after being set free two days ago. The journalists — Marie-Jeanne Ion, Sorin Miscoci and Ovidiu Ohanesian — were returned by a Hercules military aircraft and were greeted by their

families and hundreds of supporters in the Romanian capital. Aside from their families and supporters, the three were also welcomed back by an official Romanian delegation, including President Traian Băsescu and Prime Minister Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu.

Marie-Jeanne Ion and Sorin Miscoci were the first to exit the plane, and were embraced by their families. They were followed shortly by Ohanesian, who was greeted by his sister and mother. The journalists also embraced the President and Prime Minister, after which they waved at the crowd of supporters. However, none of the journalists made any statements or interviews for the media.

Romanian media did interview Miscoci's sister and Ion's mother, who both said that they are anxious to see their lives return to normal after the two-month ordeal, expressing faith that the journalists would be able to overcome this experience. The journalists appeared to be in good physical condition.

Before rejoining their families, the three journalists are being kept in quarantine for two to three days, time in which they will undergo medical examinations and talk to Romanian officials. While the location of the journalists is not currently known, several Romanian reporters were waiting in front of the Bucharest Military Hospital and the Romanian Intelligence Agency headquarters, hoping to catch a glimpse of the three journalists.

The three journalists were kidnapped in Baghdad on March 28, by the Muadh ibn Jabal Brigades. A few weeks after being kidnapped, the terrorists broadcast a tape on Al-Jazeera stating that they would kill the journalists if Romania did not withdraw its 860 troops from Iraq. However, due to efforts of the Romanian secret service and collaboration between several intelligence agencies, the group were freed on May 23, where they were placed in the hands of the Romanian Embassy in Baghdad.

President Traian Băsescu did not elaborate on the details of the journalists' release,

saying instead that further details would be given when the investigation into their kidnapping is complete. Băsescu thanked the Iraqi authorities and Romania's Muslim community, most of which is made up of Kurdish refugees and Arab immigrants, for helping in the negotiations. Lastly, he thanked the families of the hostages for "the decency and elegance of their behavior in public" as well as the Romanian media for supporting the government in the release of the hostages.

The Romanian Prime Minister, Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, said that the successful outcome of this crisis shows that the government is capable of defending both its citizens and the national interests of Romania, referring to the fact that in the release of the hostages, no ransom was paid and no troops were withdrawn.

International leaders and representatives also praised the event. The United States Embassy in Bucharest said that they are "extremely satisfied that the crisis ended with the safe release of the hostages," while UK Ambassador to Romania Quinton Quayle met Băsescu and congratulated him for his ability to manage the crisis and co-ordinate secret services, especially the fact that Romania made no compromises for the release of the journalists. Josep Borrell, the head of the European Parliament, said that the positive result of this crisis proves "we can never lose hope" and that the world must now continue to fight for the release of other hostages held in Iraq.

Marshall Islands to request \$3 billion more from U.S. for health effects of nuclear testing



President Kessai H. Note of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

The Republic of the Marshall Islands

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A report last year from the U.S. National Cancer Institute estimated that about 530 total cancers could appear, almost double the amount currently known.

The U.S. government disagrees over which islands were affected by the testing. Also, U.S. agencies have concluded that there is no further legal requirement for compensation above what has already been provided, unless the situation changes substantially.

The government of the Marshall Islands plans to "work tirelessly together to make certain that the nuclear issue is settled in a fair and just manner", said RMI President Kessai Note.

Both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate plan to hold hearings on the claim as soon as May 25.

Democratic Republic of Congo adopts new constitution, plans elections

The Democratic Republic of the Congo adopted a new constitution on May 13. Elections are being planned for the first time in more than 40 years. The Congo has been torn by five years of civil war. Peace was declared in 2003, but hunger and disease continue to trouble the country.

The U.S. State Department praised recent political developments in the African nation. Spokesman Richard Boucher made a statement that the new constitution "establishes a balance of powers between the branches of government, ensures protection and development of minorities, and provides for a limit of two presidential terms. We note the flexibility shown by all

members of the transitional Congolese government in reaching this agreement."

Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht asked for civil calm as the difficult process of preparing for elections goes forward. The election has already been delayed by the government for several months, and further postponements are expected. Congo was once a Belgian colony, and the two governments are working together to prevent the outbreak of more rioting such as happened after the last election delay in January.

Congolese President Joseph Kabila has requested military assistance from the European Union to help restrain and instruct the Congolese army and integrate it better with the government. The EU announced Monday that ten of its member nations plan to participate. This is the first such deal made by the EU.

Laura Bush visits Middle East in goodwill tour



U.S. First Lady Laura Bush visited Jerusalem and Egypt on a five-day tour of the Middle East hoped to mend the United States' image in that region.

While in Jerusalem visiting several holy sites, including the Dome of the Rock and the Western Wall, she was heckled by protesters. Mrs. Bush said she was expecting protests and was in fact welcomed by most people.

"As we all know, this is a place of very high tensions and high emotions," said Mrs. Bush, as she stood in the garden courtyard of the Church of the Resurrection. "And you can understand why when you see the people with a deep and sincere faith in their religion all living side by side."

Mrs. Bush's approval ratings have

remained very high, above 80%, even as her husband's have recently dropped below 50%. "Part of this is just that she's so much more popular than the president at home. What's not to like about Laura Bush?" said professor of political science Barbara Burrell to the Christian Science Monitor.

During her visit, she participated in recording an episode of the Egyptian Arabic version of the Sesame Street television program. The Muppet characters are similar to the U.S. version, but have Arabic names, such as Khokhah, a peach-colored little Muppet girl. Mrs. Bush emphasized the importance of learning to read in her appearance, which is probably to be broadcast on the show's next season.

Among her other activities, Mrs. Bush is having lunch with Suzanne Mubarak, wife of President Hosni Mubarak. She also plans to tour the pyramids and the library at Alexandria. Mrs. Bush is a former librarian from Texas.

Dissident meeting held in Cuba

It is reported that some 200 people gathered on Friday to open what has been touted as a rare opposition assembly against the government of Cuba. The meeting was held uninterrupted by Cuban authorities, though several European lawmakers and journalists who had entered the country with tourist visas in order to attend the gathering, are said to have been expelled.

Dubbed the Assembly for the Promotion of Civil Society, the meeting's intention was to discuss the promotion of a Western-style democracy in Cuba. Martha Beatriz Roque, described as a former political prisoner, was the event's lead organizer.

As those in attendance sat in rows of plastic chairs, cheers were heard as organizers played a taped message from U.S. President George W. Bush.

"I have a message to those assembling today to protest in Cuba: As you struggle for the freedom of your country, the American people stand with you," said Mr. Bush.

Some shouted "Viva Bush" (Long Live Bush), while others had exclaimed earlier in the meeting, "Abajo Fidel" (Down with Fidel).

Organizers, who had said that 500 people would be in attendance for the meeting, held in the back yard of co-organizer Felix Bonne, were left to contend with a turnout closer to 200. Just over half were said to be residents from around the island. The remainder comprised of the organizers themselves, international journalists, diplomats, and others. James Cason, chief of the U.S. Interests Section, was one such guest.

In light of the aforementioned, Cuban President Fidel Castro holds that the United States has bankrolled the opposition in question, which Washington denies. Moreover, he asserts that "those who attack [Cuba's government] do not represent more than a fraction of 1 percent" of the island's populace, as a government rally last Tuesday drew millions of people.

The opposition event also revealed divisions within the dissident group itself, when arguments broke out among them. Some dissidents, such as Oswaldo Paya, refused to even attend the meeting. Paya, lead organizer of the Varela Project, commented to the Associated Press that his decision was based on "...a distrust of where these people come from," calling their effort "a smoke screen."

Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz (born August 13, 1926) has led Cuba since 1959, when, leading the 26th of July Movement, he helped overthrow the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and turn Cuba into the first Communist state in the Western Hemisphere. He held the title of premier until 1976, when he became president of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers. He has been the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba since its inception in 1965.

U.S. senators reach compromise on use of filibuster

A compromise was reached late Monday in the United States Senate about the use of filibusters against several judicial nominees of President George W. Bush. Seven Republicans joined with seven Democrats to make the deal.

The compromise was announced by Senator John McCain (Rep., Ariz.). McCain said, "We have reached an agreement to try to avert a crisis in the United States Senate and pull the institution back from a precipice that would have had, in the view of all 14 of us, lasting impact, damaging impact on the institution." Future nominees will continue to be filibustered under the terms of this deal but only "under extraordinary circumstances", according to McCain.

Bush made 218 nominations in his first term of office, of which 10 were prevented from receiving an up-or-down vote by the Democrats' use of the filibuster. The filibuster is a form of extended debate in which senators hold the floor by speaking continuously, often on unrelated topics, with the purpose of delaying a decision. Senate procedures require 60 votes for "cloture", a term for ending the debate and forcing a vote. Since Republicans hold just 55 of the 100 seats in the Senate, they lack the power to force a vote without cooperation from Senate Democrats.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist was not a party to the deal. Frist, along with other Senate Republicans, had been planning to push for a vote to abolish the use of the filibuster on judicial nominees entirely. This widely debated tactic, called either the "nuclear option" or the "constitutional option", may have been part of the impetus behind the current deal. If the "nuclear option" succeeded, some Senate Democrats had threatened to bring non-vital business of the Senate to a halt in protest.

Under the current deal, the 14 Senators agree to vote for cloture and allow three judicial nominees to come to a vote: Janice Rogers Brown, William Pryor, and Priscilla Owen. Two other nominees were not part of the deal and may still be filibustered: William Myers and Henry

Saad. Some of Bush's nominees have been waiting for confirmation for four years. Bush continues to express support for all of his nominees and to request that each one get a vote. On Monday, Bush said, "I have made my position very clear, and that is my job is to pick people who will interpret the Constitution, not use the bench from which to write law. That's what I campaigned on. I said, if I'm the President, I will pick people who... bring great credit to the bench. And that's exactly what I've done, consistent with the character of the people I pick. And I expect them to get an up or down vote... And I think the American people expect that, as well. People ought to have a fair hearing and they ought to get an up or down vote on the floor."

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (Dem., Nevada) opposed Bush's view in a statement Monday. "[T]he filibuster is one of the Senate's most important tools that guarantees minorities a voice in their government," said Reid.

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