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European Union flags outside the EU headquarters building in Brussels, capital of Belgium

EUROPEAN UNION WINS NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

On October 12, it was announced that the European Union (EU), which has 27 member countries, had been awarded the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize. Each year the Prize is given to the person or organization that is thought to have made the greatest contribution to world peace.

Five Nobel Prizes are awarded every year. As well as the one for peace, prizes are given to those judged to have made the greatest contributions to medicine, literature, chemistry and physics.

The first prizes were awarded in 1901. They were the idea of a Swedish chemist called Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, who died in 1896. He was a wealthy man and arranged for some of his fortune to pay for all future prizes.

At the time of Alfred Nobel's death the same king ruled Norway and Sweden. Both countries have a part in awarding the Nobel Prizes. A group, or committee,

of academics from Sweden, selects the winners of the prizes for medicine, literature, chemistry and physics. The Peace Prize is awarded by a group of five people selected by Norway's parliament.

Several organizations have won the Peace Prize in the past. They include the United Nations (U.N.) peacekeeping forces and the Red Cross. Last year it was jointly awarded to three women. Two were from Liberia and one was from Yemen. All three had been working to improve the lives of women in their countries.

Most people were surprised by the announcement. However, many admitted that the EU had helped to keep the peace in Europe since 1945, or after the end of the Second World War. For the last 67 years there has been peace between all EU members. In the previous 150 years there had been five major wars. Some said that

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there has not been such a long period of peace in Europe since the time of the Roman Empire. After 1990, they added, the EU has also helped to encourage democracy in many Eastern European countries, especially those that were former members of the Russian-led Soviet Union.

The EU first began in 1951 when six countries, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the then West Germany, agreed to make it easier to trade with each other. At first, the organization they formed was called the European Coal and Steel Community.

In 1957, the six countries signed the Treaty of Rome. The name of the organization was changed to the European Economic Community (EEC). Each country agreed to become a “common market” so people and companies within member countries could easily work in any of the others. The organization’s headquarters were set up in Brussels, the capital of Belgium.

Other European countries applied to join. For example, Britain, Ireland and Denmark became members in 1973. In 1993, the organization became the European Union. The EU has grown in size. The total population of all the member countries is now about 500 million. Members have to follow many of the rules that are made in Brussels. Today the EU has 27 members. The two most recent are Bulgaria and Romania. They joined in 2007.

The EU has several leaders. José Manuel Barroso is the president of the European Commission, which runs the day-to-day management of the EU. Herman Van Rompuy is the president of the European Council. The Council is made up of 29 people, the presidents of the

European Council and Commission plus the elected leaders of the 27 member countries. The EU also has a European Parliament. Members of the parliament are elected from each member country. Martin Schulz is the president of the European Parliament.

Around 20 years ago the EU decided to set up a new currency called the euro. The first notes and coins were introduced in 2002. So far, of the 27 members, 17 countries have decided to exchange their old currencies for the euro. Together these 17 countries are known as the eurozone.

Many people who are supporters of the EU, and what it does, want member countries to become “ever closer together”. For instance, this might mean that the taxes people pay in different countries would all be the same. Member governments would have to get the agreement of others before making important decisions. This is known as federalism. Some even predict that one day the EU will become one large country or “the United States of Europe”.

However, many people in EU member countries now believe that the EU has become too large and undemocratic. They dislike federalism and complain that the EU is taking away many of their own elected governments’ powers. Some even think that their countries should leave the EU. Others say that it should go back to being a trading organization, as the old ECC used to be.

In recent years, the euro has helped to cause serious financial problems in some countries. Governments in Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Ireland have had to ask for assistance from other member countries. One reason for the

problems in these countries is that they have borrowed too much money. Another is that their governments are no longer in control of their own currencies.

Many people who have lost their jobs, or had their pay reduced or cannot find work in Greece, Spain and Portugal have recently been taking part in large demonstrations. What’s more the economies of most EU members are being badly affected by the eurozone problems.

In 2009, the Noble Peace Prize was awarded to Barack Obama. He had only recently been elected as the president of the U.S. Many believed that it was a strange choice. At the time America was involved in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. These people thought that the group in Norway must have given Mr. Obama the Prize to encourage him to end these wars.

Some think that the EU got the award for similar reasons. They suspect that it was meant to encourage the EU to solve its problems and to prevent a future breakup of the eurozone.

Others think it odd for the group from Norway to give the EU the Prize. This is because Norway is not a member of the EU. In the past two referendums, or votes in which all adults can take part, have been held in Norway about EU membership. Both times the majority of people have voted “no”.

After hearing the news Mr. Barroso said “the prize was a great honor for all the 500 million citizens of Europe”.

The King of Norway officially awards the Peace Prize at a special ceremony. It takes place in Oslo, Norway’s capital, on December 10, or the anniversary of Alfred Nobel’s death. ■



Peace Prize Medal

TURKEY AND SYRIA

Lakhdar Brahimi, the new United Nations (U.N.) and Arab League peace envoy to Syria, traveled to Istanbul, the largest city in Turkey, on October 13. There he held talks with Turkish leaders. Mr. Brahimi wants to make sure that the fighting that is now taking place in Syria does not spread to other countries.



The violence in Syria first began about 18 months ago. It started after the government ordered the army to use weapons to stop street protests. The demonstrators want the country's president, Bashar al-Assad, to step down. Mr. al-Assad and his family have controlled Syria for the past 40 years. His opponents also claim that many government officials in Syria are corrupt, or dishonest, and that the police have too many powers.

As the violence spread, some members of the Syrian army changed sides and joined the protesters. Yet many people in certain parts of the country still support Mr. al-Assad and his government. Recently, fighting has been taking place in Syria's two largest cities, Damascus, the capital, and Aleppo. So far it's thought that the violence has been the cause of over 40,000 deaths. The anti-government fighters, or rebels, have set up an organization called the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

Not long after the violence began, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's prime minister, suggested that Mr. al-Assad should step down and leave the country. Since then Turkey, together with several other countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, has been helping the rebels in Syria. Many thousands of Syrians have crossed the border into Turkey to get away from the fighting. The Turkish government has set up special camps for these people.

Just over a week before Mr. Brahimi's visit, several artillery shells, fired by Syrian government troops, had landed in Turkey. One hit a house in a village and killed the people inside. Soon afterwards, the Turkish parliament held a vote. The vote, which passed, gave the Turkish government permission to send its troops into another country. Over the next few days more Syrian shells landed in Turkey. In retaliation Turkish military forces used their artillery to fire at targets in Syria.



Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, prime minister of Turkey

On October 10, Turkish warplanes forced a Syrian passenger plane to land at an airport close to Ankara, the capital of Turkey. The plane had been traveling from Russia to Damascus, Syria's capital city, and was flying over Turkey at the time. The Turkish government claimed that the plane was carrying weapons as well as passengers. The following day the plane was

allowed to continue on its journey. However, Turkey confiscated some of the items it was carrying. Russia insisted that these were not weapons but parts of a radar system. The Syrian government has now banned all Turkish planes from flying over its country.

Some people think that Turkey may now get drawn into the war in Syria. Yet most are sure that the Turkish government does not want this to happen. In a recent speech Mr. Erdoğan complained that the U.N. was not doing enough to end the fighting in Syria.

Mr. Brahimi is now thought to be working on plans to send peace-keeping troops from several European countries to Syria. However, this could only be done if the two opposing sides agreed to a ceasefire and stopped fighting. ■

"EVENT HORIZON" STAR DISCOVERED

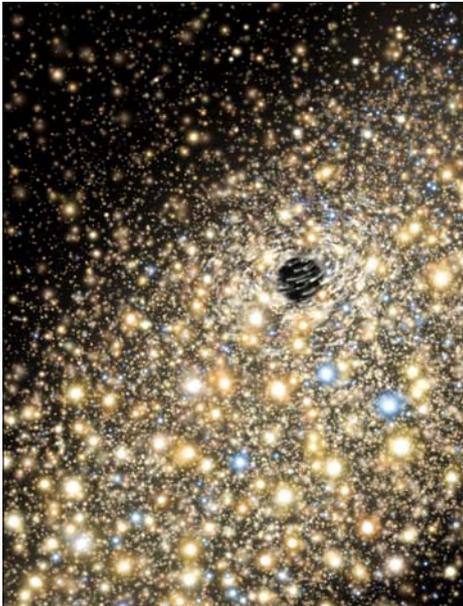
Astronomers, scientists who study stars, planets and their movements, in the U.S., have discovered evidence of an unusual star. It is racing round the huge black hole at the center of our Milky Way Galaxy. They hope to be able to test Albert Einstein's famous theory of general relativity by studying the speeding star's movements.

A black hole is a space object that has a very strong gravitational field from which nothing can escape. It is not just material that is sucked in and trapped. Even light and other radiation cannot escape, as it too is pulled in by a black hole's gravitational force. Black holes cannot be seen directly but can be detected by the movements of stars and other space objects around them.

Most spiral shaped galaxies, such as our Milky Way, are now believed to have huge black holes at their centers. All the different solar systems and stars in the galaxy move around these black holes. The closer to the black hole they are the quicker they travel round them.

The black hole in the center of the Milky Way is known as Sagittarius A-star (Sagittarius A*) after the constellation, or group of stars, in which it is located.

Sagittarius A* is only about ten times larger than our Sun. Yet its mass is about four million times greater. It takes our Solar System hundreds of millions of years to orbit, or go round, it. The distance between the Earth and Sagittarius A* is about 26,000 light years. A light year is the distance light travels in one year, or roughly 186,400 miles (300,000 kilometers) per second.



An artist's impression of stars moving around a large black hole in the center of a galaxy

The newly-discovered star has been given the name S0-102. The star travels at many thousands of kilometers per second. It takes only 11.2 years to orbit Sagittarius A*. S0-102 is the second star to be

NEWSCAST

MYSTERY BEEP — A couple in Britain kept hearing a beeping noise in their house. They didn't know where it was coming from. As the noise was annoying, the couple asked an electrician to work out from where it was coming. He was unable to find the cause yet suggested it might be something inside a wall. Builders were called and started making holes in the walls. Later the husband opened an unused drawer. Inside was an old smoke detector. It was making the beeping noise, as its battery was running out. The man smashed it up with a hammer. The repairs to the couple's walls are expected to cost hundreds of pounds.

discovered with a short orbit around the black hole. The other, called S0-2, takes about 16 years to go round Sagittarius A*.

Both S0-102 and S0-2 are much closer to the black holes "event horizon" than any discovered before. The event horizon is the distance from a black hole where it is not possible to get any closer without being sucked in. Yet the closest S0-102 gets to the black hole is about 260 times the distance between the Sun and the Earth.

Einstein (1879 – 1955) was a German-born scientist, who many describe as the father of modern physics. His theory of relativity says that mass can warp, or bend, space and time. Einstein's theory has been seen to be true. However, it has yet to be observed in an area of space near to the huge mass of a black hole. Similar to planets going round their stars both S0-102 and S0-2 have elliptical shaped orbits. This means that they

move closer and farther from the center of the black hole as they go round it. The scientists will now record their complete orbits over the next 11 to 16 years. They are particularly interested to know what happens when the stars are closest to Sagittarius A*. This is known as the periapease.

If the scientists see the stars "wobbling" a little at their periapease this would suggest that they are being affected by the [curvature](#) of space-time. This, the scientists say, is what Einstein's theory predicts S0-102 and S0-2 will do. ■

TURTLE'S UNUSUAL HABIT EXPLAINED

Chinese softshell turtles are known to put their heads in pools of water for periods of between 20 and 100 minutes. The turtles have lungs and breathe through their mouths. Why they therefore held their heads under water for long periods of time was a mystery. After doing several experiments a scientist in Singapore may have discovered the answer.

Chinese softshell turtles are found in many parts of East Asia. Unlike other types of turtles the shell of the Chinese softshell is not hard but more like a thick piece of leather. Adults' shells can grow to one foot (30 centimeters) in length.

The turtles live in brackish swamps. Brackish water has more salt in it than fresh water, but less salt than seawater. It is not unusual for brackish swamps to dry up for certain periods of time. When they do only pools of very brackish water remain.

Over one hundred years ago, two American scientists wanted to find out why the turtles put their heads

in pools of water for such a long time. They dissected, or cut up, several turtles and discovered that they had an unusual soft type of tissue inside their mouths. They guessed that these soft tissues were similar to fishes' gills. Therefore, as well as having lungs the turtles were able to breathe underwater like fish.



Chinese softshell turtle

The Singapore scientist bought several live softshell turtles from a local market. He then strapped them down so they were unable to move. He put a bowl of water by their heads and a plastic tray under the rear of their bodies.

As expected the turtles ducked their heads under the water in the bowls for long periods of time. The scientist tested the water as they did so. He discovered that oxygen was being removed from it. So this showed that the turtles were able to breathe like fish through the "gills" inside their mouths. This also explained why they did not drown.

However, the scientist also discovered that the water contained an increasing amount of urea. This chemical contains a lot of nitrogen. Urea in urine is the way in which animals and humans remove nitrogen waste from the body. In the plastic trays the scientist collected the urine that the turtles excreted, or passed out, in the normal way. He found that only about 6% of all the urea produced by the turtles was in the urine. The remainder was

therefore coming through the soft tissue inside their mouths.

Softshell turtles are not able to drink salty water. Therefore, finding fresh water to drink can be difficult. Getting rid of urea from the body by excreting urine means that a lot of this water is used. Yet by excreting the urea from its mouth, and having the brackish water wash it away, the turtle does not use up so much of the fresh water it has drunk.

Therefore it seems that the answer to the mystery of why softshell turtles hold their heads under pools of water for such a long time is that they are having a pee! ■

LENIN STATUE TAKEN DOWN

Mongolia's last statue of Lenin was lifted off its [plinth](#) by a large crane on October 14. The large figure, which was made out of bronze, was then loaded onto the back of a truck and driven away.

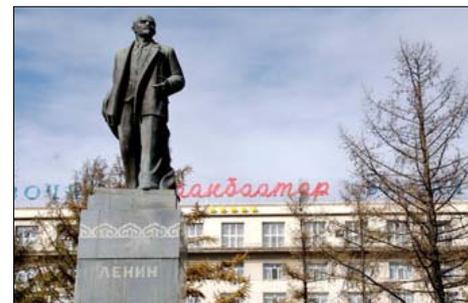
The statue was in the center of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital city. It was put up in the 1950s.

Vladimir Lenin (1870 – 1924) became the first communist leader of Russia soon after the Russian Revolution in 1917. Before the revolution the head of its royal family, called the Tsar, ruled Russia.

During the First World War (1914 – 1918), Russia fought alongside France and Britain against Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At this time there were many large demonstrations against the Tsar. In 1917, the protest leaders imprisoned the Tsar and other members of his family in one of their royal palaces. Soon afterwards, the Tsar agreed to resign, or abdicate.

For many years, Lenin had been complaining about how the Tsars

ruled Russia. Lenin had been arrested for this, so it wasn't safe for him to stay in Russia. He moved to Switzerland. There, he carried on writing articles that said Russia should have a new form of government called communism.



Lenin statue in Ulaanbaatar, in Mongolia

After the Tsar had abdicated, Lenin returned to Russia. He and his followers soon seized control of the country and turned it into a communist state, later to be called the Soviet Union.

The Communist Party continued to rule the Soviet Union until 1991. By that time it had expanded to include many countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Communist leaders arranged for statues of Lenin to be put up in many cities in these countries. By 1990 the Soviet Union had begun to break apart. Many countries that were part of it chose to become independent. They then arranged for their leaders to be democratically elected.

Mongolia is a huge country, about twice the size of France, situated between Russia and China. The country has a small population of 2.9 million people. Around 40% live in Ulaanbaatar. Many Mongolians who live outside the capital are nomadic. They have no permanent homes and travel around the country herding livestock, sheep, goats, cattle and horses. Mongolian nomads live in large tents called yurts.

Although Mongolia was not officially part of the communist Russian-led Soviet Union it worked very closely with it. During this time, Mongolia was also a one-party communist state.

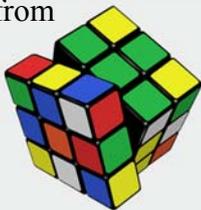
For many years, Lenin was **re-vered** in Mongolia. Schoolchildren called him “Teacher Lenin”. Yet during this time, even though it has many valuable mineral resources, Mongolia remained a poor country. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990 Mongolia introduced democratic elections.

The mayor of Ulaanbaatar, who is known to oppose communism, arranged for the statue of Lenin to be removed. He said that Lenin was a “murderer” because of the tens of millions of people who were killed or died during the time of the Soviet Union.

Since the end of the Soviet Union most of its former member countries

NEWSCAST

RUBIK CHAMPION — A young man from Russia has recently won the European Rubik Cube Speed Solving Championship. The contest, which takes place every two years, was held in Poland. People compete to be the quickest to solve the 3×3×3 Rubik’s Cube puzzle. A Rubik Cube has six faces. Six different colored stickers cover each one. A person needs to keep turning the lines, or rows, of the cube. The 3D (three-dimensional) puzzle is complete when the stickers on each face are all the same color. The winner’s time was 8.89 seconds. A man from the Netherlands came second. He solved the puzzle in 9.21 seconds.



have moved, destroyed or even buried the statues of Lenin that once stood in their cities. Most did not want to be reminded of the time that they were under communist control.

At the beginning of the First World War, St. Petersburg, Russia’s second largest city, was renamed Petrograd. When Lenin died the city’s name was changed to Leningrad. In 1991, the newly-elected Russian government changed the city’s name back to St. Petersburg.

After Lenin died in 1924 his body was embalmed. It can still be seen in a specially-built mausoleum in the center of Moscow, the capital of Russia. ■

No 2012 AFRICA PRIZE

A prize called the Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership is normally awarded in October. However, on October 16, Mo Ibrahim, the person who awards the prize, announced that this year there was no winner.

Mr. Ibrahim, who is a wealthy businessman, set up the prize in 2007. He was born in Sudan and studied in Egypt. Mr. Ibrahim, made a large amount of money when he sold the cell phone company he owned in 2006.

Mr. Ibrahim wanted to use some of his fortune to help African countries. Many countries in Africa have valuable minerals. These include oil and precious stones such as diamonds and rubies. Yet many people in African countries are still very poor. Mr. Ibrahim thinks this is because of bad leadership and a lack of good democratic government.

Mr. Ibrahim believes that some African leaders do not want to hand

over power to anyone else. This is so they can use their control to make large amounts of money, often unlawfully. He therefore decided to set up his prize to try to encourage leaders to hand over power when their term has finished or when people have voted for a different leader. During their time as leaders, they also must have run their countries according to the rules, and done everything they could have to help all the people that live within them.



Mo Ibrahim

The prize is awarded by a specially-chosen group of people, which does not include Mr. Ibrahim. It is given to a former African leader who has peacefully handed over power to a successor and made a good job of running the country while he or she was in charge.

The person awarded the prize receives a payment of \$5 million. In addition he or she is paid \$200,000 every year for the rest of his or her life. This makes the Ibrahim Prize one of the most valuable in the world.

Last year, the prize was awarded to Pedro Pires, a former president of Cape Verde. Cape Verde is a group of ten islands, or archipelago, in the Atlantic Ocean. The islands are about 354 miles (570 kilometers) off the coast of West Africa. Cape Verde is a former colony of Portugal that became independent in 1975. Its population is about 500,000.

Mr. Pires helped Cape Verde to become independent. He was prime minister from 1975 to 1991. He set up a democratic government in which people could vote for their leaders. Mr. Pires was elected president in 2001. After serving two five-year terms, he stepped down at the age of 77.

During this time, Cape Verde's economy improved, over 80% of the people are able to read and write, and the average life expectancy in the country is now 70 years.

Other past winners include Joaquim Chissano, the former president of Mozambique, in 2007, and Festus Mogae, a previous president of Botswana, in 2008.

This year, those who select the winner said that there were no suitable candidates. This is similar to both 2009 and 2010 when nobody was awarded the prize. ■

CROWN-OF-THORNS STARFISH

A recent study has claimed that Australia's Great Barrier Reef has lost 50% of its coral over the last 25 years. One reason for this, it says, is that a greater number of crown-of-thorns starfish are feeding on the coral. Now two Australian scientists say that they may have discovered a new way to reduce the numbers of these types of starfish.

The Great Barrier Reef, off the northeast coast of Australia, is the largest coral reef in the world. It is over 1,250 miles (2,000 kilometers) long. The reef is an important ecological site. It is a specially-protected area and home to thousands of marine species, many of them endangered.

The study says that the Great Barrier Reef is being badly affected

in several ways. One is more powerful storms or cyclones. Another is global warming. This is causing sea temperatures to rise. Also the increase of carbon dioxide in the air is making the sea more acidic, which can kill the coral. However, the study says that around 40% of the damage has been caused by a population explosion, or sudden increase, of crown-of-thorns starfish.

Adult crown-of-thorns starfish can grow up to 18 inches (46 centimeters) in diameter. Some have as many as 21 arms. These are covered in long sharp spines from which the starfish get their name. They vary in color. Most are grey-green to pale brown although some can be more brightly colored. Adult starfish can eat around 65 square feet (six square meters) of living coral every year.

The starfish have lived on the Great Barrier Reef for thousands of years but there have not been so many of them. Scientists think that the main reason for the recent explosion may be the use of chemical fertilizers on the land.

Female crown-of-thorns starfish release millions of eggs. These then became larvae, which feed on phytoplankton. Phytoplankton are microscopic living things found in both salty and freshwater. Most phytoplankton are single-celled organisms. Some are bacteria but many, such as algae, are plants.

Normally most of the larvae would never become adult starfish. They would die, as they would be unable to find enough to eat, or be eaten by other marine creatures.

Some of the fertilizers used on the land are washed into rivers and then out to sea. The planktonic algae feed on the fertilizer chemicals. There has therefore been a large in-

crease of phytoplankton in the seas around the Great Barrier Reef. More planktonic algae means that there is more food for the starfish larvae. Therefore many more survive to become adult starfish.

In the past, to reduce the number of starfish, divers have been paid to cut them up or inject them with acid. Yet this is expensive to do and is not very effective.



Crown-of-thorns starfish

Two Australian scientists were studying some of the microorganisms, or bacteria, which are found inside the starfish. They wanted to find out what would happen to the starfish if there were an increase in the number of bacteria inside them.

To test this the scientists used a liquid made from animal proteins to grow more of the bacteria. One scientist then wondered what would happen if he injected this liquid into one of the starfish. When he did this he accidentally discovered that the liquid made from animal proteins quickly killed the starfish. It seemed to have a severe [allergic](#) reaction to the animal, or beef-like, proteins.

The scientists say that it could be a long time before they can use their new discovery as a way of reducing the number of crown-of-thorns starfish on the Great Barrier Reef. In the meantime most experts agree that the best thing to do would be to stop so much fertilizer from being washed into the sea. ■

OBITUARY

NORODOM SIHANOUK 1922 – 2012

Former King of Cambodia who twice decided to give up the throne

On October 15, it was announced that Norodom Sihanouk had died aged 89. The former king died from a heart attack while in the hospital in Beijing, the capital of China. He had been ill for several years.

Sihanouk was born in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, in 1922. At the time Cambodia was part of a French colony called Indochina, which also included what is now Laos and Vietnam.

Sihanouk became king in 1941 after he was chosen to take over from his grandfather. This was during the Second World War (1939 – 1945). At this time the French rulers of Indochina had agreed to work with Japan, which had taken over large parts of East Asia. After the war, in 1953, Sihanouk helped Cambodia to become an independent country.

Two years later, Sihanouk **abdicated**, or gave up the throne, to become a politician. He arranged for his father to become king. Sihanouk governed the country as a political leader until 1970.

During the 1960's the Vietnam War started. The American's sent large numbers of troops to Vietnam but Sihanouk chose not to work with them. Instead he became friendly with China's communist leaders.

In 1970, while he was visiting Europe, a cousin of his, together with a military general, seized control of Cambodia. They announced that there would no longer be any kings or queens in the country and that it would become a republic with a president in charge. Sihanouk fled to Beijing.

Sihanouk then began to support the Khmer Rouge. This was a militant communist group in Cambodia. It was supported by China. In 1975, with help from North Vietnamese soldiers the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh.

The Khmer Rouge ran Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. Its leader was called Pol Pot. Sihanouk was allowed to return to Cambodia but he and his family were forced to stay in a small house near the Royal Palace.

Pol Pot and senior members of the Khmer Rouge believed that they needed to "restart" civilization. They forced many people who lived in cities and towns to move to the countryside. There, they were made to work on farms and building projects.

The Khmer Rouge was very brutal. Hundreds of thousands died from overwork, disease, and torture. It's estimated that, during the four years the Khmer Rouge was in charge, around 1.7 million people either died or were killed. This was roughly 20% of Cambodia's population.

Many were buried in the countryside in mass graves. Today these areas are often described as "the killing fields". Six of Sihanouk's children were either killed or died from mistreatment during this time.

In 1978, Vietnam invaded Cambodia and eventually defeated the Khmer Rouge. Sihanouk once again fled to Beijing. Vietnam then set up a government to run Cambodia. Eventually, in 1993, Sihanouk, who had been living in China and North Korea, managed to get the many different groups in Cambodia to agree to take part in an election. This was organized by the United Nations (U.N.).



Norodom Sihanouk

The election was a draw between a party led by Sihanouk's son, Ranariddh, and Hun Sen who led the Vietnam backed party. It was decided that both would share the position of prime minister. Sihanouk once again became Cambodia's king. He abdicated for a second time in 2004 because of poor health. Another of his sons, Norodom Sihamoni, became the new king.

Even though he had supported the Khmer Rouge in the past Sihanouk remained popular in Cambodia. After his death was announced King Sihamoni and Hun Sen traveled to Beijing to fly back with the former king's body.

Sihanouk's body will be displayed in the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh for several months. Tens of thousands of Cambodians are expected to line the streets of the city when his funeral finally takes place.

SKYDIVING RECORD

On October 14, Felix Baumgartner broke three world records: the first person to free-fall supersonic, or faster than the speed of sound, the highest ever balloon flight and the highest **altitude** from which a person has free-fallen.



Felix Baumgartner, prepares to jump (Red Bull)

When people jump out of planes they are in free-fall until they open their parachutes. Skydiving is when people leap out of a plane at a great height. This means that there is a much longer period of free-fall before they have to open their parachutes.

Mr. Baumgartner is from Austria. He has done many skydiving jumps and other stunts in the past. About seven years ago he started to make plans for his record-breaking skydive. He wanted to be the first person to free-fall faster than the speed of sound, or Mach 1. Although it can vary depending on things such as height and temperature the speed of sound is around 768 miles (1,236 kilometers) per hour. This is about one kilometer in three seconds, or roughly one mile in five seconds.

Mr. Baumgartner's record-breaking jump took place above Roswell, a city in the state of New Mexico, in the U.S. To reach the speed of sound Mr. Baumgartner had to jump from close to where the atmosphere becomes the edge of space, or at a height of around 24 miles (38.6 kilometers).

To get to this great height Mr. Baumgartner used a small capsule, which was attached to a large helium balloon. The ascent took two and a half hours. His capsule eventually reached a height of 128,097 feet (36,576 meters). This was the highest that anyone has ever traveled by balloon. Mr. Baumgartner then stepped out of the capsule's door and jumped.

At this height it is extremely cold and there is very little atmospheric pressure. Mr. Baumgartner therefore wore a specially designed suit and helmet similar to those used by astronauts. The suit was also fitted with a number of cameras as well as equipment for measuring altitude and speed. Strapped to Mr. Baumgartner's chest was another piece of equipment. This recorded what was happening to his body, such as his breathing, heart beat and skin temperature, as he fell towards the Earth.

It took Mr. Baumgartner about nine minutes to reach the ground. He was in free-fall for four minutes and 22 seconds. It took him just 40 seconds to reach a speed of 800 miles (1,290 kilometers) per hour. He eventually reached a top speed of Mach 1.24.

Mr. Baumgartner opened his parachute when he reached a height of about 5,000 feet (1,525 meters). By this time he had slowed to the speed of a normal parachutist. The capsule and balloon were collected after they separately fell back to the Earth.

To make his world record skydive Mr. Baumgartner was helped by the Red Bull drinks company. It paid for all the equipment that Mr. Baumgartner used. Officials from the company said that the jump had provided important scientific information that astronauts may be able to use in future.

After his record-breaking jump Mr. Baumgartner said that he planned to retire from skydiving. He said that he would now like to get a job flying helicopters for mountain rescues and fighting fires. ■

TALIBAN SCHOOLGIRL ATTACK

A special air ambulance took Malala Yousafzai, a 14 year old girl from Pakistan, to a hospital in Britain on October 15. There she was given special medical treatment. Five days before, a gunman, who got onto the school bus in which she was traveling, shot her in the head and neck. Later a member of the Pakistani Taliban said that his organization had planned the attack.

Ms. Yousafzai lives in an area of Pakistan called the Swat Valley. Several years ago Taliban supporters took control of this area. The

NEWSCAST

RECORD TELEPHONE BILL — A woman in France decided to end her contract with a telephone company. She was amazed to see how much money she owed when the final bill arrived. It said that the outstanding amount was almost €12 quadrillion or €11,721,000,000,000,000 (\$15.2 quadrillion). This is more than all the money made by every company in France added together. At first, the telephone company said that the woman would have to pay the bill in regular small amounts. Later it admitted the figure was a computer error. The amount should have been €117.21 (\$124.67). To apologize for its mistake the company told the woman that she would not have to pay the €117.21.

Taliban used to govern Afghanistan before the country was invaded by the U.S. in 2001. Many of their supporters then moved to the mountainous region close to the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Taliban believe that people should live according to strict Islamic laws. For example, their beliefs mean that music should be banned and that girls are not allowed to go to school or have any form of education. Those people who live in Pakistan, near the border with Afghanistan, who support the Taliban and have similar beliefs are often called the Pakistani Taliban.

Ms. Yousafzai was 11 years old when the Taliban took over the Swat Valley. It ordered all the girls' schools to shut down. Ms. Yousafzai then began to write an [anonymous](#) internet blog. In it she described how many young girls lived in fear of the Taliban. She also wrote about the cruel way in which the Taliban treat people who do not agree with their beliefs.

In 2009, the government of Pakistan sent a military force to the Swat Valley to regain control. Fierce fighting broke out. Eventually, the Pakistani forces were successful and the Taliban withdrew from the area. Ms. Yousafzai wrote about the fighting on her blog, which more and more people began to read.

After the Taliban was driven out of the Swat Valley Ms. Yousafzai started a special campaign. She wants more girls to be given the chance of going to school. Recently, she has become well-known and agreed to be interviewed by some news companies.

After the shooting on the school bus Ms. Yousafzai was taken to a military hospital in Rawalpindi. There she had an emergency

operation. Two other girls were also injured in the shooting but not as seriously. Many people in Pakistan and other countries were shocked by the attack. Over the next few days there were large demonstrations against the Taliban in several Pakistani cities such as Karachi. Extra religious services were also arranged so people could pray for Ms. Yousafzai.

Other countries have offered to help. For example, the air ambulance trip to Britain where Ms. Yousafzai is having special treatment was organized by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). On October 16, hospital officials in Britain said that Ms. Yousafzai should make a good recovery.

Soon after the attack on the school bus, Pakistani Taliban officials declared that if Ms. Yousafzai recovers they would plan to target her again. ■

ANTI-DRONE PROTEST

A motorcade, or group of cars and other vehicles, set out from Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan on October 6. It traveled towards South Waziristan, a region of Pakistan, which is next to the border with Afghanistan.

The motorcade was organized by Imran Khan. He leads the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf political party. Mr. Khan said that the motorcade was a protest against drone attacks. Drones are unmanned small aircraft that can be controlled remotely.

Recently, the U.S. has been launching many drone attacks on places within Pakistan that are close to the country's border with Afghanistan.

The U.S. has been fighting a war in Afghanistan since 2001. This was just after an Islamic militant group called al-Qaeda carried out attacks, using passenger aircraft, in New York City and Washington DC. The Taliban controlled Afghanistan at the time. It allowed al-Qaeda to operate its training camps in the country. The U.S. demanded that the Taliban hand over the al-Qaeda leaders. When the Taliban refused the U.S. invaded the country.

A few years later, several other NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member countries agreed to send troops to Afghanistan. They decided to do this to help the U.S. and the new Afghan government in their fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

Soon after the invasion, the Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters withdrew to the mountainous areas along the border with Pakistan. Yet they have not been defeated. From bases in the mountains on both sides of the border they have continued to organize attacks on Afghan security forces and American and NATO troops in Afghanistan.

The U.S. has complained that the government of Pakistan is not doing enough to stop the Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters on its side of the border. This part of Pakistan is often called the "tribal areas". Some



people in these areas who support the Taliban are known as the Pakistani Taliban. One of the problems, many people say, is that the government of Pakistan has little control over the tribal areas.



Imran Khan

The American, NATO and Afghan troops cannot cross the border into Pakistan. Instead they are making use of drones to try to kill the Taliban commanders and destroy their camps in this part of Pakistan.

Mr. Khan insists that the use of drones is wrong. These types of attacks are not always accurate. Sometimes they kill innocent civilians. When this happens, Mr. Khan says, local people become very angry. Many then decide to join the Pakistani Taliban. Mr. Khan therefore argues that the use of drones in these border areas is making the problem worse. He also says that by carrying out these drone attacks in Pakistan the U.S. is breaking international laws.

Barack Obama, the president of the U.S., says that all American drone attacks are strictly controlled. Military commanders try to make sure that civilians are not killed or injured. He also explains that if the drone attacks were stopped more destructive military attacks, such as bombing by military aircraft, might have to be used.

The anti-drone motorcade increased in size as it traveled towards South Waziristan. About 80 people from other countries, including the

U.S., took part. Yet, on October 7, before it reached South Waziristan, local officials warned Mr. Khan that Taliban supporters could attack the motorcade if it continued. Mr. Khan decided to turn back. Even though it was not possible to complete the anti-drone protest he insisted that it had been a success. ■

TOYOTA RECALL

On October 10, the Toyota Motor Corporation made a special announcement. The company said that it had decided to recall millions of Toyota cars around the world. The reason, Toyota officials said, was that the company had discovered a problem with an electric window switch. The switch is inside the driver's door of some of the different models, or types, of cars they make.

Toyota was founded in 1937. Nowadays, together with General Motors, from the U.S., and Volkswagen, from Germany, Toyota is one of the world's largest car making companies. The company is based in Japan and has a worldwide workforce of just over 300,000 people. In July this year Toyota announced that it had manufactured, or made, its 200 millionth vehicle.

Product recalls happen when a company finds out that something it has made may be dangerous. If the company makes a type of food or drink a recall will probably be necessary if some of its products are discovered to make people ill.

Announcing a product recall is a very big decision for a company to make. The company's bosses have

to decide if paying for the recall is better than the possibility that the company's **reputation** may be damaged in the future. Product recalls cost the company a lot of money.

Toyota says that the number of cars being recalled is around 7.4 million. The problem affects over ten different models. Most are vehicles that were sold in the U.S., Europe and Japan. Yet smaller recalls will also be done in places such as Australia, the Middle East and China. The cars that have faulty window switches were made between 2005 and 2010. The number of cars being recalled is roughly the same as the number of vehicles Toyota sells each year.

It seems some of the power window switches, inside the driver's door, did not have enough grease put on them when they were made. The **friction** that is caused when opening or closing the driver's window can cause the mechanism inside the door to smoke. However, the problem has caused no injuries or accidents and there have been only a few reports of the switches catching fire.

The company says that it will contact the owners of all of the cars that have these types of switches in the driver's door. Each owner will be asked to take his or her car to a Toyota garage. Toyota officials say that replacing the switch will take around 40 minutes.

This is not the first time that Toyota has decided to recall some of its cars. The last recall happened at the beginning of 2010.

This was after a few drivers complained that the accelerator pedal in their cars occasionally got stuck. In some cars it seemed a badly-fitted floor mat was causing the problem. In



TOYOTA

others there was something wrong with the pedal. In the U.S. these accelerator problems were blamed for some car accidents. Yet only a very few cars were found to have had the problem.

Toyota has not said how much it thinks its recent recall will cost. Some experts estimate that it will be at least ¥10 billion (\$127.4 million).

However, the news about the recall could affect Toyota in two possible ways. One is that the company may sell fewer cars because of the bad publicity. Alternatively, people will buy more Toyota cars. This is because they know that even if a problem, such as the power window switch, is discovered the company will arrange to fix it. ■

GIANT PANDA RELEASED

Officials in China have released a two-year-old panda into the wild. The panda is named Tao Tao and was bred in captivity. Tao Tao had to be given special training so he would be able to survive on his own.



Giant panda

Giant pandas are an endangered species. The large black and white bears are native to China and live only in a few mountainous areas of the country. Chinese officials estimate that there are now only around 1,600 giant pandas living in the wild. Another 342 have been bred in captivity.

Male adult giant pandas can be six feet (1.8 meters) long and weigh 350 pounds (160 kilograms). Females are a little smaller. In the wild pandas live on their own. They are territorial, or have their own areas. Giant pandas only get together to mate. They spend much of their time eating bamboo. Unlike other types of bear they do not hibernate, or go to sleep, during the winter months.

Pandas are famous for their breeding habits. There is only a two or three day period in the year when a female can become pregnant. In captivity it can be difficult to get males and females to mate at the right time. In the wild a female might have only one cub every two years.

In China there are special breeding programs for captive pandas. However, there are problems in releasing captive-bred pandas into the wild. The last time this was done was in 2006. Then a panda called Xiang Xiang was set free. Yet within a year Xiang Xiang had died from injuries. He got these after fighting with other wild pandas over food and territory.

This time it was thought that Tao Tao ought to be specially trained so he could survive when set free. Since Tao Tao was born he and his mother have been kept in semi-wild conditions. This was so he would learn how to climb and look after himself. His keepers would dress up in special suits to look like pandas whenever they had to go near him. This was so Tao Tao did not become too **familiar** with humans. The keepers also made sure that Tao Tao experienced heavy rain and snow.

Tao Tao's movements will now be monitored. It is hoped that the panda will survive. If he does, other captive-bred giant pandas will be trained in the same way. These too will then be released into the wild.

However, other wild pandas are not the only danger that Tao Tao will face. Leopards, wolves and other types of bears also live in the area that has become his new home. ■

GERMAN CHANCELLOR VISITS GREECE

Angela Merkel, the chancellor, or leader, of Germany visited Athens, the capital of Greece, on October 9. She held talks with Antonis Samaras, the Greek prime minister. Many people in Greece claim that Germany is to blame for many of their country's financial problems. For this reason around 6,000 police officers were on duty in the center of Athens to stop any demonstrations against Mrs. Merkel from becoming violent.

Greece is a member of the European Union (EU). Since 2001 Greece has also been a member of the eurozone, or one of the 17 countries that use the euro as its currency.

NEWSCAST

EYE SPY — A man walking along a beach, in the U.S., was surprised to find a huge blue eye. The sea had washed it up. The man put it in a plastic bag and took it to the local police. They handed it over to a wildlife organization. Having studied the eye officials at the organization declared that it had not come from an unknown sea monster or giant squid, as some people had suggested. Instead, they explained, it was probably the eye of a very large swordfish. They think that fishermen caught the swordfish and then immediately cut it up. As they had no use for the eyes they threw them into the sea.

Joining the eurozone was supposed to help Greece and improve its economy. Yet it also made it easier for the government to borrow money. Around five years ago Greece began to have serious financial problems. Its government had borrowed too much. The country was having difficulty both repaying some of what it had already borrowed as well as borrowing more.

Eventually, three organizations agreed to work together to help Greece with its money problems: the EU, the European Central Bank (ECB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Together these three organizations are nicknamed the “troika”. This word means “three” or a “collection of three” in Slavic languages (used by several countries in Eastern Europe).

In return for providing Greece with a bailout, or extra money, the

troika insisted that the government had to reduce the amount it spends. Reducing, or cutting, government spending in this way is often called **austerity** measures. However, these spending cuts in Greece are unpopular. They have caused many problems. Government workers are now paid much less. Many companies have been forced to close down. Most people have little money to spend. Now around 22% of adults and over 55% of young people in the country do not have a job.

Of all the EU and eurozone member countries Germany has the most successful economy. Much of the money that the troika lends to Greece comes from Germany. In the past Mrs. Merkel has insisted that the Greek government must continue with its austerity measures. If things are going to improve, she says, Greece must show that it can

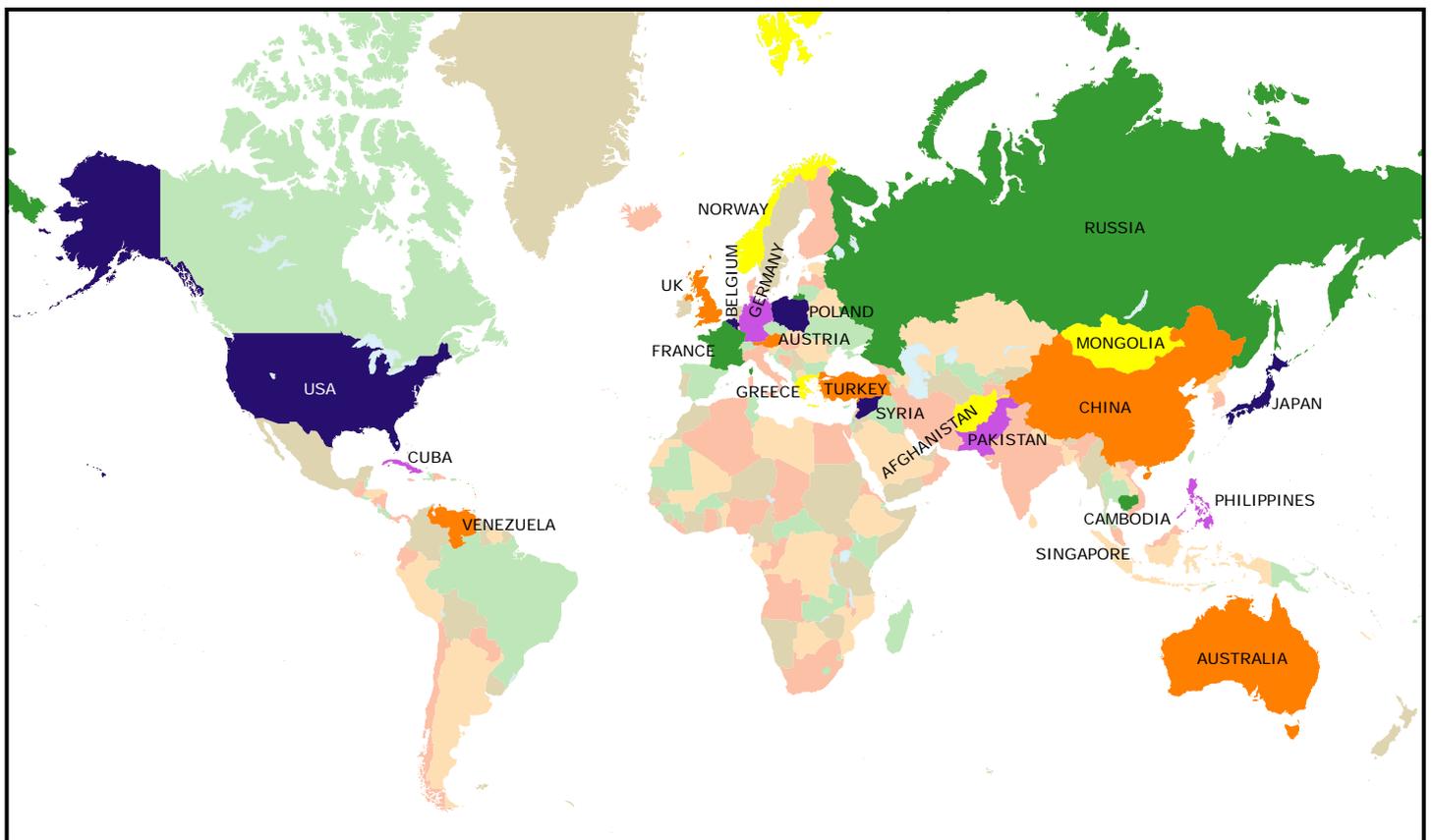
repay the money it has borrowed in the past. Yet many Greeks believe that the troika is being much too harsh. They say that the austerity measures should not be so strict.



Antonis Samaras

Angela Merkel

This was the first time that Mrs. Merkel had visited Greece since its financial difficulties began. Many Greeks now blame Germany for the country’s problems. Some even complain about what happened in the Second World War (1939 – 1945). Then the German army invaded Greece and occupied the country.



This map shows countries to which news stories refer in this issue. Visit www.newsademic.com for more detailed world maps.

Even though there were many police officers in the center of Athens some demonstrations did take place. A few people burned swastika flags. The swastika is the symbol that is most associated with Nazi Germany at the time of the Second World War.

After completing their talks Mrs. Merkel and Mr. Samaras spoke to news reporters. Mrs. Merkel declared that although it may take several more years the Greek government's austerity measures were working. She said that the troika would continue to help Greece during these difficult times. ■

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL

Recently, the United Nations (U.N.) declared that each year there would be one day designated to "girls". Days on which various things are marked in this way are sometimes known as "international **observance** days". The first International Day of the Girl was on October 11.

The idea for the Day of the Girl came from an organization called Plan. Based in Britain, Plan is a charity that operates in over 50 countries where it works to protect the rights of children. Other international organizations such as CARE have also been involved. CARE works in many countries where there is poverty and a shortage of food.

The theme, or subject, for the first Day of the Girl was "Child Marriage". In many developing, or less wealthy, countries it is not unusual for marriages to be arranged for girls who are aged between ten and 18. One report says that one in three girls in less developed countries are married before they are 18. These types of marriages are nearly always to older men.

The girl's parents normally arrange for child marriages to take place. Once a young girl is married in this way it means that she is very unlikely to either have an education or finish any studies she has started. What's more, it is not unusual for young brides to start having their own children at a very early age. Yet girls under the age of 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women who are over 20. Child brides can often suffer from violence in the home as well as a lack of medical treatment if needed.



Great Pyramid and Sphinx lit up in pink

In many developing countries child marriages are a tradition. The U.N. says that there are 52 countries in which girls can be married under the age of 15 with their parent's agreement.

Those who disagree with these types of marriages say that when girls have to get married at such a young age they lose their childhood and friends. They claim that all girls have a right to be able to stay in school and make their own decisions. If girls are safe from violence, complete their education, and have good healthcare, they say, there is a much better chance that they will improve both their lives and the lives of their families.

In recent years, the number of child marriages has been declining, or going down. Yet many argue that the rate, or speed, of the decline is too slow. Today it is estimated that every year ten million girls under the

age of 18 (many of them under 16) become child brides. Around 400 million women now aged between 25 and 49 were married as children.

On October 11, to celebrate the first ever International Day of the Girl many famous **landmarks**, all around the world, were lit up in pink. These places included the Great Pyramid and Sphinx in Egypt, the Empire State Building, in New York City, in the U.S., and Canada's Niagara Falls. Also lit up were a famous soccer stadium in Spain and the well-known Mermaid statue, in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. ■

ENDEAVOUR'S LAST JOURNEY

On October 12, the Space Shuttle *Endeavour* began its last voyage. It was, however, not a space flight but a journey along some of the streets of Los Angeles, in the U.S. On the back of a specially built 160 wheeled carrier, *Endeavour* was being taken from the city's airport to a science museum where the shuttle will be put on display.



Endeavour on its final voyage

NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) built five Space Shuttles. They were named *Atlantis*, *Discovery*, *Endeavour*, *Challenger* and *Colombia*. When the first Space Shuttle was built it was to a **revolutionary** design. It was the first reusable spacecraft. The Shuttle was

a hybrid, half aircraft and half spaceship. It had to be launched into space on the back of a powerful rocket, but could fly back to the Earth and land like a plane. The first Space Shuttle flight was in 1981 and the last, 30 years later, in 2011.

The Space Shuttle program suffered two serious accidents. In 1986, *Challenger* exploded about one minute after it blasted off. The seven crew members on board were all killed. Then, in 2003, another seven astronauts died when *Colombia* burned up as it was flying back to the Earth. *Endeavour* was the fifth and final shuttle to be made. It was built as a replacement for *Challenger*.

After 30 years it was decided to end the shuttle program. The three remaining Space Shuttles were getting old and the cost of maintaining and sending them into space was becoming too expensive.



Endeavour piggy-backing on Jumbo Jet

Endeavour was named after the British ship used by Captain James Cook (1728 – 1779). On his first long voyage Captain Cook sailed around New Zealand and mapped the coasts of its two main islands. He then turned towards Australia. European explorers had reached other parts of Australia before. Yet in 1770, Cook and his crew were the first Europeans to see and land on Australia's east coast.

Endeavour spelled in American English would not normally have a “u”. However, as it was named after

Captain Cook's ship the British English spelling is used.

Endeavour traveled into space 25 times. Many of its voyages, or missions, were to the International Space Station (ISS). *Endeavour*'s last mission was in May 2011.

Discovery is already on display at a museum near Washington DC, the capital of the U.S. *Atlantis* will be displayed at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex, in Florida.

Endeavour was flown to Los Angeles airport on the back of (or piggy-backing on) a Jumbo Jet on September 21. The 12 mile (19 kilometer) journey from the airport to the museum began on October 12. It took two days. To make way for the shuttle around 400 trees had to be cut down. Power lines, traffic signs and signals were also removed. Some of the roads along the route had to be strengthened.

In space *Endeavour* traveled at around 17,000 miles (28,160 kilometers) per hour. The speed of the shuttle's final journey to the museum, though, was much slower, or no more than two miles (3.2 kilometers) per hour. ■

CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS ANNIVERSARY

This year, October 16, was the 50th anniversary of the start of what has become known as the Cuban Missile Crisis. This took place over a period of 13 days in 1962. These 13 days are often said to be “the closest the world ever came to nuclear war”.

The Missile Crisis happened during the Cold War, which lasted from 1947 to 1991. Throughout this period the U.S. together with its allies in Western Europe and the Russian-led Soviet Union were enemies. During

NEWSCAST

BATTLE CALLED OFF — On October 14, thousands of people gathered at a place near to the south coast of Britain. Dressed as Normans and Saxons they planned to restage the Battle of Hastings. This famous battle was fought on the same day 946 years ago, in 1066. The battle took place soon after William of Normandy had managed to load his army into ships and sail across the English Channel. King Harold, the leader of the English Saxon army, was killed. William then seized the crown of England. Yet before the restaged battle began the organizer canceled it. A heavy rainstorm had made the battlefield very muddy. They said that they were worried that those taking part might get hurt.

this time, the U.S. and the Soviet Union developed and built more and more nuclear weapons.

In 1956, Fidel Castro started a revolution in Cuba. At the time General Fulgencio Batista ran the country. Many Cuban people disliked him, but the General was supported by the U.S. Castro began to raise an army to overthrow General Batista. Many Cubans joined him. After two years of fighting Castro's revolutionary army marched into Havana, the capital city. General Batista fled and eventually went to live in Portugal where he died in 1973.

As soon as he was in control, Castro declared that Cuba would be run under communist rules. He also agreed to work closely with the communist Soviet Union.

At the time, John F. Kennedy was the president of the U.S. and Nikita Khrushchev was the leader of the Soviet Union. In May 1962, with

Castro's agreement, Khrushchev secretly sent 40,000 troops and a number of nuclear missiles to Cuba.

On October 16, 1962 an American spy plane took some photographs of several areas in Cuba. The photographs showed that there were Soviet nuclear missiles in the country. American military leaders were surprised. They worried that Cuba was now becoming a nuclear power and it was only 90 miles (145 kilometers) from the U.S. In addition it was discovered that several more Russian ships were sailing across the Atlantic Ocean on their way to Cuba. The U.S. suspected that these were carrying more nuclear weapons.

Kennedy told Russia that it had to remove its nuclear weapons from Cuba and that the Russian ships must turn back. Many American military leaders wanted to launch an air attack and invade Cuba. However, Kennedy decided to use American warships to **blockade** Cuba. This would stop the Russian ships from reaching the country. Kennedy once again demanded that the Russian ships turn back and the Russian missiles in Cuba be taken away. Khrushchev refused.



John F Kennedy

As the Russian ships got closer to Cuba many people believed that a nuclear war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was about to start. If the Russian ships did not turn-around the U.S. was ready to bomb Cuba and launch an invasion.

Eventually, on October 28, the two sides made an agreement. The Russian ships would turn back and the Soviet missiles would be removed from Cuba. In return the U.S. promised not to invade Cuba. It also agreed to pull out or **dismantle** the nuclear missiles it had previously placed in Turkey, which is close to Russia.



Nikita Khrushchev

Some people say that what happened 50 years ago was “the most dangerous moment in human history”. Others describe the Cuban Missile Crisis as the time “when the world held its breath”. ■

PEACE DEAL IN THE PHILIPPINES

Benigno Aquino, the president of the Philippines, made an important announcement on October 7. He declared that a peace deal had been agreed with the leaders of the largest Muslim militant group in the country.

The Philippines is made up of over 7,000 islands. The two largest are called Luzon and Mindanao. The Philippines is a former colony of Spain. The country was also controlled by the U.S. for around 30 years at the beginning of the 20th century. The Philippines officially became an independent country in 1946.

Most of the 95 million people who live in the Philippines follow

the Roman Catholic Faith. However, about 5% of the population are Muslims. Nearly all of these people live on a part of Mindanao.

For over 40 years, several Muslim militant groups have been fighting against Philippine government forces in Mindanao. It's thought that the violence has caused the deaths of 120,000 people. The militant groups are separatists. This means that they want the Muslim area of the Philippines to become a separate, or independent, country. The separatists call this area Bangsamoro.

The largest militant group is called the Moro Islamic **Liberation** Front (MILF). It is hoped that the agreement between the government of the Philippines and the MILF will finally bring an end to the conflict. The peace agreement has been arranged, or brokered, by the government of Malaysia. For many years officials from Malaysia have been trying to get the MILF and the government of the Philippines to hold talks with each other.



Benigno Aquino, president of the Philippines

In the past, several other agreements have been made. Yet these were not successful and the fighting soon started again. The new plan is for Bangsamoro to become an **autonomous** region of the Philippines. This means that it will make many of its own decisions and have its own laws and police force. However, Bangsamoro will remain part of the Philippines and will not be a separate

country. The MILF's 11,000 fighters will have to give up their weapons.

Mr. Aquino said that the agreement is really a plan that sets out how the two sides will make the changes that are needed to end the violence. The agreement was formally signed in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, on October 15. It's hoped that by the time Mr. Aquino has finished his six-year term as president in 2016 everything listed in the peace plan will have been implemented, or carried out.



Some people think that the reason this peace deal has been successful, while others in the past have failed, is because of the way the agreement was made. Before it was only the leaders who took part in the discussions. Yet this time many people living in the region were also given the chance to say what they wanted.

Within several other nearby countries, such as Myanmar (also known as Burma) and Thailand, there are similar conflicts with militant Muslim groups. These too have been fighting against government forces. Some people say that, in the future, it may now be possible to end these conflicts by copying what has been done in the Philippines. ■

NEW STONEHENGE DISCOVERIES

Researchers in Britain have recently completed a new survey of the stones that make up Stonehenge. They used the latest 3D (three-dimensional) laser scanning technology. Their results show that where the sun sets at midwinter and rises at midsummer was of special importance to the people who designed and built the ancient monument.

Stonehenge is made up of two circles of standing stones. The outer circle was originally made of standing pillars with lintels, or horizontal stones, placed on top of them. Inside the two circles are several larger pairs of stones that also have lintels. These inner stones form a horseshoe shape.

Archaeologists suspect that the site of Stonehenge was used for many hundreds of years before the stones were erected, or put up. They believe that the whole structure took several hundred years to complete. The first stones were erected around 2,500 BCE. This is about the same time that most experts believe that the Great Pyramid of Giza, in Egypt, was built.

Stonehenge is considered by many to be one of the “wonders of the ancient world”. There are many ideas, or theories, about how and why it was built.

A few people think that it was a place where animals or even humans were sacrificed. Others say that the monument was where a person's body was taken to after his or her death, before being buried or cremated. Another idea is that people traveled to Stonehenge to seek healing if they were ill or had something wrong with them.

However, most people suspect that Stonehenge was used as a type of “calendar”. Some of the stones

line up with the places on the horizon where the Sun rises at midsummer and sets in midwinter. The stone circle could therefore have been a way of tracking how the Sun appears to travel across the sky during the different seasons.

There is a 1.9 mile (three kilometer) long ancient pathway, known as the Avenue, which connects Stonehenge to a river. The Avenue is aligned, or lines up with, the sunrise in midsummer and the sunset in midwinter.



Aerial picture of Stonehenge showing the straight lines of the Avenue pathway

The latest laser scanning survey shows that some of the stones were more carefully worked, or carved, than others. The gaps between them were narrower, straighter and more rectangular. What's more some of the rough outer sides of these stones were hammered away, or pick-dressed. This means that the lighter inner layers of the stone could be seen. These pick-dressed surfaces therefore would have looked very bright when the sun was shining on them.

The sides of the stones that were pick-dressed and more carefully carved are those that line up with the Avenue. So people walking towards Stonehenge, along the Avenue, at midwinter or at the midsummer sunrise would have seen these much

“brighter” stones in front of them. The survey therefore shows that midwinter and midsummer must have been special times of the year.



Stonehenge

The 3D scans also revealed that there are carvings on some of the stones, which are no longer easily visible. Many are of small axe heads. These, the researchers say, were made a long time after Stonehenge fell into disuse, or stopped being used for what it had originally been built. ■

ELECTION IN VENEZUELA

A presidential election was held in Venezuela on October 7. Hugo Chávez, with 55% of the votes, won it. He beat Henrique Capriles who got 44%. Mr. Chávez, who has won three previous elections and been Venezuela’s president since 1999, will now stay on as the country’s leader for another six years.

Around 30 opposition parties joined together to support Mr. Capriles. Even though Mr. Chávez got fewer votes than at the last election, in 2006, many people were surprised at the number of votes he won by. Most believed that the result would be closer and many thought that Mr. Capriles was going to win. Around 80% of the people who could have voted did so. This figure, known as the turnout, was very high for an election.

When people vote in Venezuela an automated touch screen system is used. This means that the number of votes each candidate gets can be quickly calculated. Soon after the last people had voted Mr. Capriles realized he would not win and admitted defeat. Once the result was known tens of thousands of Mr. Chávez’s supporters crowded into the streets of central Caracas, the capital city, to celebrate.

Mr. Chávez is a controversial leader. He describes the way in which he runs the country as a “socialist revolution”. He believes that the government should control most of the big companies in Venezuela. The money these companies make, he says, can then be used to help the poor people in the country. A government taking over and running large companies in this way is called nationalization.

Before the election, Mr. Chávez arranged to spend a lot of money on building extra houses for the poor. He also subsidized, or made less expensive, several of the things people use such as electricity and fuel. Many people say that Mr. Chávez is only able to do this because of the country’s large oil supplies.

Venezuela is very dependant on oil. It has the largest proven, or known, oil supplies in the world. Of Venezuela’s total economy around 95% of the money it makes comes from oil. The government is now in charge of all the large oil companies in the country.

However, Mr. Capriles and his supporters insist that Mr. Chávez’s socialist revolution is not working. They claim that the oil companies as well as the others that the government controls are very badly managed. They also say that if the world oil price were not so high

Venezuela would be in serious financial trouble. Very few countries in the world, they explain, are run in the same way that Mr. Chávez governs Venezuela.



Hugo Chávez, president of Venezuela

Another possible problem is Mr. Chávez’s health. Last year he announced that he had cancer. Yet he has never said how serious or what type of cancer it is. Mr. Chávez traveled to Cuba for several operations. In the months before the election he claimed that he is now cured. Yet no one knows if this is true.

Three days after the election, Mr. Chávez announced that he had chosen Nicolas Maduro to be the country’s vice-president. So if Mr. Chávez’s illness returns, and he has to step down because of his health, Mr. Maduro will be in charge until a new election is held. ■

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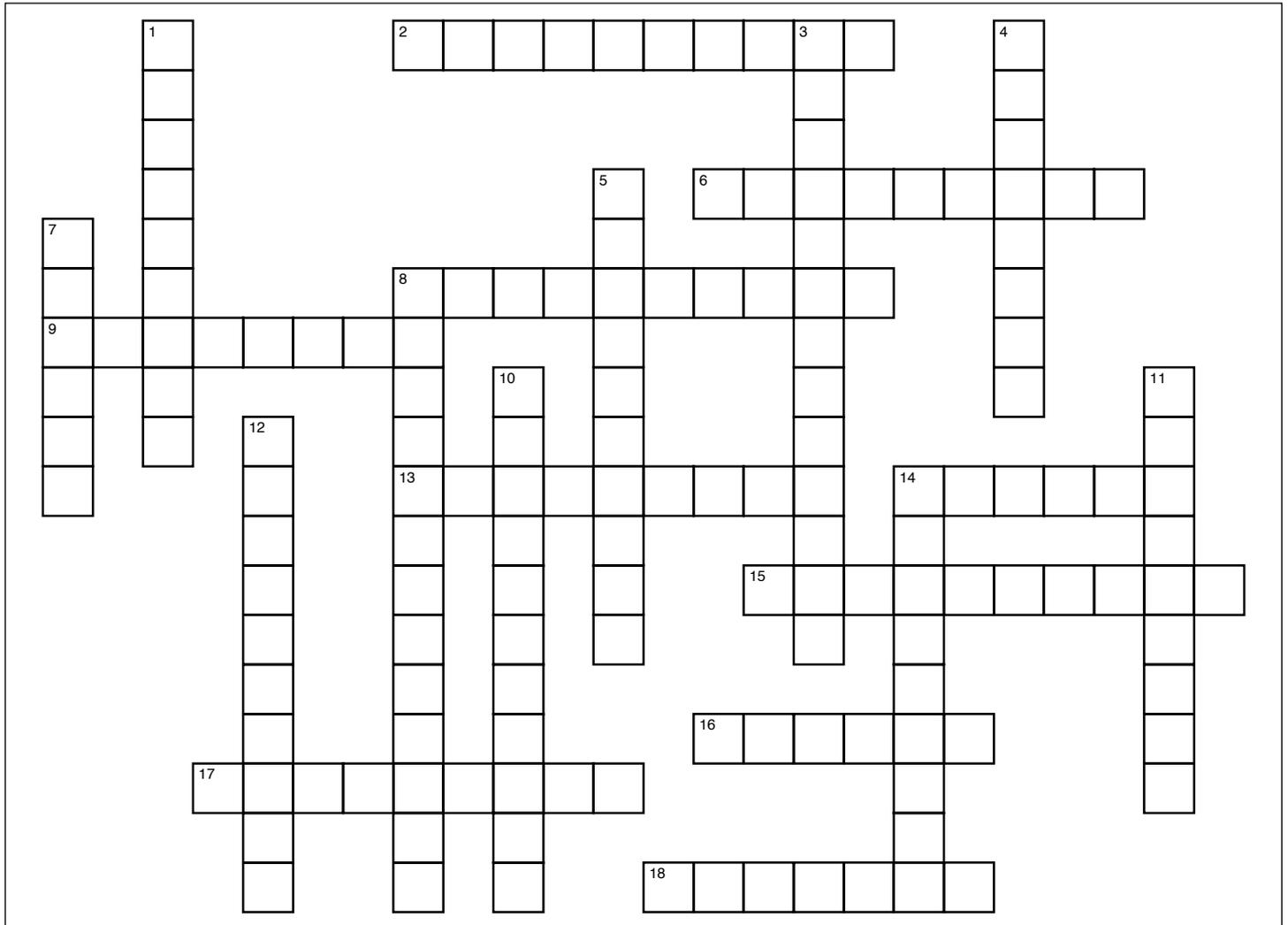
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ISSUE 182

GLOSSARY PUZZLE

INSTRUCTIONS: ① Complete the crossword. The answers are highlighted in orange in the news stories. There are 25 words highlighted and you need 20 of them to complete the crossword. ② Once you have solved the crossword go to the word search on the next page ➡



- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>Across</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 <i>Noun</i> The act of noticing or paying attention to something 6 <i>Noun</i> Large guns 8 <i>Noun</i> The opinion that people have about something or someone 9 <i>Noun</i> When a place or country is surrounded by military forces to stop people or goods from going in or out 13 <i>Noun (Plural)</i> Buildings or places that are well-known, especially ones you can use to work out where you are 14 <i>Noun</i> A time of difficulty or great danger 15 <i>Verb</i> Killed an animal or person as an offering to a god or gods 16 <i>Noun</i> A square or rectangular block, usually made of stone, on which a column, tomb or statue stands 17 <i>Verb</i> To remove or take something apart 18 <i>Verb</i> Greatly respected or admired someone or something | <p>Down</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 <i>Adjective</i> With the name of the person responsible being unknown 3 <i>Adjective</i> Likely to cause arguments 4 <i>Adjective</i> Very sensitive to something that might make you ill 5 <i>Adjective</i> Having the power to make your own decisions 7 <i>Noun</i> Something made by combining two things 8 <i>Adjective</i> Completely new and very different from what has gone before 10 <i>Verb</i> Took something away from someone as a punishment 11 <i>Noun</i> Describes actions taken to save money, especially living more simply and strictly controlling spending 12 <i>Noun</i> Freedom and equal rights for people who have experienced discrimination or been unfairly treated 14 <i>Noun</i> The amount by which something is curved or bent |
|--|--|

