



March 7, 2013

American English edition

Issue Number 192

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Hugo Chávez's coffin being taken through the streets of Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela

VENEZUELA'S PRESIDENT DIES

At about half past four in the afternoon on March 5, Nicolas Maduro, Venezuela's vice president, appeared on live television. With tears in his eyes he announced that Hugo Chávez, the country's president for the last 14 years, had died.

Mr. Chávez was 58 years old. He had not been seen in public since the beginning of December when he went to Havana, the capital of Cuba, for medical treatment. In Cuba he had several operations for cancer. Yet neither Mr. Chávez nor senior government ministers ever explained what type of cancer he was suffering from. He only arrived back a few weeks ago and was immediately taken to a military hospital in Caracas, Venezuela's capital city.

Mr. Chávez was a controversial figure. He was a very popular leader in Venezuela, especially among the poorer people. Several other South American presidents also admired him.

However, his opponents complained that he governed the country like a dictator. They also accused him of mismanaging Venezuela's economy and wasting much of the country's oil wealth. 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.

Mr. Chávez, who won four presidential elections, often described the way in which he ran the country as a "socialist revolution". He arranged for the government to take control of the large oil, electricity and food companies. He said that most of the money that these companies made should be used to help less wealthy people. A government taking over and running large companies in this way is called nationalization.

Mr. Chávez spent a lot of money on providing free medical treatment and

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building extra houses for the poor. He also subsidized, or made less expensive, several of the things that people most need, such as food, electricity and fuel.

Mr. Chávez's critics argue that he has ruined Venezuela's economy. They claim that the government run companies are badly managed and inefficient. There are frequent power outages and it is not unusual for some food shops to be empty. In recent years the currency, called the bolívar, has lost much of its value. Violent crime is also a big problem in the larger cities.



Hugo Chávez

Mr. Chávez disliked America. He often accused the U.S. of interfering in other countries. He claimed that the [capitalist](#) policies that the U.S. government and many other countries believe in were wrong. Mr. Chávez liked to support other countries that are anti-American such as Libya (when Colonel Gaddafi was in charge), Cuba and Iran.

Mr. Chávez came from a poor family. Both his parents were schoolteachers. He went to a military academy and trained to be a soldier. In 1992, there were many problems in Venezuela. Large street protests were held. Those who took part were demonstrating against the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez, who was Venezuela's president at that time.

Colonel Chávez, as he then was, led a group that tried to overthrow President Pérez's government. He

was arrested and spent the next two years in prison. After he was released he decided to set up a political party. He then stood in the 1998 presidential election.

There were two main political parties in Venezuela at that time. Both had governed the country for long periods. Many accused them of corruption, or dishonesty, and mismanaging the country's economy. As a candidate Mr. Chávez promised a new "socialist revolution". To the surprise of many he won the election with 56% of the votes.

Soon after becoming president, he organized weekly radio and television shows. People were invited to phone in and ask him questions. The following year he proposed setting up a new assembly, or parliament. A referendum, or vote in which all adults can take part, was held. Most people voted "yes".

In the election for the new assembly, Mr. Chávez's supporters got 95% of the seats. They then decided to change the constitution, or rules by which the country is run. As part of these changes another presidential election was held in 2000. Mr. Chávez won again. This time he got 59% of the votes.

In 2002, Mr. Chávez decided that the government would take over the large oil companies. This led to many arguments and street protests by both those who agreed and disagreed with him. Shooting broke out between the two opposing groups. Senior army officers then seized control. They captured Mr. Chávez and took him to a military base. The military leaders then appointed a new president. Almost immediately the government of the U.S. announced that it would recognize, or support, the newly appointed president.

However, two days later, there were huge street demonstrations by Mr. Chávez's supporters. A different group of army officers then freed Mr. Chávez and reinstated him as president. Mr. Chávez often accused the U.S. of being involved in the plans to seize control of the country. Yet the American government has always insisted that this is not true.

In 2006, Mr. Chávez won another presidential election with 63% of the votes. He immediately announced that his socialist revolution would get even bigger. More companies were nationalized. Yet over the next few years more people began to disagree with how Mr. Chávez governed the country. Very few nations in the world, they argued, were run in the same way that Mr. Chávez governed Venezuela.

The latest presidential election was held last October. Some predicted that Henrique Capriles, who leads the main opposition group, would win.

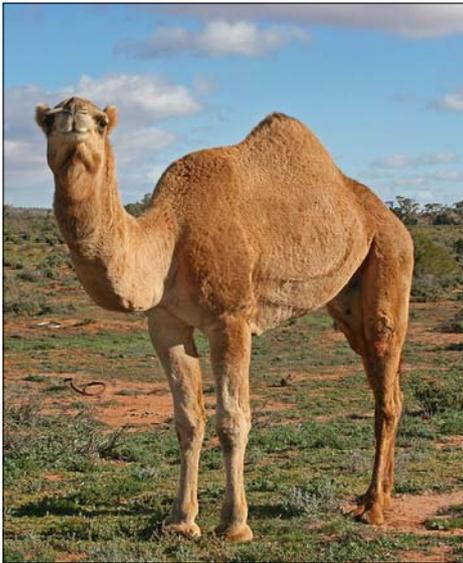
Others wondered if Mr. Chávez should take part because of his health. In 2011, he admitted that he had cancer. A few months before the election he went to Cuba to have an operation. After his return he claimed to have been cured. He won the election with 55% of the votes. Mr. Capriles got 44%. Yet soon after the result was announced he returned to Cuba for more medical treatment. Before doing so he declared that he had chosen Mr. Maduro to be the country's vice-president.

A state funeral will be held on March 8. Many leaders from other countries are expected to attend. According to Venezuela's constitution a new election must be held within 30 days if the president is no longer able to carry out his or her duties. ■

ARCTIC CAMELS

Researchers have found the fossilized bones of a giant camel in the Arctic region of Canada. Modern day camels live in places where it is very hot and there is little rain. Yet the researchers' discovery suggests that their ancestors lived in parts of the world that were much colder.

The researchers discovered about 30 pieces of bone on Ellesmere Island, in the far north of Canada. They come from the giant camel's lower leg, or shinbone. The bones dated back to around 3.5 million years ago. By doing tests on the protein found in the bones the researchers were able to work out that the large mammal was an ancestor of camels that live in the world today.



Dromedary camel

The bone was roughly 30% bigger than a similar one from a modern day camel. This means that the giant camel was around 11 feet (3.5 meters) tall. It probably had a thicker coat to keep warm. The researchers also think that, like dromedary camels, the giant camels had one hump.

Around 3.5 million years ago the Earth was warmer than it is today. However, the Arctic region,

where the giant camel lived, was still cold and thick forests would have covered the land. The winters would have been long and very dark with frequent snowstorms and freezing temperatures.

It is known that the ancestors of modern day camels came from North America. Yet until the recent discovery it was not thought that they lived in such cold places. Fossilized bones of camel-like animals have been found in North America before but not this far north. Hundreds of thousand of years ago ancestors of modern day camels crossed from what is now Alaska into Asia. At that time the two land areas were joined together and not separated by the sea, as they are today.

The researchers believe that their discovery could mean that some of the things that help camels to survive in very hot places actually evolved in cold climates. For example, a camel's hump stores fat. This would have helped it to survive the six month long Arctic winter. Their flat feet would have been just as good for walking on snow as they are for walking on sand. Also their large eyes would have meant that they would be able to see in the dim Arctic light during the winter.

The researchers say that they now plan to search for more fossilized camel bones in the Arctic regions of Canada. ■

BEST JOBS IN THE WORLD?

On March 4, Tourism Australia began to advertize what it says are the "six best jobs in the world". Those wishing to apply have to be between 18 and 30 years of age and come from another country. For six months work each of the successful

NEWSCAST

DOG HERO — While staying with her grandmother, in Poland, a young girl made friends with a stray dog. The grandmother had seen her playing with the dog in the yard. Yet later she and the dog disappeared. Realizing the girl was missing the grandmother called for help. As night fell a team of 200 people, including police officers and firefighters, began to search nearby marshland. The temperature had fallen to 23°F (-5°C). In the early hours of the morning a dog was heard barking. Following the sound the rescuers found the girl curled up on the ground. The search teams said that the dog had saved her life. This was because it had stayed with the girl throughout the night and used its body to keep her warm.

applicants will be paid A\$100,000 (\$102,700).

Tourism Australia is an organization that has been set up by the Australian government. Its job is to persuade tourists from other countries to come to Australia. It also encourages Australians to travel to other parts of the country for both holidays and business. Tourism is an important part of Australia's economy. This is because those who visit spend a lot of money both traveling around and in local shops, restaurants and hotels.

Nearly 40 years ago, the Australian government set up a program to attract younger people to visit the country for 12 months. They would be able to work to earn enough money to live on during their stay. Nowadays this is called the Working Holiday Maker program.

People from over 25 different countries are able to apply. These include Britain, Ireland, the U.S.,

Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. They must be aged between 18 and 30 and have no children to look after. They also have to have enough money to live on for the first part of their stay as well as for their journey home.



In 2009, the tourist department of the Australian state of Queensland advertized what it claimed was “the best job in the world”. It wanted someone to live on Hamilton Island on the Great Barrier Reef for six months. Their job would be to travel to other islands on the reef, go swimming and snorkeling and spend time on sandy beaches. The person had to write frequent posts on internet blogs and take videos that were posted to a website. The person chosen for the job would be paid A\$150,000 (\$154,000).

Around 34,000 people from all over the world applied. A man from Britain was eventually selected. At that time many people said that the state of Queensland had been very clever. This, they explained, was because it had created one of the world’s most successful public relations (PR) campaigns. PR is the way in which organizations and companies use news to try to advertize what they do, if possible without having to pay any money.

The news that Queensland was asking people to apply for “the world’s best job” featured in hundreds of newspapers. It also appeared in many radio and television broadcasts. So the “job offer” helped to advertize “holidays in Queensland” to millions of people all around the world.

Most people believe that Tourism Australia is now copying what the state of Queensland did four years ago. They say that it’s world’s best job offers are therefore meant to advertize Australia’s Working Holiday Maker program.

The six job offers are in different parts of the country. They are for an Outback Adventurer, Park Ranger, Wildlife Caretaker, Lifestyle Photographer, Taste Master and Chief Funster. Applicants have to upload a 30 second video to a website explaining why they are the best person for the job. After the first day Tourism Australia said that over 30,000 people had already applied. ■

ANCIENT CONTINENT DISCOVERED?

An international team of scientists believe that there may be parts of an ancient continent under the Indian Ocean. Their research suggests that this micro continent, which once joined the island of Madagascar and India, existed between two billion and 85 million years ago.

As long as 400 years ago some people suspected that the world’s continents must have moved or “drifted” apart. This was because they noticed that the shapes of the east coast of South America and the west coast of Africa looked as if they must have been joined together.

In 1912, a German researcher, Alfred Wegener, came up with the idea of continental drift. He believed that

the continents were slowly moving around the Earth. In the 1950s a new theory, called plate tectonics, meant that the drifting of the continents was better understood.

Plate tectonics explain why, and how, huge pieces of the Earth’s crust move. The crust of the Earth is like a very big jigsaw. It is made up of huge pieces called plates. These plates float on the very hot liquid rock deep below the surface. They move slowly at a speed of about 0.8 inches (two centimeters) each year.

Some plates move apart from each other. Others slide past and some force other plates underneath them. Earthquakes and volcanoes can happen as a result of these plate movements. Depending on what measure is used there are seven or eight major plates and many minor ones.



Artist's impression of the Rodinia supercontinent

Today we say that the world is made up of seven continents – Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America. Yet between 1.1 billion to 750 million years ago it’s thought that all the Earth’s landmasses were joined together. Scientists call this supercontinent Rodinia. Around 750 million years ago Rodinia began to break up.

Now they are many thousands of kilometers apart but the island of Madagascar and India used to be close to each other. Around 85 million

years ago India started to slowly drift to the north. It eventually collided with what became the Eurasian landmass. The force of India gradually pushing into this landmass helped to create the Himalayan Mountains.

The team of scientists studied grains of sand on the island of Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean. These contain minerals that show that the grains are much older than the local rocks. These grains, the scientists say, are from an ancient land. They were probably forced back up to the surface by a volcanic eruption about nine million years ago.

The scientists believe that the grains of sand dated back to between 1.9 billion and 600 million years ago. The scientists think that they come from a strip of land, or micro continent, which used to be between Madagascar and India. This landmass eventually broke up and disappeared beneath the ocean. The scientists have named the ancient micro continent Mauritia. ■

FIRST HORSE RIDING

A team of scientists working in Saudi Arabia has made an important discovery about horses. What they have found might mean that horses were domesticated several thousand years earlier than was previously thought.

Humans are believed to have begun “owning” dogs about 15,000 years ago. Yet it’s believed that horses and food animals - such as pigs, goats and sheep - were not domesticated until much later. Before the recent discovery most historians believed that people first began riding horses, in parts of Central Asia, around 5,500 years ago.

In the study of human history the time when humans first started rid-

ing horses is important. Once people began to do this many things altered. People could travel and hunt over much greater distances. Groups of people who lived far apart could trade with each other and keep in contact. Warfare and fighting also changed. A group of armed men riding horses was much more powerful than a group on foot. What’s more, armed men riding horses could travel very quickly.

About four years ago scientists working in Kazakhstan dug up some 5,500-year-old horse bones. They were found in ancient settlements used by the Botai people. Historians know that these people hunted wild horses for their meat.



Horse-like sculpture found at al-Magar (Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities)

Some of the jawbones showed that the horses’ back teeth were worn down. The scientists were sure that an object placed in the mouth of the horse called a “bit” caused this. A bit is used for steering and controlling a horse. This meant that the Botai not only hunted horses but rode them as well.

The scientists also discovered several broken pots. They were able to find out what had been kept in them. Some had been used for horse’s milk. Therefore, the horses must have been domesticated, as it would have been almost impossible to milk a wild horse.

The scientists in Saudi Arabia have been working at a place called al-Magar. They have found

hundreds of stone objects. All are around 9,000 years old and look as if they are evidence of a previously unknown civilization. Then, the climate in this part of Saudi Arabia was much wetter.

The objects include arrowheads, stone tools and scrapers as well as small animal statues of goats and sheep. One of the most interesting discoveries is a larger stone carving of a horse-like animal. It is 34 inches (86 centimeters) long and weighs over 300 pounds (135 kilograms).

Smaller horse-like statues have also been found. These look as if they have bands across their shoulders. The scientists think that these bands could be reins, which are used to slow and steer a horse.

More excavations are planned. However, some of the objects already found at al-Magar suggest that humans may have been riding horses around 9,000 years ago. ■

ATTACK ENDS SABAH INCURSION

On March 5, thousands of soldiers from the Malaysian army launched an attack on a coastal village in Sabah State, in the northeast of the country. Helicopters and fighter jets also took part. Najib Razak, the prime minister of Malaysia, ordered the attack after a group of armed men from the southern part of the Philippines refused to leave.

The trouble first began on February 9. Then, around 200 armed men from the Philippines arrived by boat on the east coast of Sabah State, on the Malaysian part of the island of Borneo. They quickly took control of a fishing village near the town of Lahad Datu.

The armed group said that they were soldiers in the service of the

Sulu Sultanate. This was an Islamic kingdom that used to rule this area a long time ago. The Sultanate included an area of the southern Philippines, the islands of the Sulu archipelago and what is now Sabah State.

In the 1800s, Sabah was taken over by the British. At that time they agreed to pay the Sultan of Sulu an annual payment for the use of the land. Over 100 years later Sabah became part of Malaysia. It still pays a small, or token, amount of money to the Sulu Sultanate every year.

Jamalul Kiram claims that his ancestors were the Sultans of Sulu and that he is the current sultan. Mr. Kiram declared that he had ordered the armed men to go to Sabah. He said that his brother, the prince of Sulu, was in charge of the group. Mr. Karim explained that the men had gone to Sabah to take back some of the land that rightfully belonged to the Sulu Sultanate. He also demanded that the Malaysian government pay a much larger amount of money each year.

After the armed men had taken control of the village the Malaysian police blocked off the roads that led to it. Later shooting broke out and

several policemen and soldiers were killed. The Philippine government tried to persuade the men to return to the southern Philippines, but they refused. Both countries sent navy ships to the area. They did this to stop any more armed men from sailing from the southern Philippines to Sabah.

Some people in Malaysia criticized the prime minister and his government for not doing anything about the [incursion](#) sooner. A day after the attack on the village military officials announced that it had been successful. However, they said that a search of the eastern part of Sabah would now be carried out as several of the armed men had escaped. ▣

PEACE TALKS ARRANGED

Najib Razak and Yingluck Shinawatra, the prime ministers of Malaysia and Thailand made an important announcement on February 28. They said that peace talks would soon take place between Thai officials and the leaders of militant groups that are based in the south of Thailand. It is hoped that the talks will bring an end to the fighting, which

has been going on for the last ten years, in this part of the country.

Most of the people who live in Thailand are Buddhists. Just over 100 years ago Thailand annexed, or took control of, what was then an independent Islamic region near the southern part of the country. Since then many of the Muslims who live in this part of Thailand have [resented](#) being controlled by what they believe is a Buddhist-led government. For a long time they have complained that Muslims in Thailand suffer from [discrimination](#).

In 2004, the fighting became worse. This was after the Thai army arrested many Muslim men. Since then there has almost been daily bombings and shootings. It's thought that at least 5,500 people have been killed. Most of those who have died are civilians, both Buddhists and Muslims.

There are several separate militant groups. Most seem to want some type of autonomy. This means that they would be allowed to govern their own area of the country even though it remained part of Thailand. It's thought that the militant groups have around 9,000 fighters. Most are in Thailand but some are based across the border in Malaysia. Most of the people who live in Malaysia are Muslims.

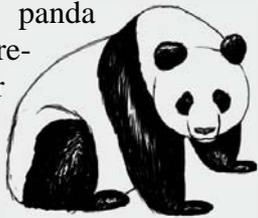
Around six months ago officials from Malaysia helped to broker, or arrange, similar peace talks in the Philippines. There a militant Islamic group has been fighting against government forces for many years. In the Philippines most people follow the Roman Catholic faith. The militants want the part of the Philippines where many Muslims live to become an independent country.

Ms. Yingluck, the Thai prime minister, said that she wanted to find



NEWSCAST

PANDA PALACE — An unusual place to stay is just about to open in China. The building is in Sichuan province, in the southwest of the country. Called the Hao-duo Panda Hotel the owners say that it is the first panda-themed hotel in the world. The 32 rooms are all decorated with pictures of the black and white animals. Toy pandas sit on all the chairs, tables and beds. Even the hotel's workers will dress up in large panda suits to entertain their guests. Sichuan province has China's largest population of pandas. A well-known giant panda breeding and research center is a two-hour drive from the hotel.



a way of solving the problems in the south of the country. However, so far, only one of the militant groups, called the BRN (National Revolutionary Front), has said that it will attend the peace talks.

The talks will be held in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, before the end of March. It is not yet known if the leaders of the other militant groups can be persuaded to take part. ■

NAMING PLUTO'S MOONS

Pluto has five moons, or satellites. Three of them are called Nix, Hydra and Charon. The other two were only discovered within the last two years and have yet to be named. Recently, an online [poll](#) was organized to choose names for Pluto's two "new moons". Around 450,000 people took part.

Pluto was first seen or discovered in 1930. At the time it was considered to be the ninth planet in our Solar System. It was also the smallest and the one farthest away from the Sun. In 1978, Pluto was discovered to have a moon, which was later named Charon.

Over time telescopes have continued to become more powerful so smaller more distant space objects can be seen. In 1992, the Kuiper belt was discovered. This is a huge spread-out ring of icy, rocky bodies beyond Neptune. Astronomers then realized that Pluto may not really be a planet after all, but one of the biggest objects in the Kuiper belt.

In 2006, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) officially decided that Pluto would no longer be a planet. Instead it would be called a "dwarf" planet. One reason for the IAU's decision was that several other dwarf planets had been discovered. These include Eris (which is slightly bigger than Pluto), Haumea, and Makemake in the Kuiper belt, and Ceres, in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.

In 2005, when it was still called a planet, the Hubble Space Telescope spotted two more moons going around Pluto. At first, these two new moons were called P2 and P3 but were later given the names Nix and Hydra. Both are smaller than Charon.

The most recently discovered moons have been temporarily named P4 and P5. They are not as big as the other three. Astronomers estimate that P4 is roughly 15.5 miles (25 kilometers) wide and P5 is about ten miles (16 kilometers) across.

Anyone who discovers a moon may suggest a name for it. The suggestion must be sent to the IAU, which makes the final decision. Many of the names of planets, stars

and [constellations](#) come from Greek and Roman gods, myths and legends.

Pluto is the name the Ancient Greeks used for their god of the underworld, where people were believed to go after they died. Pluto's moons' names follow the underworld theme. Charon is the name of the person who took the dead to the underworld on a boat across a river called the Styx. Nix is Charon's mother, and Hydra is a monster that was supposedly born in the Styx.

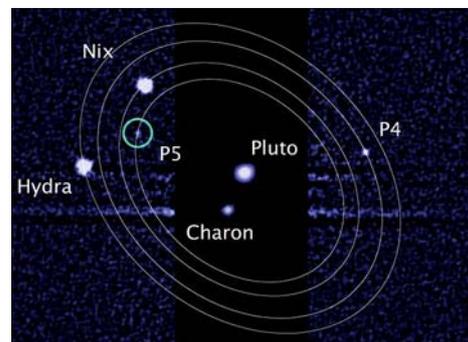


Image of Pluto and its moons taken by the Hubble Space Telescope

The poll to name the two planets was arranged by an organization called SETI (search for [extraterrestrial](#) intelligence) and Dr. Mark Showalter. Dr. Showalter led the teams that discovered P4 and P5. They gave those who took part in the poll a choice of 21 possible names.

The poll finished on February 25. Vulcan came top and Cerberus second. Vulcan is the Roman god of fire. In Greek mythology Cerberus is the many-headed dog that guards the gates to the underworld.

It's thought that the reason Vulcan came top was because of a popular television series called *Star Trek*, which began in 1966. Several *Star Trek* movies have also been made. Many fans of the television show voted for Vulcan. In the television shows and movies Vulcan is the home planet of Dr. Spock, one of *Star Trek's* best-known characters.

However, an official from the IAU said that space objects are not normally named in this way. He explained that astronomers and not *Star Trek* fans would make the final decision. ■

WORLD'S RICHEST LIST

Each year, at the beginning of March, *Forbes*, an American publishing company, announces its annual list of the world's richest people. *Forbes* is best known for its twice-monthly business magazine.

Top of the list, for the fourth year in a row, is Carlos Slim, a Mexican billionaire. Mr. Slim's family was originally from Lebanon. In 1902, his father left Lebanon, when he was 14 years old, and went to live in Mexico. Nine years later he opened a shop. Afterwards his father began to buy property. He died when Carlos was 13 years of age.

Mr. Slim, who is now 73 years old, continued to grow his father's business. His fortune is estimated to be \$73 billion. Mr. Slim now controls over 200 different companies. Most are in Mexico. They include banks, airlines, shops, building companies, and restaurants. He also owns the largest telephone company in Mexico and one of the biggest cell phone operations in Latin America.

Some business experts say that it is now difficult to buy a soft drink, make a phone call, use a bank or drink a cup of coffee in Mexico without adding to Mr. Slim's fortune. Some have even started to nickname Mexico "Slimlandia".

Some people say that Mr. Slim has a modest lifestyle for such a wealthy person. He lives in a six-bedroomed house in Mexico City and prefers to use a pen and paper instead of com-

puters. Mr. Slim says that one of his business rules is that any company reports he is given to read must be no longer than one page.

Second on the *Forbes* list is Bill Gates, a cofounder of the Microsoft Company. Mr. Gates used to be at the top of *Forbes*' rich list before he was "overtaken" by Mr. Slim. Mr. Gates's fortune is now estimated to be \$67 billion.



Carlos Slim

In 2008, Mr. Gates stepped down as the boss of Microsoft to spend more time working with the charitable foundation he set up with his wife. Called The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation it gives large amounts of money to help find cures for diseases, such as malaria, reduce poverty, and provide computer-related education. When wealthy people give money for good causes in this way it is called philanthropy. *Forbes* says that if Mr. Gates had not given so much money to his foundation he might still be wealthier than Mr. Slim.

Mr. Slim is also a [philanthropist](#). He has set up three foundations that help improve health care, education and the creation of jobs in Mexico. Yet some Mexicans complain that he could afford to give much more to help poorer people in his country.

Forbes estimates that there are now 1,426 US-dollar billionaires in the world. Most are in America. Li Ka-Shing, a businessman based

in Hong Kong, in China, is the wealthiest person in Asia. He is eighth on the list with a fortune of \$31 billion.

Of the 1,426 billionaires 138 are women. This is higher than last year when there were 104 women billionaires. The world's richest woman is Liliane Bettencourt, who lives in France. She is 90 years old and owns most of L'Oréal, a well-known French cosmetics company. Ms. Bettencourt is in ninth place on the *Forbes* list. ■

ITALY'S ELECTION RESULT

On February 24 and 25, people in Italy voted in a general election. After all the votes had been counted many people were amazed at the success of a new political party called the Five Star Movement. The movement was set up in 2009. Beppe Grillo, who is a well-known [comedian](#), leads it.



Beppe Grillo

The Italian parliament has two chambers, the Chamber of Deputies, or the lower house, and the Senate, the upper house. In Italy there are many different political parties. Most agree to work with others to form larger groups, or coalitions.

To govern the country effectively one of these groups needs to get over half of the seats in both the lower and upper houses. The group that gets the highest number of seats in

the Chamber of Deputies is awarded extra, or bonus, seats. This is done to make sure that it has a majority, or over 50% of the seats, in the lower house.

In November 2011 the then prime minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, resigned. He did this because of the country's financial difficulties. At the time it was agreed that a new technocrat government would take over. This means that it would be made up of important people who had not been elected. Mario Monti was given the job of prime minister. Mr. Monti's government would be in charge for about 12 months after which new elections would be held.

To try to solve Italy's problems Mr. Monti introduced what's known as austerity policies. He increased the amount of tax many people have to pay. He also reduced the amount of money that the government spends. Many Italians think that this has made the problems worse.

In the election there were three main coalitions. One led by Mr. Berlusconi, another by Pier Luigi Bersani and the third by Mr. Monti. Most people expected Mr. Bersani to win.

Mr. Bersani's coalition won the most seats in the Chamber of Deputies, so it also got the bonus seats. Yet in the Senate it failed to get a majority. Most people think that this means that it will be very difficult for Mr. Bersani to govern the country as its new prime minister.

The surprise was the Five Star Movement. It got 25% of the votes. Therefore, one in four people voted for it. Mr. Grillo's new organization now has 109 seats in the lower house and 54 in the upper house. It therefore holds the "balance of power". This means that it will be very difficult for any of the other parties

NEWSCAST

TOOTH CATCH — Two fishermen in the U.S. recently found something unusual in their net after pulling it up. They were fishing for scallops about eight miles (13 kilometers) from the coast. Here the sea is about 120 feet deep (36.6 meters). Amongst the scallops and pieces of rock in the net the two men noticed something unusual. It was about six inches (15 centimeters) long and triangular-shaped. The men thought that it might be a giant tooth. Later, an expert confirmed that it was a tooth and that it probably came from a mammoth. The animal must have lived at least 12,000 years ago. At that time the seas were much lower so where the men had been fishing would have been dry land.

to make new laws without the Five Star Movement's support.

The "five stars" refer to Mr. Grillo's five main concerns — water, transport, development, the environment, and internet access.

Mr. Grillo says that he decided to set up his new movement because he was angry about politics in Italy and Italian politicians. He claims that most are dishonest and that they are paid too much money. Mr. Grillo insists that politicians should serve the people who elect them. He also says that politicians have caused Italy's financial problems.

The movement's 163 new members of parliament have no political experience. Most are under the age of 40, which is very young for a politician in Italy. They include students, IT workers and housewives.

The new parliament will meet for the first time on March 15. Giorgio Napolitano, the president of Italy,

will then ask Mr. Bersani to form a new government. If he is unable to do this then another election may have to be held. ■

BERLIN WALL PROTEST

On March 4, the mayor of Berlin, Germany's capital city, announced that he would try to find a way to save a part of the Berlin Wall.

Three days earlier a company building a nearby block of 36 expensive flats, or apartments, had started to remove a 65.5 foot (20-meter) section of the wall. This part of the wall is known as the East Side Gallery. Then, several thousand protesters arrived. To stop what was happening they gathered around the part of the wall that the building company planned to knock down. The protesters claim that the East Side Gallery is a memorial of an important part of Germany's history.



Part of the East Side Gallery in Berlin

After the Second World War (1939 – 1945), Germany was divided between the U.S., Britain, France, and the Russian-led Soviet Union. These countries had joined forces to defeat Germany in the war. The city of Berlin was in the Soviet Union's part of Germany. As it was the capital city, it too was divided between the four different countries.

However, the different countries didn't always trust one another. Soon after the war ended, the U.S.,

Britain and France decided to join their areas of Germany together to form the Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany. This included their parts of Berlin, which became known as West Berlin. The Soviet Union's area of Germany was called the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany. It included the eastern part of Berlin.

To stop people moving to West Germany from the eastern part, the Soviet Union built a wire fence along the border. This was nicknamed the "Iron Curtain". In the city of Berlin the fence was replaced with a concrete wall in 1961. Known as the Berlin Wall it was 102 miles (165 kilometers) long. It soon became a symbol of the separation between the Communist-led Soviet Union and the "Democratic West".

In 1989, mass protests began in East Germany. The protesters demonstrated against the East German government. They also wanted more freedom to travel to the West. As more people joined the protests the East German government realized it could not control the large crowds.

On November 9, 1989 the government said that it would allow more people to travel to West Germany. On hearing the news thousands of people from East and West Berlin went to the wall. Some used sledgehammers to knock down parts of it. This date is now remembered as "the day the wall came down". The following year East and West Germany were reunited as one country.

Soon after "the wall came down" artists from all over the world began painting murals on parts of it. They chose to paint on the east side of the wall to celebrate that it was no longer a barrier. On one section of the wall there are over 100 paintings. This is the East Side Gallery.

Today much of the wall has disappeared. Some parts of it are now in museums in other countries. The East Side Gallery is 0.8 miles (1.3 kilometers) long. It is one of the longest remaining sections of the wall.

An official from the company building the block of flats said that work would now be postponed. This was so discussions could be held with local people. The mayor will also take part. He said that it was not necessary to remove this part of the wall and that it should be preserved. ■

GIBRALTAR'S ROCK APES

Recently, local officials have said that a number of the rock apes in Gibraltar are to be caught and sent to other places. Officials say that there are now too many of them and the animals are becoming a **nuisance**.

Gibraltar is famous for both "The Rock", or "The Rock of Gibraltar", and the apes that live upon it. Some people call them rock apes, but they are really a type of tailless monkey. Their correct name is Barbary macaques. They are the only monkeys living in the wild on the continent of Europe.



Barbary macaque in Gibraltar

Gibraltar is a small peninsula near the southern tip of Spain. The Rock is a mountain with a cliff 1,400 feet (426 meters) high on one side. Gibraltar, which has its own

government, is now known as a British overseas territory.

Gibraltar covers an area of only 2.5 square miles (6.5 square kilometers). Around 30,000 people live there. It is in a **strategically** important position. This is because ships based there can control the Strait of Gibraltar, a narrow strip of sea where the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea meet.



The Rock of Gibraltar

"The Rock" was once part of Spain but was captured by the British in 1704 during the War of Spanish Succession (1701 – 1714). Several European countries fought in this war to stop the kingdoms of France and Spain from becoming unified, or one country.

The war finally ended with an agreement called the Treaty of Utrecht. The treaty was named after the Dutch city in which it was signed in 1713. Part of the Treaty said that Gibraltar was to belong to Britain "...forever, without any exception or **impediment** whatsoever."

Since 1713 Britain has used Gibraltar as a base for some of its navy ships. In more recent times the territory has been the cause of many arguments between Spain and Britain. This is because Spain would like Gibraltar to be handed back.

One local legend says that as long as the Barbary macaques continue to live in Gibraltar the territory will remain under the control of Britain. In 1942, during the Second World War

NEWSCAST

CRUNCHY CATERPILLARS — Custom officials working at an airport in Britain were surprised to discover tens of thousands of dried caterpillars in a passenger's luggage. The large insects had been dried, shrink-wrapped in plastic and packed into four bags. The man, who had traveled from Burkina Faso, in Africa, claimed that he planned to eat them. Experts said that they were probably mopane worms, which are the larvae of emperor moths. The "worms", which are popular in parts of Africa, can be eaten raw or fried as a crunchy snack. Unfortunately for the man the custom officials confiscated his snacks. They explained that a special permit was needed to bring unusual types of food into the country.

(1939 – 1945), there were only seven rock apes in Gibraltar. Because of the legend, Winston Churchill, the prime minister of Britain at that time, ordered that extra ones be taken to Gibraltar from Algeria and Morocco.

In the past British soldiers based in Gibraltar were responsible for feeding the monkeys. Nowadays there are around 300 rock apes. A local conservation group looks after them. The animals are caught every so often to check their health. Each is also given a tattoo and a microchip.

In recent years the monkeys have gotten used to tourists giving them food. They are known to jump onto people's shoulders. Visitors are warned that they can be dangerous. Last year around 60 people had to have medical treatment after being bitten. Feeding the monkeys is now banned. Anyone caught doing this can be fined up to \$750.

As the numbers of Barbary macaques have increased they have started to cause trouble in places where local people live. They will steal food from houses and tip over rubbish bins. Special "noise makers" have been set up in some residential areas. These produce frequent "loud bangs", which are supposed to scare the monkeys away.

Now local officials say that the best solution is to reduce the number of monkeys in Gibraltar. Around 90 will be caught. Some will go to Morocco and Tunisia while others will be sent to wild life parks in several European countries. ■

WORKING FROM HOME

Everyone who works for the Yahoo Company recently received a memo, or message, from the management. Many workers were unhappy after reading it. The memo said that a company rule was about to change. From June people would no longer be allowed to work from home. Instead, every working day, they will have to go to one of the company's offices.



Yahoo's CEO, Marissa Mayer

In recent years working from home, often called working remotely or telecommuting, has become more popular. In the U.S., for example, it's now thought that almost 25% of employees work from home for a least a few hours every week.

For some people, such as those who work in factories or shops, it is not possible to work from home. Yet nowadays, with fast internet connections, networked computers and webcams, many of the tasks that people do in offices can be done at home. Some have predicted that in the future there will be far fewer people working in offices as more and more telecommute.

However, not everyone agrees. Some bosses think that workers are much less productive if they work from home. They say that at home people can be too easily **distracted**. What's more some workers do not like working remotely. Some fear that if they are not in the office every day they are less likely to be promoted or given a pay rise.

Two students set up Yahoo in 1995. It quickly became one of the most popular search engines and internet directories. Later Yahoo added other internet services such as email, news, messaging, and video sharing. As it is an internet based technology company most thought that Yahoo would encourage many of its employees to work remotely. News of the company's rule change therefore surprised many people.

In recent years Yahoo has not been very successful. The company has found it difficult to compete with Google, which has become the world's leading internet search engine. Google has also expanded into other businesses such as software for cell phones. Google makes most of its money by charging companies to advertize on its search website. Yahoo offers a similar service but it is not as popular.

Since 2008 Yahoo has had several bosses, or CEOs (chief executive officers). Last July it was announced that Marissa Mayer had

been appointed as Yahoo's new CEO. She used to work for Google. At 37 years of age Ms. Mayer is one of the youngest bosses of the top 500 companies in the U.S. She studied computer science at university before joining Google in 1999. Ms. Mayer was Google's first female engineer and the 20th person to join the company.

Over the last ten years Google has become one of the most valuable companies in the world. However, it prefers its employees to work in offices and not remotely. The company believes that its workers are more likely to come up with better ideas and solutions to problems when they are in the same building. This, it says, is because, even if it is just a conversation over lunch, there is far more [interaction](#) between employees when they work in the same place.

It's believed that Ms. Mayer has decided to ban all Yahoo employees from working from home for the same reasons. Yet not everyone thinks so. Some wonder if the rule change has been made because Yahoo needs to save money. They predict that instead of agreeing to work in offices some Yahoo workers will now decide to leave the company. When people choose to leave it is much less expensive for a company than having to fire workers, or make them [redundant](#). ■

RICHARD THE FIRST'S HEART

On February 28, a team of French researchers announced the results of a study they had carried out on the heart of Richard the First (1157 – 1199). Their study shows that the king's heart had been preserved in an [elaborate](#) way.

Richard the First became King of England after his father King Henry the Second died in 1189. Then the kings of England also ruled large parts of France. Richard the First spent most of his time in France, which was where his mother came from. It's thought that he spoke French and not English.



Richard the First's tomb at Fontevraud Abbey

King Richard is known as the "Lionheart" or Richard the Lionheart. He was given this nickname because of his success as a military leader. Soon after becoming king, he took part in one of the [crusades](#) to the Holy Land. Although he led his army to several victories he failed to recapture Jerusalem. During the crusade many terrible things happened. For example, Richard is believed to have ordered the murder of thousands of Muslims who were being held prisoner.

In 1199, while attacking a castle in central France, Richard was hit in the shoulder by an arrow, or bolt, which was fired from a crossbow. He died 12 days later. After his death his heart was cut out and taken on a journey of over 330 miles (530 kilometers) to the city of Rouen in Normandy, a region in northern France. There it was kept in the cathedral. The rest of his body was buried next to his father in Fontevraud Abbey, in a different part of France.

The remains of Richard's heart were found during an excavation

at Rouen cathedral in 1838. It had been placed inside a box made out of lead. On the lid, in Latin, are the words "Here is the heart of Richard, King of England".

The researchers said that what was in the lead box had turned into powder. However, they were sure that it was the remains of King Richard's heart. The researchers said that the heart seemed to have been cut open, drained of blood and then sewn up again. It was then wrapped in a piece of cloth.

The heart had been preserved with a mixture of substances. These included mercury and lime. It seemed to have been stuffed with different types of plants such as daisies, mint and myrtle. Surprisingly, there were also traces of frankincense.

Frankincense comes from the resin, or sap, of a tree that grows in North Africa and the Middle East. When heated or burned, frankincense gives off a strong fragrance, or smell. It is used in this way during Jewish, Islamic, and Christian religious ceremonies.



Lead box in which the remains of Richard the First's heart was discovered

In the Christian tradition frankincense was one of the gifts given to the newly born baby Jesus by the magi, or three kings from distant lands. It was also put on his body after his death on the cross.

The researchers said that the use of frankincense in the preservation of Richard's heart might have been for a special reason. At the time of his death some religious leaders were worried that Richard might not go to heaven. This, they thought, was because of the many bad things that he did during his lifetime. It's therefore possible that frankincense was used as a way of making him a Christ or Jesus-like figure. ■

PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

A huge swarm of locusts appeared near Cairo, the capital of Egypt, on March 3. Officials said that around 30 million of the insects descended on Giza, near the southern part of the city. Separate swarms were also reported to have arrived in other towns and villages in the country.

Desert locusts are flying insects that are about three inches (75 millimeters) long. They are found in many parts of North Africa and the Middle East. The females lay their eggs in holes that they dig in the ground when it rains. The newly hatched locusts then feed on the vegetation that begins to grow because of the rain. Within a short time they develop wings and are then able to fly.

Sometimes, if the conditions are right, there can be a sudden increase in locust numbers, or a population explosion. The insects swarm together and can fly for very long distances. They feed on any green plants. Hungry swarms of locusts can destroy large areas of green crops in a very short time. When huge swarms of locusts gather together they are often described as a "plague"

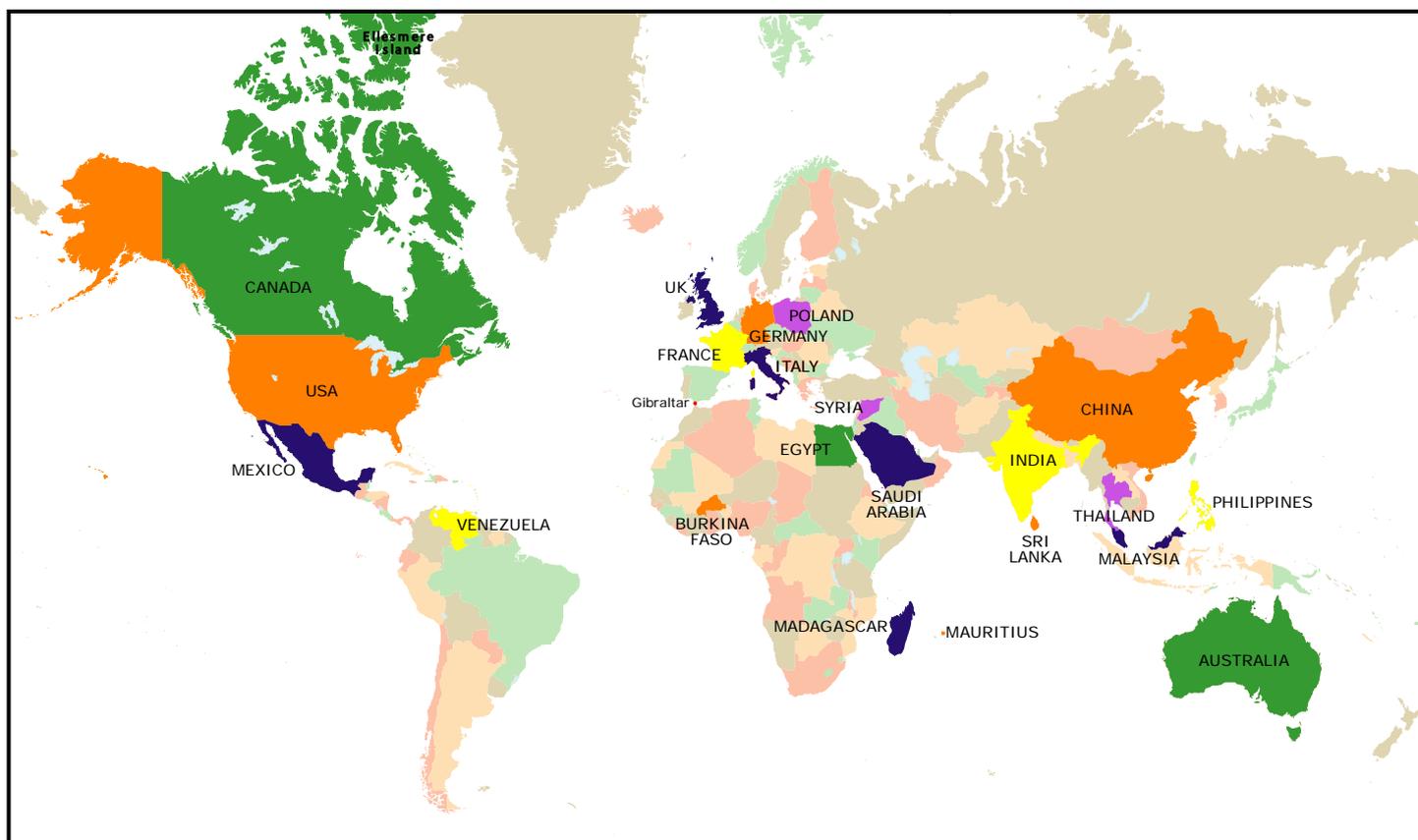
Egyptian officials explained that each year the locusts normally start

hatching in November in the south-east of the country and northeast Sudan. Several months later they migrate and cross the Red Sea into Saudi Arabia. This year, the officials said, was unusual. The swarms were much larger. They were also flying farther north than normal, into parts of Egypt where they are not usually seen.



Swarm of locusts

The last plague of locust in Egypt was about ten years ago. Then a huge swarm, around 40 miles (64 kilometers) wide, caused much damage to crops on many of the country's



farms. This plague also affected Israel. It used planes to spray insecticide, or special chemicals that kill insects, on the swarms.

Some reports said that the locusts have already destroyed many crops in Egypt. Yet officials insisted that this was not true. The locusts, they explained, were sexually immature, or very young. This means that they do not need to eat green plants to produce the energy they need. Instead, at this age, the young locusts rely on their own stores of fat.

Around Cairo some people set fire to old tires to try to stop the locusts from landing. Burning rubber tires produce thick black smoke. However, officials said that people should not do this, as it would not have any effect on the insects.

Government officials in Israel and Lebanon have asked people to immediately tell them if they see any locusts. One swarm arrived in Israel on March 5. Planes were sent to spray them with insecticide.

In Israel the week long Passover festival will begin on March 25. At this time of year the story of the Hebrews, or Jewish people, leaving Egypt, as told in the Bible, is remembered. In the story God punishes the Egyptians for mistreating the Hebrews and forcing them to work as slaves. God's punishment is to send ten different plagues to Egypt. The eighth one is a plague of locusts. ■

U.S. TO HELP SYRIAN REBELS

On February 28, John Kerry, the U.S.'s secretary of state, met with Moaz al-Khatib, the leader of the Syrian National Coalition (SNC). The meeting took place in Rome, the capital of Italy. Several days before the meeting Mr. al-Khatib

threatened not to attend. This, he explained, was because the U.S. had refused to supply the SNC with the weapons that it needed to defeat Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad.

Fighting in Syria has been going on for two years. It started after the government ordered the army to use weapons to stop street protests. The demonstrators were complaining about Mr. al-Assad. He and his family have controlled Syria for over 40 years. The protesters said that most government officials in Syria were corrupt, or dishonest, and the police have too many powers.

As the fighting 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. More 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 at least 70,000 deaths. Around one million Syrians have crossed the borders into Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon to get away from the fighting.



Some of the anti-government fighters, or rebels, set up an organization called the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Yet there were a number of other different opposition groups. Last November several organizations opposed to Mr. al-Assad's government met in Doha, the capital of Qatar. They agreed to form the

SNC so there would be one main opposition group. Mr. al-Khatib was chosen to be the SNC's leader.

Many countries in the Middle East and the rest of the world, including the U.S. have imposed [sanctions](#) on Syria. They have also announced that they support the SNC. These countries have set up a group called the Friends of Syria. It was this group that arranged the talks in Rome.



John Kerry and Moaz al-Khatib

The Friends of Syria say that President al-Assad should step down and leave the country. This, they believe, would be the quickest way to stop the fighting. Yet the Syrian leader insists that he will not do this. The Syrian army and air force have much more powerful weapons than the rebels who are fighting against them.

Mr. al-Khatib says that if the rebels are to defeat the Syrian army they need anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons. Yet the U.S. and other countries have been reluctant to provide them. They worry that if they did this other countries, which support Mr. al-Assad, such as Iran, may become involved. There are also concerns about militant Islamic groups that are fighting against the Syrian army but are not part of the SNC. The U.S. does not want these groups to get hold of more powerful weapons.

At the talks in Rome Mr. Kerry announced that the U.S. would help the SNC. Yet this help will be "non-[lethal](#)". This means that it will not include weapons. Instead

the U.S. will provide things such as armored vehicles and communication equipment as well as food and medical supplies.

The rebels now control large parts of Syria. Yet many people think that unless they are given better weapons the fighting in the country is unlikely to end soon. ■

“SMART” PASHMINA

Pashmina is very expensive. It is mainly used to make [shawls](#). These are very light but also very warm. In recent years, as they are worth a lot of money, many fake, or counterfeit, Pashmina shawls have been produced in places such as China. These fakes are made from other types of wool or even man-made, or synthetic, fibers.

Now traditional shawl makers in Kashmir, in northern India, plan to use nanotechnology to prove that their shawls are real and not counterfeits. Nanotechnology is the science of working with things at the level of their atoms and molecules, the tiny building blocks from which everything is made.



Pashmina goats

Pashmina wool comes from a type of Himalayan mountain goat. Called the Pashmina goat these animals live high in the mountains in Nepal, Pakistan, Tibet, a region of China, and Ladakh, in Kashmir. Here it is very cold, especially during

the winter months when the temperatures can be as low as -4°F (-20°C). The goats live off grass.

Local farmers collect wool from the goats' fleeces in the springtime. At this time of year the goats [molt](#), or shed some of their wool. This then regrows the following winter. The farmers collect the strands of wool, which is then sent to the people who make the shawls.

Around 50,000 real Pashmina shawls are made in Kashmir each year. Many of them are sold in expensive shops in cities in the U.S. and Europe. From April all shawl makers in Kashmir will have to make sure that their shawls have a special tag. Called a secure fusion label (SFL) the tag will have an identity number. This can only be read with a special pen. A computer record, or database, of each shawl number will be kept. This will therefore prove that the shawl is a real Pashmina and not a fake.

The SFLs will be fused, or embedded, in the shawls with nanotechnology. The labels cannot be removed or copied. They will not be affected by washing, even if this is done many times. The new system is similar to one that is already being used for handmade silk goods that are produced in India.

This winter the temperatures have been unusually cold in the Ladakh region. Heavy snow has covered the mountainsides near the border with China where many of the goats usually graze for food.

Local officials in Kashmir have sent extra food, or fodder, to the farmers who look after the goats. Yet, because of the snow, much of this has not reached the places where it is needed. Some fear that thousands of Pashmina goats might have died because they did not have

enough to eat. If so it will mean that fewer Pashmina shawls will be produced next year. ■

KINGDOM TOWER

Plans have recently been announced for the construction of a new skyscraper in Jeddah, in Saudi Arabia. When finished it will be the world's tallest building. Called the Kingdom Tower it will be on the coast of the Red Sea. Jeddah is the second largest city in Saudi Arabia. Construction work is expected to take five years, so the building will be completed in 2018.

Currently the world's tallest building is the Burj Khalifa, in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This building was officially opened two years ago. It has 163 occupied floors and is 2,717 feet (828 meters) high.



Artist's impression of the Kingdom Tower

It's thought that the original plan was for the Kingdom Tower to be "one mile" or 1.6 kilometers high. However, it was later discovered that the geology, or the underground

rocks, in this part of Saudi Arabia was not suitable for such a tall building. This meant that it had to be reduced in height.

The owners have not yet said exactly how tall the building will be. However, they have said that its height will be more than 3,280 feet (1,000 meters). So it will be the world's first building to be over one kilometer high. It is expected to have at least 50 more occupied floors than the Burj Khalifa.

An American architect, who also worked on the Burj Khalifa, has designed the tower. Two companies from Britain will organize most of the building work, which is expected to cost around \$1.2 billion. The tower will include a large hotel, apartments, offices, and luxury [condominiums](#). Close to the top will be the world's highest observatory. Colder air taken in near the top of the building will be used to cool the lower floors.

One unusual feature is a sky terrace. This will look out over the Red Sea. The terrace will have a diameter of roughly 98 feet (30 meters) and be like a large outdoor balcony. It will stick out from the side of the building at about the level of the 157th floor. The sky terrace was originally planned to be a place where helicopters could land but later it was decided that this might be unsafe.

The Kingdom Tower is part of a larger project known as Kingdom City, which will be built on the shore of the Red Sea. It will cover an area of two square miles (five square kilometers). Constructing the tower will be the first part of the project. Next the infrastructure for the city, such as roads, rail links, electricity grids, and high-speed communication cables will be completed. Once this has been finished, work will start on building homes, offices and hotels. ■

ANGER OVER RAMA'S BRIDGE DECISION

The government of India has announced that it will go ahead with its plans to make a new shipping lane. The deep-water lane, or underwater canal, will be between India and Sri Lanka. It will cross what's known as Rama's Bridge, or Ram Sethu. The government's decision has angered many Hindus. This is because they believe that the Hindu god Ram, the creator of the Universe, built the "bridge".



Rama's Bridge (also known as Adam's Bridge) is a 18 mile (29 kilometer) long string of limestone islands and sandbanks. These almost join the island of Sri Lanka to the coast of southern India. It separates the Palk Strait, on the northern side, from the Gulf of Mannar in the south. Many of the sandbanks that make up the bridge are only 3.25 feet (one meter) below the surface of the sea.

Ancient Hindu writings, or scriptures, say that the bridge is about 3,500 years old. Either the ape god Hanuman or Lord Rama built it with help from an army of monkeys. The bridge meant that Lord Rama could cross over the sea to Sri Lanka to rescue his wife, Sita, who had been captured by a many-headed evil king. The rescue of Sita and the defeat of the evil king is an important story in Hinduism. This is because it symbolizes the [triumph](#) of good

over evil. Each year the Hindu festival of Dussehra celebrates Lord Rama's victory.

Most scientists think that the bridge formed naturally over hundreds of thousands of years and is not man-made. However, some people are less certain. They claim that the stones look as if they have been placed there deliberately. The islands and sandbanks, they believe, could not have been formed naturally by the wind and the waves. Some historical records say that it was possible to walk across the bridge until about 500 years ago. Then a powerful storm created the gaps between the islands.

The government's plan is to dig or dredge a deep channel through part of the bridge. Large ships will then be able to sail from one side to the other. Now ships traveling to the northeastern part of India have to sail all the way around Sri Lanka. The new channel will the journey will be about 250 miles (400 kilometers) shorter.



Aerial photograph of Rama's Bridge

India has a secular government. This means that religion and the way in which the country is governed are kept separate. The idea of making a deep-water shipping lane through Rama's Bridge was first announced over six years ago. Then it led to large street demonstrations in several Indian cities.

This time members of the country's parliament have complained

about the government's recent decision. Most are members of the main opposition group, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). They claim that the government's plans shows that it has "no faith in God". The leaders of the BJP insist that they will stop any dredging work that threatens to damage Rama's Bridge.

Some environmentalists are also angry about the government's decision. They say that a large shipping channel through the bridge will damage local corals and cause pollution. They also worry that it will affect some of the sea creatures that live in the area. These include thousands of marine turtles as well as dugongs, which are a rare type of manatee, or sea cow. ■

MARS COMET

Could a large comet crash into Mars next year? Some astronomers seem to think so. Others say that it will miss, but not by much. The comet is expected to pass extremely close to Mars or hit the planet on October 19, next year.

An astronomer based in Australia discovered the comet. Using a powerful telescope at the Siding Spring Observatory he first spotted it on January 3, between the orbits of Jupiter and Saturn. The comet's official name is C/2013 A1, but many people are now calling it Siding Spring.

Comets are often described as large "dirty snowballs". They release dust and gas. Each has a solid center, called the nucleus. The nucleus is made mainly from frozen water, but can contain other chemicals such as ammonia, carbon dioxide and methane. Around the nucleus is a cloudy atmosphere called the coma.

Most comets can only be seen from the Earth through a telescope. Yet it is possible to see some without a telescope if they pass close to the Sun. Comets seem to light up as the gasses and dust that make up their comas absorb and release energy from the Sun. At this time a long "tail" can be seen trailing behind them.



Artist's impression of comet impact on Mars
(artwork © Don Dixon www.cosmographica.com)

Later this year a comet, called ISON (C/2012 S1), will be visible in the night sky. Astronomers say that it should be possible to see it, without a telescope, sometime around late October or early November. It will be visible until mid January. Astronomers in Russia discovered ISON last September.

Like the planets in our Solar System, comets orbit the Sun. Those with an orbit of less than 200 years are called short-period comets. Those whose orbits take more than 200 years are known as long-period comets.

Short-period comets are thought to originate in a part of our Solar System called the Kuiper belt. This is beyond the orbit of the dwarf planet Pluto. Long-period comets are believed to come from a region about 1,000 times farther away from the Sun known as the Oort cloud. Both Siding Spring and ISON are Oort cloud comets.

Since it was first seen astronomers have been trying to work out what path Siding Spring will take as it gets closer to Mars. Yet predicting

the path of comets can be difficult. As the Sun warms them gases are released from their surfaces. These can "push" the comet one-way or the other. Currently scientists at NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), in the U.S., expect Siding Spring to miss Mars by about 62,000 miles (100,000 kilometers). Yet this could change.

Siding Spring is estimated to be about 31 miles (50 kilometers) wide. It is traveling at a speed of roughly 35 miles (56 kilometers) per second. If it does hit Mars it is likely to create an impact crater 310 miles (500 kilometers) wide and 1.2 miles (two kilometers) deep. Scientists say that the size of the impact would be similar to the one on the Earth that happened around 65 million years ago. Many believe that this impact killed off all the dinosaurs.

Currently there are several unmanned spacecraft orbiting Mars. There are also two "rover" vehicles on the planet's surface. Therefore, whether Siding Spring hits Mars or just misses it, images and other information sent back from these space probes and rovers are likely to be spectacular. ■

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Editor: Rebecca Watson

American Editor: Chris Tarn

Acknowledgements:

News story photographs by gettyimages

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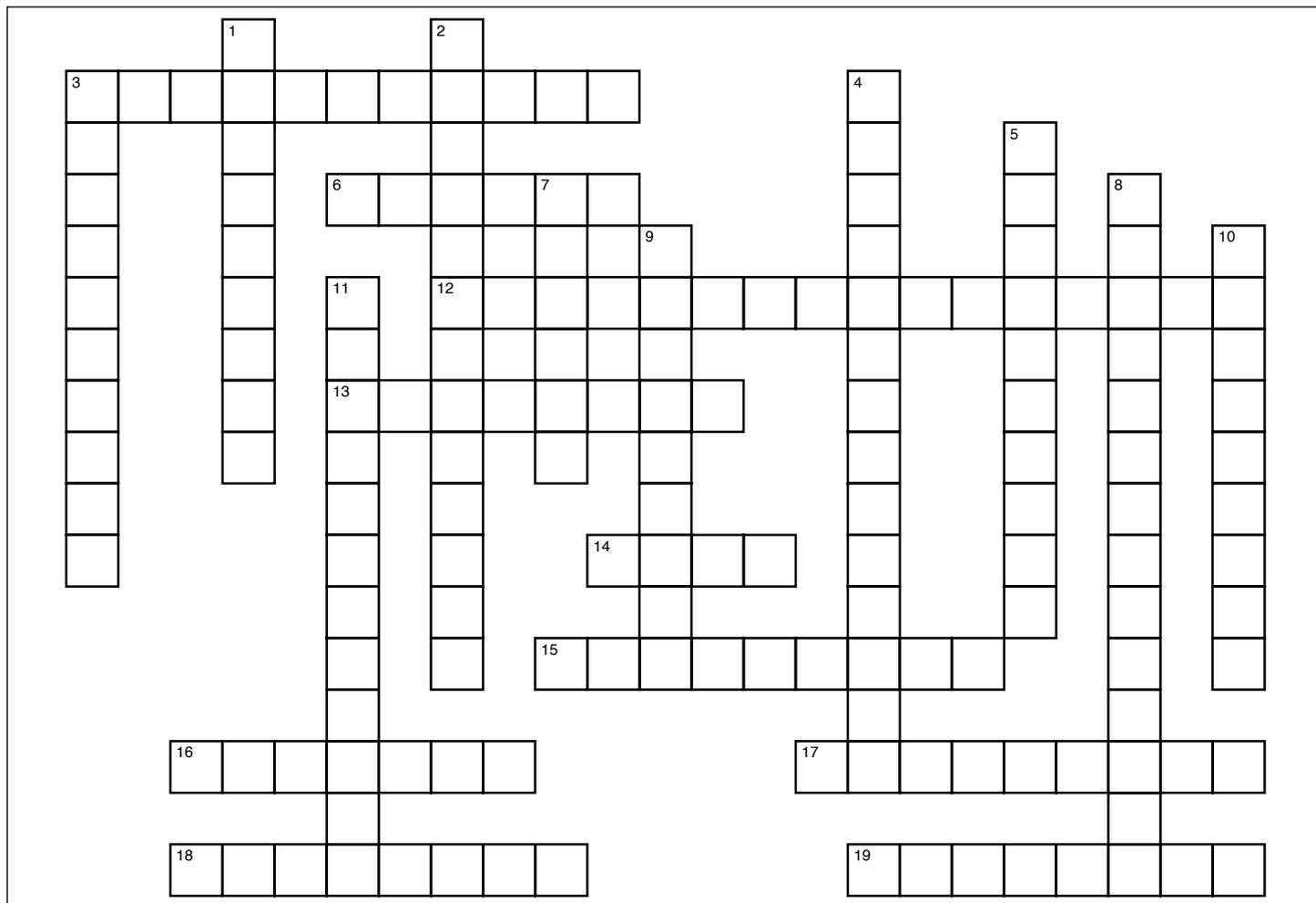
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ISSUE 192

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 ➡



Across

- 3 *Noun* The act of communicating with others
- 6 *Noun (Plural)* Pieces of cloth used by women to cover the head and shoulders or wrap around a baby
- 12 *Adjective* From outside the Earth
- 13 *Noun* A person, creature or thing that is annoying and causes problems
- 14 *Noun* Survey of peoples opinion
- 15 *Noun* Describes actions taken to save money, especially living more simply and strictly controlling spending
- 16 *Noun* The successful ending of a contest, especially a war or battle
- 17 *Noun* A sudden attack, invasion, or raid
- 18 *Noun (Plural)* Military expeditions organized by the Christian powers of Europe in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims
- 19 *Verb* Became angry at being forced to accept something

Down

- 1 *Verb* Describes someone who has lost his or her job because a company or organization no longer needs the person
- 2 *Adverb* Relating to military or political plans to gain an advantage
- 3 *Noun* A hindrance or obstruction
- 4 *Noun* When a person or people are treated differently or unfairly because of who they are
- 5 *Adjective* Not able to concentrate on something
- 7 *Adjective* Causing or able to cause death
- 8 *Noun* A person who is concerned for his or her fellow human beings, especially as shown by kind and generous acts that benefit many people
- 9 *Noun (Plural)* Measures applied to force a country to stop doing something
- 10 *Adjective* Describes a complex design
- 11 *Noun (Plural)* Apartment buildings in which each apartment is individually owned

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GLOSSARY PUZZLE *CONTINUED*

INSTRUCTIONS: ③ Find 19 of the 20 crossword answers in the word search. Words can go vertically, horizontally, diagonally and back to front. ④ After finding the 19 words write down the 20th (or missing) word under the puzzle.



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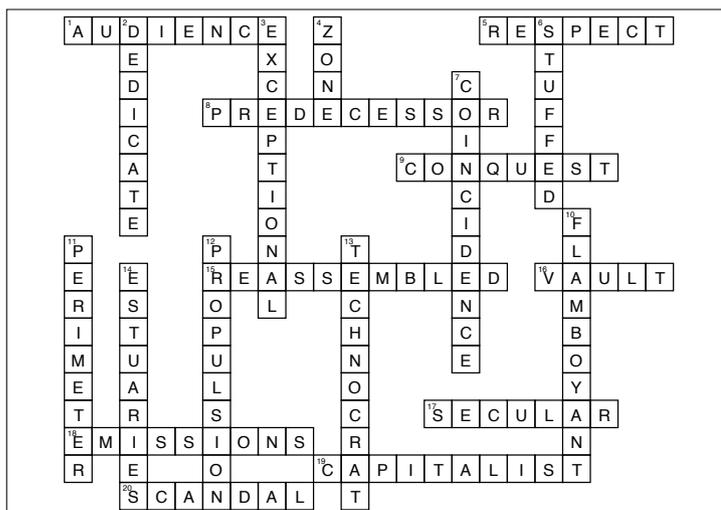


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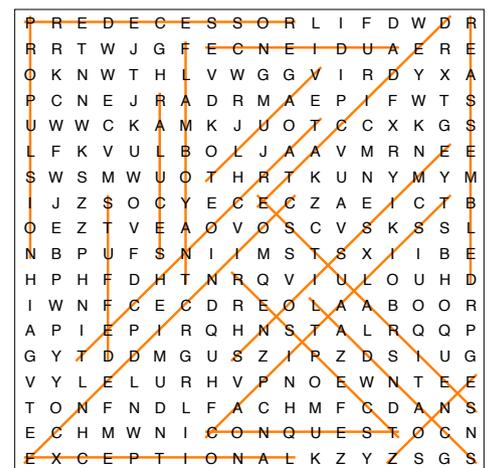
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MISSING WORD ANSWER = _____



ISSUE 191 ANSWERS



P E R I M E T E R