

**NEWS IN**  
*brief*

**King of Mandela's clan jailed for 12 years**

AFP, Johannesburg

A South African traditional king from Nelson Mandela's Thembu ethnic group began a 12-year prison sentence yesterday for arson, kidnap and assault of his subjects, after a long battle to stay out of jail. In 2009, King Buyelekhaya Dalindyebo was convicted of manslaughter, arson and assault charges for offences committed more than two decades ago.

**US sets February date for Asean summit**

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama will host leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Rancho Mirage, California on February 15 and 16, the White House said Wednesday. Obama's office dubbed the meeting, the first hosted by a US president with the 10 Asean leaders, "unprecedented" and said it would further his aim of "rebalancing" US foreign policy towards Asia.

**Adnan Sami gets Indian citizenship**

PTI, New Delhi

Pakistani singer Adnan Sami has been granted Indian citizenship with effect from January 1 following his request to the Centre to legalize his status in the country on humanitarian grounds. Lahore-born Sami had first arrived in India on March 13, 2001 on a visitor's visa.

**UK to stop financial aid to India**

TNN, New Delhi

From January 1, 2016, India will no longer receive financial aid from the UK, a decision which was taken by the British government in 2012 after a domestic outcry about India's growing economic status. The transition has taken three years during which the existing financial grant projects were completed and the unutilized funds moved into what are called "technical assistance" projects.



(From left, clockwise) Girls cheer while waiting for the New Year's fireworks in Sydney; Balinese young girl take a selfie during a New Year celebration in Bali; and Indian school students offer prayers for world peace in the upcoming year of 2016 in Ahmedabad, India, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP

**World welcomes 2016 amid terror fears**

AGENCIES

Global New Year's Eve festivities began under tightened security yesterday, with Brussels scrapping celebrations as fears of jihadist threats cast a pall, just weeks after brutal attacks in Paris.

Police in Brussels have also arrested six people in connection with an alleged plot to target the city on New Year's Eve, prosecutors say. The arrests in Brussels were made during raids in suburbs including Molenbeek, which was used as a base by the 13 November Paris attackers.

The arrests come as cities around the world heighten security measures ahead of large-scale New Year celebrations. Security is being stepped up in major European cities ahead of New Year celebrations, with officials wary of possible terror plots.

New Year fireworks and festivities have been cancelled in Brussels and extra measures are being put in place in other cities, including Paris, London, Berlin and Moscow.

Meanwhile in Turkey, security services say they have thwarted a major plot to attack celebrations in Ankara.

Earlier this week, Austrian police claimed a "friendly intelligence service" had tipped them off that major European capitals were at risk of being attacked over the holiday period.

The French capital has cancelled its main New Year fireworks display but the traditional gathering on the

Champs-Elysees will take place, amid tight security.

Projections on the Arc de Triomphe will be shorter than normal and four giant screens will be placed at intervals to avoid creating tightly packed crowds.

On Wednesday, Turkish police arrested two suspected IS members over an alleged plot to attack celebrations in Ankara. State media said they were planning two separate attacks on crowded areas. Suicide vests and explosives were found during police

**DEVELOPMENTS**

- Belgium arrests six, cancels celebrations
- London, Paris, Berlin, Moscow tighten security
- Hacker attack blacks out BBC website
- Security alerts issued in Asia

raids.

Authorities in Moscow will completely close off Red Square, where crowds normally count down to midnight.

In Berlin, backpacks and fireworks will be prohibited and bags searched on the "fan mile" in front of the Brandenburg Gate, which has reportedly been closed off since Christmas. Up to a million people are expected to attend the celebration.

London's Metropolitan Police will deploy 3,000 officers in the inner city, including extra armed officers.

"Our plans are purely precautionary and not as a result of any specific intelligence," said a spokesperson.

Australian officials assured revellers that thousands of extra police would patrol major cities, but urged residents to celebrate. "Don't change your way of life," said Melbourne's Lord Mayor Robert Doyle.

And a number of other cities around the world have been put on high alert or called up additional police officers, including Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur and New Delhi, where police and anti-terror squads have conducted mock terror drills this week.

In the Philippines, stray bullets and exploding firecrackers killed one person and injured almost 200 others as the country plunged into its annual chaotic revelry.

Hackers brought down the BBC's websites for several hours yesterday in a large-scale hacking attack, the British public broadcaster reported. Users trying to access BBC.com and related websites could only see an error message saying: "The site could be temporarily unavailable or too busy." The BBC press office blamed the problem on a "technical issue".

Despite continued problems with access to the sites, it said in a later update: "The BBC website is now back

**Many world leaders are 'out of their minds': Obama**

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

President Barack Obama has admitted that a "pretty sizeable percentage" of world leaders are "out of their minds".

The President made the admission to Jerry Seinfeld for an episode of Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee.

In the beginning of the clip, Seinfeld arrives at the White House and even helps himself to an apple from the Oval office, much to the President's mock disapproval.

"I always wanted to be in a show about nothing and here I am," Obama remarked to Seinfeld as they took a seat in the infamous presidential 'beast' vehicle.

Over coffee in a White House cafe, Seinfeld asks Obama: "How many world leaders do you think are just completely out of their mind?"

"A pretty sizeable percentage," Obama confirmed.

Seinfeld proceeded: "Some of these people, you must meet them, you must be chatting and you see it in their eyes... you go 'oh, this guys gone'."

Without naming names, the 54-year-old president proposed: "Part of what happens with these guys, is the longer they stay in office, the more likely that is to happen," which Seinfeld appeared to agree with interjecting: "Of course, they lose it."

Obama elaborated: "At a certain point your feet hurt and you're having trouble peeing, [but] you have absolute power."

"Privilege is toxic", Seinfeld suggested, to which Mr Obama agreed: "It really is."

Another highlight of the 18-minute segment was Obama admitting his most popular fanbase is usually children.

"I do really well with the 0-8 demographic, partly because my ears are big so I look a little like a cartoon character and then little kids like saying my name but it's all one big name like 'barackobama'."

The clip ends with Mr Obama taking the 1963 Corvette for a spin around the White House grounds.

Obama, who's two-term presidency will finish in 2016 made another television appearance recently when he joined Bear Grylls for a hike in Alaska. There, he undertook a number of challenges such as sampling some salmon half-



**Bill Clinton 'one of the great abusers': Trump**

PTI, Washington

United States Republican Presidential frontrunner Donald Trump has blamed Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton of starting a war of words by calling him sexist as he accused her husband, former President Bill Clinton, to be "one of the great abusers of the world."

Trump again invoked the ex-President's alleged extramarital affairs and accused Clinton of engaging in "tremendous abuse" of women.

"And [Hillary] wants to accuse me of things. And the husband is one of the great abusers of the world. Give me a break. Give me a break. Give me a break," Trump said, during an election campaign event in South Carolina.

Dismissing Clinton's accusation that Trump himself engaged in sexism the real estate magnate said: "She came out saying [Trump] has a 'penchant for sexism'.. now she is playing with that card. I had no choice, but I had to mention her husband's situation," Trump said.

A day earlier, Trump told reporters that he would be raising Clinton's past during the election campaign. "Hillary brought up the whole thing with [calling me] sexist," he said.

"She's got a major problem [that] happens to be right in her own house. We'll go after the ex-President...it'll come out well for us," he said, referring to the comments



**Freak heatwave hits North Pole**

AFP, Montreal

Temperatures at the North Pole rose above freezing point Wednesday, 20 degrees Celsius above the mid-winter norm and the latest abnormality in a season of extreme weather events.

Canadian weather authorities blamed the temperature spike on the freak depression which has already brought record Christmas temperatures to North America and lashed Britain with winds and floods.

The deep low pressure area is currently looming over Iceland and churning up hurricane force 75-knot winds and 30-foot waves in the north Atlantic while dragging warm air northwards.

"It's a very violent and extremely powerful depression, so it's not surprising that hot temperatures have been pushed so far north," said Canadian government meteorologist Nathalie Hasell.

"This deep depression has pushed hot air as far as the North Pole, where temperatures are at least 20 degrees above normal, at around freezing point, between zero and two degrees," she said.

US scientists from the North Pole Environmental Observatory told AFP that the temperatures had climbed suddenly.

An Arctic monitoring point 180 miles (300 kilometers) from the Pole that had been recording minus 37 degrees on Monday had shot up to minus eight by Wednesday, said senior researcher James Morison.

The polar region is the area of the world that has seen the most profound effects of climate change in recent decades.

Average year-round temperatures in the Arctic are three degrees Celsius higher than they were in the pre-industrial era, snowfall is heavier, winds are stronger and the ice sheet has been shrinking for 30 years.

**Frantic US fights against floods**

**At least 13 killed in Missouri**

AFP, Chicago

Soldiers and volunteers packed sand bags Wednesday in a frantic effort to stave off floodwaters in the US state of Missouri, where 13 people have been killed and several towns have been engulfed.

The Mississippi River is already more than 14 feet (4.2 meters) above flood stage in some areas and is forecast to rise another eight feet before cresting today, according to the National Weather Service.

"We've never seen water this high," Missouri Governor Jay Nixon told CNN. "We're in a massive flood fight."

Don Smith, the mayor of Rockaway Beach, a small resort town in the southern part of the state, calling the flooding "absolutely devastating" and pleaded for help.

"I don't even know how we're going to deal with the clean-up," Smith told CNN. "One of the business owners has an antique shop: there were minnows inside." The images shown by local media were dramatic.

Muddy water inundated homes and businesses nearly to the rooftops. Hundreds of volunteers formed human chains to spread sandbags on levees before the rapidly rising water could overflow them.

A man and his dog were rescued by boat from the roof of a home that was almost completely submerged near the Missouri town of Eureka. Another man was towed out of the floodwaters with his legs dangling out the back window of his pickup.

Nixon urged residents to stay out of the frigid and fast-moving waters. Most of the 13 victims in Missouri died when their cars were swept away.

May the good times and treasures of the present become the golden memories of tomorrow.

**2016 HAPPY NEW YEAR**

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