



Jesse Tornainen (in grey shirt), a member of the Finnish neo-Nazi group Finnish Resistance Movement (FRM) is seen during FRM demonstration in front of the railway station in Helsinki, Finland—REUTERS

Iran's Zarif hails Syria truce as 'major achievement'

TEHRAN, DEC 30 /- Iran's foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif today welcomed a nationwide truce in Syria as a "major achievement" that could lead to renewed peace talks. On the deal brokered by Russia and Turkey, potentially a significant breakthrough in the nearly six-year conflict.

Zarif said, "Ceasefire in Syria is a major achievement." "Let's build on it by tackling the roots of extremist terror," he posted on Twitter. Zarif spoke by telephone yesterday with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on the latest developments in Syria, where Iran has offered considerable military, financial and diplomatic aid to defend President Bashar al-Assad. "Both sides welcomed the nationwide ceasefire and emphasised the fight against terrorism, Islamic State (IS) and Al-Nusra groups and their allies," the official IRNA news agency said. Zarif and Lavrov agreed to "continue consultation and coordination within the framework of the tripartite agreement among Turkey, Iran and Russia to hold talks between the Syrian government and rebels" in Kazakhstan, Turkey, Iran and Russia to hold talks between the Syrian government and rebels in Kazakhstan it added.

Turkey and Russia are pushing for talks between the regime and rebels in Astana to begin next month. The ceasefire, announced yesterday by Russian President Vladimir Putin and confirmed by the Syrian army and opposition, does not include designated "terrorists" such as IS, (AFP)

Romania gets new PM, ending political turmoil

BUCHAREST, DEC 30 /- Romania's president today named social-democrat Sorin Grindeanu as the nation's new prime minister, bringing to a close weeks of uncertainty since the left won a parliamentary vote on December 11. The centre-right president Klaus Iohannis signed the official decree naming Grindeanu, a 43-year-old former communications minister, as the new premier. Grindeanu now faces a confidence vote in parliament on his programme and cabinet nominees. The nomination sought to put an end to a political crisis sparked when Iohannis rejected a previous candidate who would have been the country's first female and first Muslim prime minister.

The president offered no reasons for his rejection of Sevil Shhaideh, initially put forward by the Social Democrats (PSD), but there was speculation that it was due to her Syrian husband's background. Sources close to the president had indicated yesterday that Grindeanu was considered a "better solution." He is seen in Romania as a "disciplined soldier" within the PSD ranks and said himself in a recent interview that he had joined the party very young as an outlet for his leftist convictions. The PSD had proposed the previously little-known Shhaideh after its thumping poll victory on December 11 when it won 45 per cent of the vote, enough to form a majority coalition with its partners ALDE, Shhaideh, 52, who has only five months ministerial experience, is from Romania's small and long-established Turkish minority, but her Muslim faith is not thought to have been the problem.

Instead the focus was likely on her husband, 54, who worked in the Syrian agriculture ministry for 20 years before emigrating to Romania in 2011 and marrying Shhaideh the same year, according to the PSD. Website HotNews cited unnamed sources as saying that the security services had "strongly cautioned" against Shhaideh's nomination because of the closeness of her husband and his two brothers to President Bashar al-Assad regime. This might have made giving Shhaideh the necessary security clearances to be the NATO member's prime minister problematic. PSD leader Liviu Dragnea had withdrawn his own bid to become prime minister because of a conviction that bars him from office. (AFP)

India, Egypt aim to boost ties in New Year after eventful 2016

CAIRO, DEC 30 /- India and Egypt had a fulfilling year in 2016 as the leadership of the two countries agreed to step up their defence and security cooperation to tackle the twin challenges of terrorism and radicalisation besides enhancing economic and people-to-people engagements. This year also witnessed some of the high-level meetings between the two countries including the visit of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to India at the invitation of his Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee in September to discuss ways to develop bilateral cooperation in different fields. A series of decisions to combat terrorism were taken in wide-ranging talks between Prime

Minister Narendra Modi and el-Sisi as the two countries have been engaged in staffing off a number of cooperation opportunities, which will be increased in the coming year. "One of the key cooperation moments in 2016 is that the Vocational Training Centre on 'Textiles in Shoubra El-Kheima, Cairo, was formally inaugurated in August with the support of the Indian government. The Vocational Centre is one of the largest training centres in Egypt offering several courses in printing, electrical, mechanical, energy, textile, upgradation of state-of-the-art technologies in the field of spinning, weaving, dyeing and printing. In September, another key cooperation moment took place after the first

US expels 35 Russian officials, slaps sanctions over hacking

WASHINGTON, DEC 30 /- In apparent retaliatory action against alleged Russian hacking during the US presidential election, President Barack Obama has slapped a series of sanctions against Russia and expelled 35 Russian officials. "All Americans should be alarmed by Russia's actions," Obama said in a statement yesterday as he ordered a number of actions in response to the Russian government's alleged aggressive harassment of US officials and cyber operations targeting the US election. "These actions follow repeated private and public warnings that we have issued to the Russian government, and are a necessary and appropriate response to ef-

orts to harm US interests in violation of established international norms of behaviour," he said. The US has also ordered shutting of two of Russian compounds in the country. The executive order issued by Obama provided additional authority for responding to certain cyber activity that seeks to interfere with or undermine the US election processes and institutions, or those of its allies or partners. "Using this new authority, I have sanctioned nine entities and individuals: the GRU and the FSB, two Russian intelligence services; four individual officers of the GRU; and three companies that provided material support to the GRU's cyber operations," he said.

"In addition, the Secretary of the Treasury is designating two Russian individuals for using cyber-enabled means to cause misappropriation of funds and personal identifying information. The State Department is also shutting down two Russian compounds, in Maryland and New York, used by Russian personnel for intelligence-related purposes, and is declaring 'persona non grata' 35 Russian intelligence operatives," Obama said. "Finally, the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation are releasing declassified technical information on Russian civilian and military intelligence service cyber activity, to help

network defenders in the US and abroad identify, detect, and disrupt Russia's global campaign of malicious cyber activities," he said. Obama said these actions are not the sum total of US response to Russia's aggressive activities. "We will continue to take a variety of actions at a time and place of our choosing, some of which will not be publicised," he said. "In addition to holding Russia accountable for what it has done, the United States and friends and allies around the world must work together to oppose Russia's efforts to undermine established international norms of behaviour, and interfere with democratic governance," Obama said. (PTI)

Russia moves to expel 35 US diplomats in tit-for-tat response: Reports

MOSCOW, DEC 30 /- Russia on Friday moved to expel 35 US diplomats in tit-for-tat response after President Barack Obama unleashed a barrage of punishment against Moscow over alleged election interference. Obama's broadside over cyberattacks sent ties between Russia and the United States—already at their worst since the Cold War—a tonne fresh low less than a month ahead of President-elect Donald Trump taking charge. The outgoing US leader yesterday gave 35 alleged Russian intelligence operatives based at the country's embassy in Washington and consulate in San Francisco 72 hours to leave the country, and hit Russia's military and domestic intelligence agencies with sanctions. "We of course cannot leave these stunts unanswered. Reciprocity is the law in diplomacy and international relations," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in a televised statement, dismissing the US allegations as "groundless".

Lavrov said his ministry had asked President Vladimir Putin to declare 31 employees at the US embassy in Moscow and four at the country's consulate in second city Saint Petersburg persona non grata. Russia is also seeking to ban US diplomats from using a holiday home and warehouse in Moscow, Lavrov said, after Obama ordered the closure two Russian compounds in New York and Maryland. Making good on a promise to punish Putin's government for allegedly trying to tilt the 2016 election in Trump's favour, Obama Thursday unveiled a broad range of steps against Moscow including the diplomat expulsions. US intelligence concluded that a hack-and-release of Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton staff emails was ordered by the Kremlin and was designed to put Republican vice-presidential nominee in the Oval Office. "I have ordered a number of actions in response to the Russian government's aggressive harassment of US officials and cyber operations aimed at the US election," Obama said in a statement. In response to the hacks, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov accused the Obama administration of trying to "definitively destroy US-Russia relations which have al-

ready reached a low." Relations between Washington and Moscow have slumped to their lowest point since the end of the Cold War, and Obama has previously imposed sanctions over Russia's actions in Syria and Ukraine.

Peskov said ahead of Lavrov's announcement that Putin would take into account the fact Obama only has some three weeks left in office when responding, insisting Moscow would try not to act like a "bull in a china shop" in the hope of normalising ties once Trump takes charge. The move by Obama could also raise further tensions with his successor Trump, who has expressed his admiration for Putin and desire to improve ties with Russia. Trump has questioned whether Russia really tipped the electoral scale, painting Obama's accusations as a national embarrassment, while a Democratic president to delegitimise a Republican victory.

"Trump said that while he believes the US should move on to bigger and better things, what we meet with intelligence leaders next week for a briefing on the situation, Obama has pointedly stated that 'all Americans should be alarmed by Russia's actions.'"

Man wrongly arrested for Berlin attack fears for family: Report

LONDON, DEC 30 /- The Pakistani man wrongly arrested for the Berlin truck attack today said he had told German police he could not even drive and was now afraid for the safety of his family back home. Naveed Baloch, an asylum seeker from the troubled province of Balochistan, told the Guardian newspaper he had just left a friend's house and was crossing a street when he saw a police car approaching fast and picked up his pace. He said he was arrested and taken to a police station, where he was photographed and fingerprinted.

"When I resisted, they started slapping me," the 24-year-old, who has been living in a secret location provided by police since his release because he says he is afraid for his life, told the British daily. Baloch, who sought refuge in Germany as a member of a secular separatist movement in Balochistan, said he struggled to communicate because no translator could be found who phoned his name in Balochi. "I calmly told them I cannot drive at all. Neither can I even start a vehicle," he said.

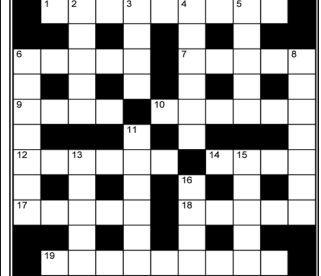
Baloch was arrested on December 23, the hours after the attack on a Christmas market in the heart of Berlin in which 12 people were killed. The German daily Baloch 24 hours later, after failing to find evidence of his involvement. They instead identified rejected Punjabi asylum seeker Anis Amri as the prime sus-

pect. Amri was shot dead by Italian police on December 23 after fleeing a manhunt in Germany. Baloch, a shepherd by profession, said members of his family in the village of Mand in Balochistan in south-west Pakistan had received threatening phone calls following his arrest.

"Now they all know I fled to Germany, fearful of my life, and that I am claiming asylum here. It leaves my family very vulnerable and there's nothing I can do to protect them," he told the Guardian. Baloch said he left his home in Balochistan in late 2015, after a year ago, arriving in Germany via Iran, Turkey and Greece, because of death threats he had received for his activism for the Baloch National Movement. "Most of the people I worked with have been arrested and killed. I knew it was a matter of time before they came for me."

That's the reason I came to Germany," he said. Mineral-rich Balochistan province has been plagued for decades by a separatist insurgency and sectarian killings. (AFP)

QUICK CROSSWORD 2702



- Across**
1. Extra (9)
7. Tree anchors (5)
7. Water lily (5)
9. Heal (4)
10. Artist's workshop (6)
12. Fleet of warships (6)
14. Tangle (4)
17. Purplish colour (5)
18. Expand (5)
19. Translate (9)
- Down**
2. Singing group (5)
3. Alleviate (4)
4. Divides (6)
5. Assessed (5)
6. Take back (7)
8. Abridge (7)
11. Stick to (6)
13. Grieve over (5)
15. Elbow (5)
16. Exchange (4)

Previous solution
Across: 1. Quarry, 7. Naive, 8. Crane, 9. Unkind, 10. Char, 12. Iota, 14. Counts, 17. Troll, 18. Inane, 19. Shamblies.
Down: 1. Quirk, 2. Ageing, 3. Dock, 4. Reach, 5. Infuriate, 6. Defrosted, 11. Jovial, 13. Troth, 15. Nears, 16. Glim.

SUDOKU: 2430

7	5	1	2					
1		5	3		7	6	9	
4		7						
2						3		4
2	9	3			1			6
5					9	7		3
						5	9	

Yesterday's Solution 2429

1	2	7	6	5	4	9	3	8
6	3	5	9	1	8	2	7	4
9	4	8	3	2	7	5	1	6
8	5	9	7	6	2	1	4	3
2	7	4	1	9	3	6	8	5
3	1	6	8	4	5	7	9	2
4	9	2	5	8	1	3	6	7
7	8	1	2	3	6	4	5	9
5	6	3	4	7	9	8	2	1

SPECIAL TRAIN BETWEEN NEW COOCHBEHAR AND DINHATA

It has been decided to continue the service of presently running 05447/05448 New Coochbehar-Dinhata special for a period of another 03 months to clear extra rush of passengers as under:

Train No. 05447 from New Coochbehar on 01-01-2017 to 31-03-2017	Train No. 05448 from Dinhata on 01-01-2017 to 31-03-2017
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ARR.	DEP.	STATION	ARR.	DEP.
---	10.15	New Coochbehar	14.30	---
11.15	---	Dinhata	---	13.40

Composition: Sleeper Class (Nine), General Second Class (Four) & SLR/D (Two)=15 Coaches.

General Manager (Operations), Maligaon
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GORIGINUM OF e-TENDER NOTICE NO. 23 OF 2016 Dtd: 08-12-2016, e-TENDER NO. 23 OF 2016, 05447/05448
The following extraction are hereby made in SEN/CMLG's e-Tender Notice No. 23 Of 2016 Dtd: 08-12-2016 and may please read as:
Date of closing of tender: 30-01-2017 at 13.00 hrs, instead of 16-01-2017 at 13.00 hrs, and date of opening: 31-01-2017 at 15.30 hrs, instead of 17-01-2017 at 15.30 hrs.
For details visit: www.ipeps.gov.in Sr. Divisional Engineer/Co-ord, Maligaon
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