

All in the Cards

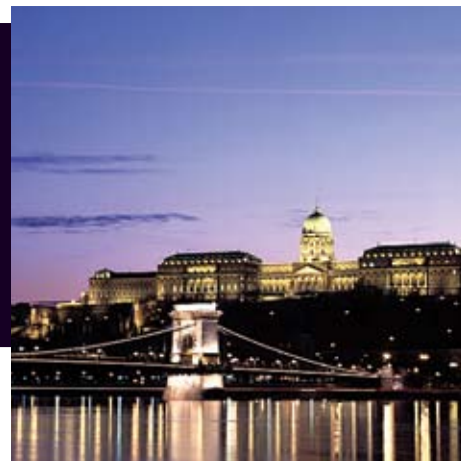
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NEW PRESIDENT TAKES CHARGE OF THE OVAL OFFICE



U.S. President Barack Obama talks with White House Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, in the Oval Office. PETE SOUZA/WHITE HOUSE VIA GETTY IMAGES

President Obama speaks to the world

By JARED PEARMAN
Epoch Times Staff

WASHINGTON—President Barack Obama, upon taking his oath of office and becoming the 44th president of the United States, called for “a new era of responsibility” on the terrace of the Capitol today.

A crowd of millions gathered on the National Mall to watch the ceremony, and as the new president stepped to the podium to swear his allegiance to the constitution, the audience swelled and cheered.

A “humbled” Obama thanked the audience and his predecessor President Bush, before beginning his much anticipated speech.

“What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility—a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task,” he stated.

CONTINUED ON P5 WORLD

Obama dives into agenda at home and abroad

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Barack Obama plunged into Israeli-Palestinian peace diplomacy on his first full day in office on Wednesday and was poised to order the closing of the internationally condemned military detention camp at Guantanamo.

Acting swiftly on Day One after his inauguration, Obama also summoned his economic team and war council to press ahead with plans for rescuing the battered economy and winding down the unpopular war in Iraq.

With his prompt attention to the decades-old Middle East conflict, he made clear it would be a top foreign policy priority among the litany of problems he inherited from his Republican predecessor George W. Bush.

And Obama’s immediate focus on Guantanamo, where the harsh treatment of terrorism suspects under the Bush administration damaged America’s moral standing in the world, showed his determination to clean up the U.S. image abroad.

Obama was expected to set a one-year deadline on Thursday for closing Guantanamo and also ban abusive interrogations and call for a review of detainees’ cases, a congressional aide and a White House official said.

CONTINUED ON P5 WORLD

SOUND EFFECTS:

Classroom noise could be hurting your kid’s marks

Group sounds alarm on school acoustics

By CINDY CHAN
Epoch Times Staff

Warning that noisy classrooms with poor acoustics are hindering learning and harming teachers’ health, experts are urging Canada to adopt national sound standards for new schools and to improve listening environments for existing schools.

An average empty classroom’s background noise measures about 50 decibels (dB). It comes from sources such as outside traffic and school-yard activities, hallways and neighbouring rooms, equipment like computers and projectors, and lighting, ventilation, and heating systems.

Add another approximately 10 dB from typical student activity, and the total background noise is 60 dB. That effectively covers up the teacher’s voice, since conversational speech is about 60 dB.

“Often in classrooms, with all the background noise, to be heard the teacher has to raise her voice and that results in voice problems,” said Maureen Clarke representing the Canadian Association of Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Grade one children need a speech-to-noise ratio of 15.5 dB to understand what the teacher is saying, Ms. Clarke explained. This means teachers must speak 15.5 dB louder than the background noise.

“We want to help children learn at their potential,” said Linda Walsh, president of the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists. “When children don’t hear the teachers’ instructions in the first place, they’re not going to develop language skills and literacy skills according to how they should.”

Constantly striving to be heard leads to vocal fatigue, loss of voice, and other health problems in many of the teachers being treated by speech pathologists across Canada, Ms. Walsh said.

‘In a typical grade 1 classroom, the average student will not understand one in six simple, familiar, and clearly spoken words’

Ms. Walsh and Ms. Clarke are spokespersons for the Concerned About Classrooms Coalition, consisting of 18 national and provincial organizations working to enhance children’s learning environments and teachers’ vocal health.

The issue concerns not only children with hearing loss but also those with attentional and learning problems, or those learning in a second language. Even children with normal hearing are affected, said Ms. Walsh.

Research by John Bradley of the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network found that “in a typical grade 1 classroom, the average student will not understand one in six simple, familiar, and clearly spoken words.” However “in quieter conditions they can understand almost all of these words.”

CONTINUED ON P3 NATION

U.S. banks under fire for holding onto bailout cash

By HEIDE B. MELHORTA
Epoch Times Staff

The United States Department of the Treasury is propping up banks that refuse to lend to the very American taxpayers who are footing this once-in-a-lifetime handout.

Both the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) and the federal prime rate have dropped dramatically. Yet, the all-time low interest rates have not benefited the consumers.

Treasury Secretary-designate Timothy Geithner is talking about creating a “bad bank” to take nonperforming loans of bank’s hands so that recapitalization money will do more than keep banks from collapsing and actually get them to start lending

again.

An example of the chill in the credit market are credit card rates that still sit at 14.32 percent, with no changes over the past months, according to the Index Credit Card Web site.

The Treasury Department invested \$14.77 billion of its Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) funds in 43 banks beginning this year. In 2008, the Treasury invested \$192 billion in 257 large and small financial institutions in 42 states and Puerto Rico, not including the most recent investments.

The largest investments, as high as \$25 billion, were made in Citigroup Inc., JPMorgan Chase & Co., and Wells Fargo & Company last year.

CONTINUED ON P5 WORLD

Israelis and Arabs join hand-in-hand for peace in Gaza

By MERLENE-AVIVA GRUNPETER
Epoch Times Staff

KFAR KARA – In the junction of the Arab village of Kfar Kara, Arabs and Jews stood in a peaceful demonstration, wearing white scarves and holding olive branches. They held hands together, standing silently and solemnly. Passing vehicles cheered their support for peaceful co-existence in Israel.

The symbolic chain of Arabs and Jews standing hand in hand, was initiated by Amana Kna’an, an Arab resident of Kfar Kara village, mother of three, and CEO of a society for women’s advancement. Kna’an established “Green Carpet”, a movement for promoting the social fabric of Jews and Arabs living side by side and developing tourism in Wadi Ara, a narrow ravine in the north of Israel which is home to both Arabs and Jews.

“I live in such good neighborliness with Jews and Arabs in Wadi Ara, so I decided to open my home for Jews and Arabs, and have invited everyone to start a dialogue”, she said.

CONTINUED ON P4 WORLD



Amana Kna’an organized an event that brought Arabs and Israeli’s together to stand for peace, hand-in-hand. EPOCH TIMES STAFF

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