

BRIEF
NATION

WASHINGTON
Retail sales post strong January gain

Consumers, lured to the malls by unusually warm weather and eager to spend their Christmas gift cards, boosted retail sales by a much larger than expected amount in January with sales outside of autos surging at the fastest pace in six years.

The Commerce Department said Tuesday that retail sales excluding autos were up 2.2 percent in January, the best showing in this category since late 1999. With autos included, retail sales rose by 2.3 percent, the best showing in 20 months. Overall, retail sales had risen by a tiny 0.4 percent in December.

"Warm weather and consumers' willingness to spend every penny they have led to a huge increase in retail sales," said Joel Naroff, head of Naroff Economic Advisors.

BRIEFS
WORLD

LAHORE, Pakistan
Western businesses torched by protesters

Thousands rampaged through two cities Tuesday in Pakistan's worst violence against Prophet Muhammad caricatures, burning buildings housing a hotel, banks and a KFC, vandalizing a Citibank and breaking windows at a Holiday Inn and a Pizza Hut.

At least two people were killed in Lahore, where intelligence officials suspected outlawed Islamic militant groups incited the violence to undermine President Gen. Pervez Musharraf's U.S.-allied government.

The unruly protests and deaths marked an alarming spike in the unrest in Pakistan over the cartoons, which first appeared in a Danish newspaper in September and have been reprinted by other Western newspapers. One cartoon depicts Muhammad wearing a turban shaped as a bomb with an ignited detonator string.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti
Haitian candidate asks supporters for nonviolence

Leading presidential candidate Rene Preval claimed Tuesday that gross errors and likely fraud marred the vote and the interim government has ordered a review of the election results.

Preval urged supporters to protest peacefully, a day after at least one pro-Preval demonstrator was killed and followers elsewhere occupied a hotel.

Haiti's interim government ordered a review of election results amid the accusations of electoral fraud, the country's interior minister said Tuesday.

"The government wants to make sure that everything with the process is correct," said interim Interior Minister Paul Magloire. "We're going to review the results because we want to make sure what we have is right."

TEHRAN, Iran
Iran confirms it resumed uranium enrichment

Iran has begun small-scale enrichment of uranium, a senior Iranian nuclear negotiator said Tuesday, a defiant declaration in the face of global opposition to Iran's atomic program.

Javad Vaeidi, deputy secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, in announcing the small-scale enrichment, also told reporters that Iran would resume negotiations with Moscow on Monday over its plan to enrich Iranian uranium on Russian soil, a proposal designed to allay fears that Iran will build nuclear weapons.

The negotiations with Russia had been due to start again Thursday, but Iran said Monday they were postponed indefinitely.

Cheney's victim has minor heart attack

Pellet lodged in man's heart

By LYNN BREZOSKY
AND NEDRA PICKLER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



CHENEY WHITTINGTON

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas
The 78-year-old lawyer wounded by Vice President Dick Cheney in a hunting accident suffered a mild heart attack Tuesday after a shotgun pellet in his chest traveled to his heart, hospital officials said.

Harry Whittington was immediately moved back to the intensive care unit and will be watched for

a week to make sure more of the metal pellets do not reach other vital organs. He was reported in stable condition.

Whittington suffered a silent heart attack, which is an obstructed blood flow, but without the classic heart-attack symptoms of

pain and pressure, according to doctors at Christus Spohn Hospital Corpus Christi-Memorial.

The doctors said they decided to treat the situation conservatively and leave the pellet alone rather than operate to remove it. They said they are optimistic Whittington will recover and live a healthy life with the pellet in him.

Asked whether the pellet could move farther into his heart and become fatal, hospital officials said that was a hypothetical question they could not answer.

Hospital officials said they were not concerned about the six to 200 other pieces of birdshot that might still be lodged in Whittington's body.

Cheney watched the news conference where doctors described Whittington's complications. Then the vice president called him, wished him well and asked if there was anything that he needed.

Cheney, an experienced hunter, has not spoken publicly about the accident, which took place Saturday night while the vice president was aiming for a quail. Critics of the Bush administration called for more answers from the Cheney himself.

Whittington has said through hospital officials that he does not want to comment on the shooting.

The furor over the accident and the White House delay in making it public are "part of the secretive

nature of this administration," said Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid of Nevada.

"I think it's time the American people heard from the vice president."

Before hospital officials announced details of Whittington's condition, the hunting accident had produced a raft of Cheney jokes on late-night television.

"I think Cheney is starting to lose it," Jay Leno said. "After he shot the guy he screamed, 'Anyone else want to call domestic wiretapping illegal?'"

Texas officials said the shooting was an accident and no charges were brought against the vice president.

THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

Saddam's newest tactic

Ex-Iraqi leader, co-defendants launch hunger strike to protest judge

By HAMZA HENDAWI
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq
After shouts, insults, arguments and walkouts, Saddam Hussein and three of his co-defendants unveiled a new show-stealing tactic Tuesday: They announced in court that they had gone on hunger strike.

Saddam said the strike was called to protest the tough way chief judge Raouf Abdel-Rahman has conducted the court since he took over last month.

"For three days we have been holding a hunger strike protesting against your way of treating us, against you and your masters," the former Iraqi leader said. Their claims could not be independently confirmed.

Abdel-Rahman has tried to impose order in a court where outbursts and abuse, mostly by Saddam and his former intelligence chief and half brother Barzan Ibrahim, have often overshadowed the proceedings.

The disruptions led to criticism of Abdel-Rahman's predecessor, fellow Kurd Rizgar Mohammed Amin, for not doing enough to rein in the brothers.

But after a short period of shouting and verbal abuse at the start of Tuesday's session, the court was calm as prosecutors tried for a second consecutive day to build their case of the ousted president's direct role in executions and imprisonment of hundreds Shiites in the 1980s.

A key document presented to the court allegedly showed that Saddam approved rewards for intelligence agents involved in the crackdown against residents of Dujail, a mainly Shiite town north of Baghdad, following a 1982 assassination attempt against him there.

If convicted in the killing of nearly 150 Shiites from Dujail, Saddam and his seven co-defendants could face death by hanging.

Ibrahim spoke at length, denying he had any part in the crackdown and insisting he personally released detainees.

He spoke from the defendants' pen, again wearing only his pajamas in protest at being forced to attend the trial.



Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein addresses the court of the Iraqi High Tribunal at the start of proceedings in Baghdad, Iraq, on Tuesday. His top co-defendant Barzan Ibrahim, seen rear left, entered wearing long underwear to signal his rejection of the court.

But his orderly arguments represented the first time any of the defendants have dealt at length with the charges they face, and his participation could boost the legitimacy of a tribunal whose fairness some have questioned.

Judge Raid Juhi, a court spokesman who investigated the Dujail case, told reporters of Ibrahim's attire: "You must have noticed that all the defendants wore appropriate attire. Defendant Barzan (Ibrahim) wore what he thought was appropriate."

After nearly three hours of testimony, Abdel-Rahman adjourned the trial until Feb. 28.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

More than 1,000 protesters burned a British flag Tuesday and the regional administration in Iraq's main southern province severed all ties with British authorities over video footage showing British soldiers allegedly beating and kicking Iraqi youths.

Gunmen killed 11 Shiite farmers north of Baghdad, including eight members of one family, officials said.

A U.S. Marine was killed and six coalition personnel were wounded in two attacks in Baghdad.

2006 is make-or-break year for United States in Iraq

By ANNE GEARAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON
For the Bush administration, 2006 is shaping up as a make-or-break year in Iraq, a year when Iraqis take ownership of a democracy built with U.S. treasure and troops or Washington loses a second chance for success in the costly undertaking.

Intersecting factors in Iraq and at home make this year pivotal. The first permanent post-invasion government offers hope for Iraqi political stability even in the face of unabated sectarian violence.

ANALYSIS

At the same time, the Bush administration faces growing domestic pressure to reduce the U.S. troop presence.

Within the administration, there is an urgency to get it right this time, after the stumbles and false starts of the U.S.-run Coalition Provisional Authority and more than a year of Iraqi-led caretaker governments.

Some officials talk of "restarting the clock" in Iraq, while others say 2006 represents an opportunity to capi-

talize on existing policies.

"This is the year that we are going to try to sustain the accomplishments on the political, economic and security tracks," said James Jeffrey, the State Department senior adviser for Iraq.

The latest report from the U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction warns that 2006 will be a critical year of transition in Iraq. It questions, though, whether the Iraqi government has the resources to rebuild and protect the infrastructure, develop the country's major cities and support private-sector projects.

"The successful December 2005 elections launched Iraq into a new phase of its history," Special Inspector General Stuart Bowen told Congress last week.

"The first government elected under Iraq's new constitution is now forming and will soon assume responsibility for managing Iraq's economy and infrastructure."

Bowen said it will take far more U.S. support before the Iraqi government can take control over billions of dollars in reconstruction projects, including problem-plagued oil and electricity improvements.

Want to know if death is near?

Baby boomers can take quiz for four-year outlook

By LINDSEY TANNER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO
It sounds like a perfect parlor game for baby boomers suddenly confronting their own mortality: What are your chances of dying within four years?

Researchers have come up with 12 risk factors to try to answer that for people older than age 50.

The quiz is designed to try to help doctors and families get a firmer sense for what the future may hold, to help plan health care accordingly, says lead author Dr. Sei Lee, a geriatrics researcher at the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center, who helped develop it.

This test is roughly 81 percent accurate and can give older people a reasonable idea of their survival chances, Lee and his colleagues say.

Their report appears in today's Journal of the American Medical Association, and the quiz is as follows:

- Age:
 - 60-64 years old, 1 point
 - 65-69, 2 points
 - 70-74, 3 points
 - 75-79, 4 points
 - 80-84, 5 points
 - 85 and older, 7 points
 - Gender: Male 2 points, female 0
 - Body-Mass Index: Less than 25 (normal weight or less), 1 point. (Researchers say the 1-point penalty for having a body-mass index under 25 (normal weight or less) is based on findings that being underweight is a risk for elderly people)
 - Diabetes: 2 points.
 - Cancer (excluding minor skin cancers): 2 points.
 - Chronic lung disease that limits activities or requires oxygen use at home: 2 points.
 - Congestive heart failure: 2 points.
 - Cigarette smoking in the past week: 2 points.
 - Difficulty bathing/showering because of a health or memory problem: 2 points.
 - Difficulty managing money, paying bills, keeping track of expenses because of a health or memory problem: 2 points.
 - Difficulty walking several blocks because of a health problem: 2 points.
 - Difficulty pushing or pulling large objects like a living room chair because of a health problem: 1 point.
- Score:**
0 to 5 points: less than a 4 percent risk of dying
6-9 points: 15 percent risk
10-13 points: 42 percent risk
14 or more points: 64 percent risk

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