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Edmonton NEWS BREAK



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The man accused in the savage beating of Canadian tourist Sheila Nabb now says he was forced to sign a confession he never read. Jose Ramon Acosta Quintero, 28, has admitted he hit Nabb in a hotel elevator but denies an intent to kill her as outlined in second confession that he signed. He says the two started talking on an elevator and blocked the door when she attempted to get off because he was drunk and wanted to chat some more, but panicked when she started screaming and he hit her.

* The Somali militant group Al-Shabaab says it has banned the International Committee of the Red Cross from operating in the regions it controls, accusing the organization of distributing expired food. Earlier this month the ICRC announced that it was suspending aid intended for up to 1.1 million people in central and southern Somalia because it was being hindered by local authorities.

* Police in the northern Afghanistan province of Kunduz are looking for a man they say strangled his wife after she bore him a third child that was not a son. On Saturday, the man, with the help of his mother, first beat the woman and then strangled her to death.

* U.N. nuclear experts gave a thumbs-up to Japan's planned "stress tests" for its remaining nuclear power plants Tuesday but left Japanese authorities to decide whether the plants themselves are safe. The IAEA team also recommends Japanese regulators improve communication with the residents around the plants and address plans for dealing with severe accidents more comprehensively.

* Eastern Europe shivered Tuesday in the coldest conditions seen this winter, with below-freezing temperatures and heavy snowfall leading to deaths, frostbite and widespread travel disruption. Ukraine's Emergency Situations Ministry said 30 people

have died as a result of the cold since Friday. Twenty-one of the dead were homeless people.

* Technical experts directing the salvage operation aboard the Costa Concordia cruise ship are recommending that the underwater recovery part of the operation be called off because it is becoming too dangerous. A total of 15 people remain missing. The head of the operation, Franco Gabrielli will make the final decision, but is unlikely to go against the recommendations of the technical experts. Salvage operations in the part of the ship above the water line will continue.

* Unemployment in the 17-nation eurozone ended 2011 at 10.4 per cent, a new record high for the single currency since its launch at the start of 1999, official figures showed Tuesday. Unemployment has been steadily rising over the past year — in December 2010, it stood at 9.5 per cent. The highest unemployment rate remains in Spain, where 22.9 per cent of the working population were without work, though Greece is nearing with 19.2 per cent rate. The lowest rate is Austria's at 4.1 per cent.

* Groups representing states and cities in the Great Lakes region have drafted a plan to separate the lakes from the Mississippi River watershed in the Chicago area. The backers describe the plan as the only sure way to protect both aquatic systems from invasions by destructive species such as Asian carp. The US Army Corps of Engineers is already conducting its own study of how to close 18 potential pathways between the two systems, including the Chicago waterways. The corps will release its findings in 2015.

* British singer Adele, widely acknowledged as 2011's top artist, will mark her live performance comeback at the Grammy Awards. It will be Adele's first live performance in five months — since undergoing vocal cord microsurgery in the fall.

NATIONAL NEWS

Two Edmonton police officers testified Tuesday that they recognized Colton Barry Ferguson as the man on LRT security video who shot Heather Rae Thurier, 23, in the face point blank on May 21, 2010. Const. Matthew Potter testified Tuesday he watched the surveillance video three days after the shooting and recognized the attacker as Ferguson. A second officer, Const. Craig Matheson, also had previous encounters with Ferguson and recognized him from a suspect photo sent out after the shooting. Ferguson is charged with first-degree murder and possession of a prohibited weapon.

* Edmonton police say they are looking for 67-year-old David Warren Buchanan in connection with three attempted child abductions. Police say a man fitting the description of Buchanan initiated a conversation with a four-year-old boy at a public location in the west end January 14. Buchanan is wanted in two other suspected abduction attempts. Buchanan is known to wear a blue cowboy hat and reading glasses.

* An eighth death in southern Alberta has been linked to an ecstasy-like drug. RCMP released details Tuesday of a 38-year-old man who died Dec. 10. The "dominant" drug in the man's system was PMMA. PMMA is five times as toxic as MDMA. In B.C., 18 people have died after taking the drug in the last six months, and a 19th death is being investigated. Of those 18 deaths, five have been linked to PMMA.

* A series of fare hikes on ETS takes place today. Cash fare rises to an even \$3. There are no changes to most monthly passes, tickets or day passes. The Senior Citizen Annual Pass goes from \$118 to \$121.50 while the Low Income Senior Annual Pass goes from \$51 to \$52.50. The Senior Citizen Monthly Pass increases to \$13.50.

* Statistics Canada reported Tuesday that the GDP shrank in

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November for the first time in 6 months. Leading the decline at 2.5 per cent was the production of oil and natural gas. Manufacturing was up 0.6 per cent, as were retail sales as they posted their fourth-consecutive monthly increase.

* The TSX gained 15 points Tuesday to 12,452. The Canadian dollar closed at USD\$0.997 while March oil fell 45-cents to USD\$98.33 a barrel.

BEEF BREAK

Which side of his mouth is Stephen Harper talking from when he says MP's pensions will be cut. Each individual pension may be cut, but when Harper's foisting 30 more MPs on us next election he's speaking with a forked tongue as taxpayers will be on the hook for not only 30 new pensions, but every other expense that comes with another hog at the trough.
 Comments: beefbreak@bellyyellow.com

On This Day in History

1920 - Ottawa Ontario - Founding of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, comprising the Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP), formed in the 1870's to administer the NWT, and the Dominion Police, that had guarded government buildings and enforced federal statutes since 1868; headquarters moved to Ottawa while training stays in Regina; size of force set at 2,500

Today's Pop Quiz:

What Japanese athletes grapple for the Emperors Cup?

Yesterday's Quiz:

Is a hockey goalie allowed to play with a broken stick? **A.** yes

Weather

Today: variable, H 1
 Tomorrow: sunny, H 0

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