

QUICK HITS

New Documents Link Huawei to Suspected Front Cos in Iran, Syria

**London | Hong Kong:** The US case against the chief financial officer of China's Huawei Technologies, who was arrested in Canada last month, centres on the company's suspected ties to two obscure companies. One is a telecom equipment seller that operated in Tehran; the other is that firm's owner, a holding company registered in Mauritius. US authorities allege CFO Meng Wanzhou deceived international banks into clearing transactions with Iran by claiming the two companies were independent of Huawei, when in fact Huawei controlled them. Huawei has maintained the two are independent: equipment seller Skycom Tech and shell company Canicula Holdings. But corporate filings and other documents found by Reuters in Iran and Syria show that Huawei, the world's largest supplier of telecommunications network equipment, is more closely linked to both firms than previously known. The documents reveal that a high-level Huawei executive appears to have been appointed Skycom's Iran manager. They also show that at least three Chinese-named individuals had signing rights for both Huawei and Skycom bank accounts in Iran. Reuters also discovered that a Middle Eastern lawyer said Huawei conducted operations in Syria through Canicula. Reuters

Apple's Tim Cook got Big Pay Bump in 2018: Filing

**Washington:** Apple gave chief executive Tim Cook a hefty 22% pay raise in 2018, bringing his total compensation for the year to almost \$15.7 million, according to a filing submitted to the Securities and Exchange Commission. The figure comprised a base salary of \$3 million, a \$12-million bonus and \$680,000 in what it called "other compensation" that includes private air travel and security expenses. Apple's compensation committee cited the company's strong sales performance over the year in justifying the bonus. AFP

PM May Fails to Win Over Northern Ireland Party

**London:** British PM Theresa May failed on Wednesday to persuade the Northern Irish party that props up her government to back her Brexit deal, just hours before lawmakers were due to resume debate on the divorce agreement. The Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party said it could still not support the so-called backstop arrangements, increasing the likelihood of parliament rejecting the deal and opening the way for a range of different outcomes: from a disorderly exit to another referendum on EU membership. Reuters

Trump Cites Slain Indian Cop to Make Case for Wall

Declares impasse 'a crisis of the heart and a crisis of the soul'

**New York:** US President Donald Trump invoked an Indian-American "hero" police officer killed by an illegal immigrant to make an appeal to the American people to pressure legislators to fund the border wall he wants and end the government shutdown. In his Tuesday night address to the nation from the Oval Office, Trump referred to the killing of Corporal Ronil Singh, saying: "America's heart broke the day after Christmas when a young police officer in California was savagely murdered in cold blood by an illegal alien who just came across the border. The life of an American hero was stolen by someone who had no right to be in our country."

Speaking in a measured, calm and composed way in contrast to his usual blustery, hectoring style, Trump said the border wall on the Mexican border was necessary to not only keep out illegal immigrants and criminals, but also the drugs that were ravaging the country resulting in thousands of deaths every year. As he spoke, the partial government shutdown caused by the standoff over the wall entered its 18th day while a caravan of an estimated 7,000 Central Americans



People gather to watch the president's address at an American Legion post in Encinitas, California, on Tuesday - AFP

Trump focused on illegal drugs flowing in through the southern border, which he said kills more Americans each year than during all of the Vietnam War

who had marched through Mexico were camped on the border waiting to enter the US.

He made a distinction between legal immigrants like Singh and his alleged killer who came in illegally and was not deported despite arrests. "America proudly welcomes millions of lawful immigrants who enrich our society and contribute to our nation. But, all Americans are hurt by uncontrolled illegal migration," he said. To gain sympathy from ordinary Americans, Trump focused on illegal drugs flowing in through the southern border, which he said kills more Americans each year

Stop Holding Americans Hostage over Shutdown, Pelosi tells Trump

**Washington:** Top congressional Democrats pushed back sternly on Tuesday against Donald Trump, warning that the US president was holding Americans "hostage" by refusing to fund shuttered government agencies until he gets money for his much-hyped border wall. "President Trump must stop holding the American people hostage, must stop manufacturing a crisis and must reopen the government," Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, said in a curt rebuttal to Trump's address to the nation, in which he declared the situation on the southern border a "crisis of the heart". "The women and children at the border are not a security threat, they are a humanitarian challenge - a challenge that President Trump's own cruel and counterproductive policies have only deepened," she said. AFP

than during all of the Vietnam War (about 58,000) and said the wall would stop the drugs. He spoke at length about the victims of crimes by illegal immigrants and said: "This is a humanitarian crisis, a crisis of the heart and a crisis of the soul." He left no room for a compromise on the demand for the wall barrier beyond saying that he would agree to a steel fence instead of a wall. He asked voters to call their legislators and ask them to support the barrier. IANS

Bezos Set to Divorce Wife of 25 Years, MacKenzie

**New York:** Billionaire Jeff Bezos, founder and chief executive of Amazon.com Inc, and wife MacKenzie Bezos, are divorcing after 25 years of marriage, the couple said in a joint statement on Twitter on Wednesday.

Jeff Bezos, 54, is the world's richest person, with a fortune of more than \$160 billion thanks to his stake in Amazon, which again became Wall Street's most valuable company this week, surpassing Microsoft Inc. The couple decided to divorce after a long period of "loving exploration" and trial separation, and expect to continue as partners in joint ventures and projects, according to the statement.

MacKenzie Bezos, 48, is an author who grew up in San Francisco, according to a 2013 profile in Vogue magazine. She attended Princeton University and met her husband at an interview for a job at a New York hedge fund, according to the magazine. The pair have four children. At a Business Insider event in Berlin last April, Jeff Bezos said MacKenzie's support was instrumental when he founded Amazon as an online bookseller in 1994, and that she did the accounting for the company in its first year. "When you have loving and supportive people in your life, like MacKenzie, my parents, my grandfather, my grandmother, you end up being able to take risks," he said at the event. Jeff Bezos in September committed \$2 billion to helping homeless families and starting pre-schools for low-income communities. He had solicited ideas on Twitter in 2017 for ways to donate some of his wealth. In 2012, the couple donated \$2.5 million to a Washington state campaign to legalise same-sex nuptials there. From modest beginnings as an online bookseller, Bezos and Amazon branched out into almost every product category available, ending up taking on established retail giants such as Wal-Mart Stores Inc. Under Bezos, Amazon launched the Kindle e-reader and revolutionized the way books are distributed and read. The company has also been a pioneer in cloud computing. Reuters



Bezos and MacKenzie - Reuters

Australian Police Examining Packages Left at Consulates

**Sydney:** Several foreign diplomatic missions were evacuated in the Australian cities of Melbourne and Canberra on Wednesday after they received packages containing suspicious substances. Police, fire crews and ambulances were seen at a number of foreign consulates in Melbourne, including those of India, Germany, Italy, Spain and South Korea. Officials at the US and Swiss missions in the city said they had also received packages.

The government Vic Emergency website noted at least 10 "hazardous material" incidents in the city. There were no reports of anyone being injured at the targeted missions in both cities. "The circumstances surrounding these incidents are being investigated," the Australian Federal Police said in a statement. The Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported that a worker from the New Zealand consulate in Melbourne had said the packages in question were envelopes labelled "asbestos". Inside were plastic sandwich bags containing a fibrous material. The ABC reported suspicious packages were also found at the Melbourne diplomatic offices of Pakistan and possibly those of Greece, France and Hong Kong. AP

MPs Force May's Hand as Brexit Vote Looms

**London:** British MPs voted Wednesday to force Prime Minister Theresa May to quickly set out an alternative plan for Brexit if she loses a crucial vote on her EU withdrawal deal next week, in a second parliamentary defeat in 24 hours.

The House of Commons voted to reduce the time the government has to explain its "plan B" from 21 sitting days to three if, as expected, lawmakers reject the draft Brexit agreement in a vote on Tuesday. Members of May's own Conservative party led the revolt amid fears that delaying the decision raises the risks of Britain crashing out of the European Union on March 29 with no deal at all.

It was the second setback in as many days for the prime minister, after MPs voted late Tuesday to deny the government certain taxation powers in a no-deal scenario - another attempt to avoid such an outcome. Speaking to MPs earlier, May said: "The only way to avoid no deal is to vote for the deal." But her spokesman added: "If that were not to take place... we would respond quickly and provide certainty on the way forward." The parliamentary manoeuvres came at the start of five days of debate on the deal May struck with the EU last November, which has been strongly opposed by lawmakers on all sides.



of the House of Commons. She set out further clarifications she hopes will win over her own Conservative MPs and Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which props up her government in parliament. The most controversial element of the agreement is the "backstop" arrangement, which could see Northern Ireland continue to follow certain EU trade rules after Brexit to avoid border checks with Ireland. The government has now offered guarantees to local lawmakers in the province over the operation of the backstop, and on the free flow of trade between Northern Ireland and mainland Britain. But DUP deputy leader Nigel Dodds said the proposals were "meaningless and cosmetic", adding he would keep pressing for changes to the overall deal. May is also still seeking assurances on the operation of the backstop from European leaders, which she hopes to deliver before the vote next week. AFP

US-China Trade Talks End as Hopes of a Deal Build

**Beijing:** Chinese and US teams ended trade talks in Beijing on Wednesday that lasted longer than expected and officials said details will be released soon, raising hopes an all-out trade war that could badly disrupt the global economy can be avoided. The talks were extended into an unscheduled third day, showing both sides were "serious", China's foreign ministry said. Share prices jumped in Asia and markets in Europe and the US were expected to follow suit as the lengthened talks fuelled optimism that the two countries were inching toward an agreement. Ted McKinney, US under secretary of agriculture for trade and foreign agricultural affairs, said the US trade delegation would return to the US later on Wednesday after a "good few days". "I think they went just fine," McKinney said of the talks. "It's been a good one for us," he told reporters at the delegation's hotel, without elaborating. Speaking at a daily news briefing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang confirmed both sides had agreed to extend the talks beyond Monday and Tuesday as originally scheduled. Asked if that meant they were difficult talks, Lu said: "I can only say that extending the consultations shows that the two sides were indeed very serious in conducting the consultations." Reuters

Zuck Plans Public Debates about Tech for 2019 Personal Challenge

Facebook chief executive officer Mark Zuckerberg said on Tuesday he will host a series of public discussions about the future of technology in society as part of his personal challenge this year. Zuckerberg sounded his plan in a Facebook post, which has been a regular feature when he airs his New Year's resolutions that in the past have included personal goals such as learning Mandarin to reading two books a month. "Every few weeks I'll talk with leaders, experts, and people in our community from different fields

and I'll try different formats to keep it interesting. These will all be public, either on my Facebook or Instagram pages or on other media," Zuckerberg said in a Facebook post. Facebook's reputation suffered last year from a data scandal involving a British political consulting firm. Last year Mark Zuckerberg said he would fix many of Facebook's issues such as the use of the platform for hate speech, spreading misinformation and political meddling in several countries during elections. Reuters

Italy Watchdog Fines Car Finance Cartel €678 Million

**Milan:** Italy's anti-trust authority said on Wednesday it has fined a swathe of top carmakers, including BMW, Fiat-Chrysler, Ford and Toyota, €678 million (\$776 million) for operating a financing cartel. The car manufacturers and their respective banks, which offer financing to customers purchasing vehicles, were found guilty of running a cartel from 2003 to 2017, the AGCM competition authority said in a statement. Cartel members also included General Motors, PSA (Peugeot-Citroen) finance institutions, Renault, Volkswagen, Santander Consumer Bank, and the Assofin and Assilea trade associations. They "put in place an anti-competition agreement, between 2003

and 2017, to alter the competitive dynamics in the market of car sales... through financing," it said. The AGCM noted "a single, complex and continuous agreement concerning the exchange of sensitive information on quantities and prices." Germany's Daimler and its Mercedes-Benz Financial Services Italia unit reported the cartel, of which it was a member, and therefore received "total immunity" in return, the authority said. AFP

TIPS, TRIVIA & TRENDS YOUR DAILY DIET OF FUN AND FACTS

California Island Offers \$130,000 to Look after Lighthouse



An island California is offering a whopping salary of \$130,000, split between two people, to look after a historic lighthouse-turned-inn, the media reported. The East Brother Light Station is located in the San Pablo Bay, part of the larger San Francisco Bay. CNN reported on Tuesday. The lighthouse, which dates back to 1874, was established to help sailors navigate the misty waters surrounding San Francisco. Automated in the 1960s, the lighthouse is still operational. It is owned by the US Coast Guard and maintained by non-profit group East Brother Lighthouse Inc. It's been a West Coast bed and breakfast staple since 1979. Job applicants need to have experience in hospitality and a seafaring nature, along with a US Coast Guard commercial boat operator's licence, according to the East Brother website. Other job requirements include serving high-quality food, housekeeping and ferrying guests from the mainland to the island. IANS

Aussie PM Tripped Up by Doctored Footwear

Australia's prime minister laughed off a clumsy attempt by aides to Photoshop him wearing snazzier, and markedly cleaner, footwear on Wednesday, saying he was perfectly happy with his battered old kicks. A snap of Scott Morrison with his family - which featured as the banner heading on the prime minister's official website - drew public attention thanks to his obviously doctored and implausibly white sneakers. Facing widespread mockery on social media, including suggestion that the fake shoes were both for the left foot, Morrison decided to jump into the furor feet first. "Message to my Department," he jocularly tweeted. "I didn't ask for the shoeshine." "But if you must Photoshop, please focus on the hair (lack thereof), not the feet!" Morrison posted a first person view of his legs and tattered old black and white - once white - trainers. "Here they are in all their glory - my footwear of choice whenever I can get out of a suit," he said. The prime ministerial shoes were also resurrected in a more authentic version of the family photo on his website. AFP



London Retains Tech Startup Crown

London is Europe's most attractive city for technology startups. With Brexit looming, the mayor's promotional agency London & Partners said that £1.8 billion was invested in fledgling tech businesses in 2018. Here are the top 3 cities:

1 LONDON	2 BERLIN	3 PARIS
£1.8 billion	€936.53 million	€797.04 million

Saudi Teen Granted Refugee Status

The UN has found that a woman who fled Saudi Arabia is a legitimate refugee and has asked Australia to take her in, officials in Canberra said on Wednesday. The UNHCR has referred Ms Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunni to Australia for consideration for refugee resettlement, "the Department of Home Affairs confirmed in a statement. The decision marks a significant victory for the 18-year-old, who is currently in Bangkok where she says Thai authorities attempted to block her from travelling to Australia to claim asylum. The home affairs department said it will "consider this referral in the usual way, as it does with all UNHCR referrals". Australia has strongly hinted that Qunni's request will be accepted. "If she is found to be a refugee, then we will give very, very serious consideration to a humanitarian visa," health minister Greg Hunt had said before the UN determination was public. AFP

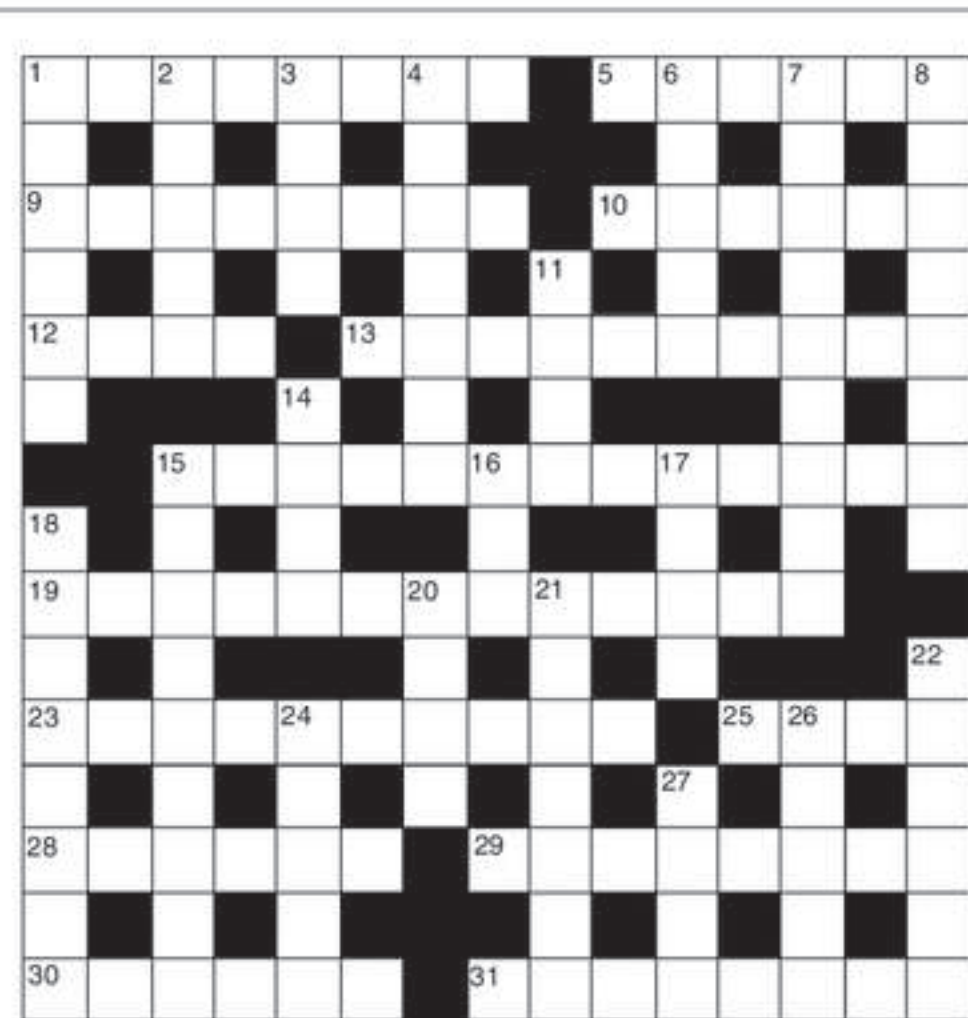
Wife of Norwegian Millionaire Missing, Ransom Demanded



The wife of a Norwegian multi-millionaire missing for 10 weeks is believed to have been kidnapped and a large ransom has been demanded for her release, local media reported on Wednesday. Married to a businessman who made his fortune in real estate and the energy sector, 68-year-old Anne-Elisabeth Falkevik disappeared on October 31, the Verdens Gang (VG) newspaper said. A ransom demand for €9 million (\$10.3 million) in cryptocurrency has been issued for her release, VG said. The kidnappers have threatened to use violence against her if her family does not meet their demands. The missing woman's husband, Tom Hagen, 68, is Norway's 172nd richest man, according to the magazine Kapital, with an estimated fortune of 1.7 billion kroner (\$200 million). A real estate investor, he owns 70% of electricity company Elkraft which he co-founded in 1992, Norwegian media reported. AFP

Crossword

7300



- Officer supports very old unit of force (4)
- Nuclear fuel constituent? President briefly keeps it on island (7)
- First letter received by local pharmacy (5)
- Romantic sort recruits one who sells boxes in US? (9)
- Spring nearly dark? Just about (4-4)
- Attempt to restrict Irish government payment (4)
- Small bed for Hamish perhaps (4)
- Approved everything below ground surrounding area (9)
- One's held by master of ceremonies (3)
- A big shot in cricket upset league (4)
- One's had dinner among elderly and lonely (8)
- 10 members of ill-fated dynasty (4)
- Pub commercials involving Republican showed guts (7)
- Cover religious books chap's binding (6)
- Note reverberates somewhat when raised (5)
- You're probably up a gum tree if you spot this (5)
- Journey to ancient city (4)

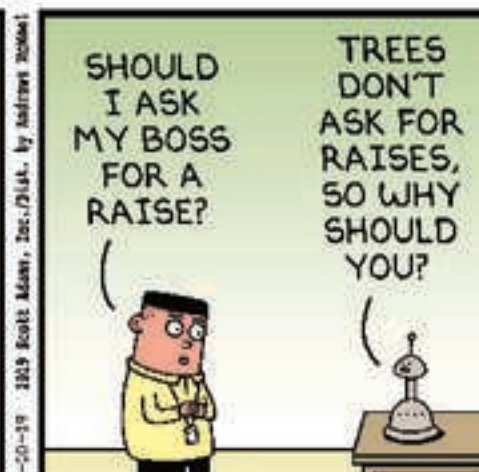
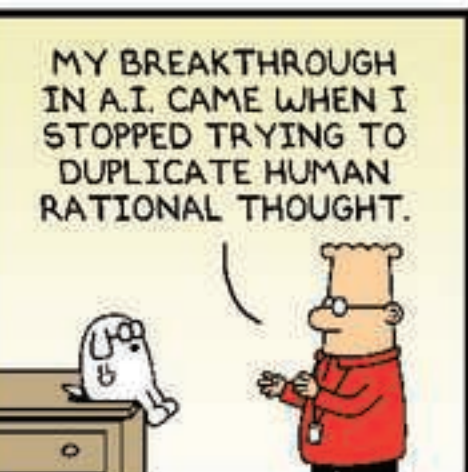
SOLUTION TO No. 7299

ACROSS : 6 Larger-than-life. 9 Asthma. 10 Thorough. 11 Ice house. 13 Immure. 15 Nonage. 17 Madras. 19 Octavo. 20 Penknife. 22 Sombrero. 24 Weepee. 25 Estuary. English. DOWN : 1 Glass-conscious. 2 Arch. 3 Deja vu. 4 Majolica. 5 Alto. 7 Toter 8 Figures of eight. 12 Henna. 14 Moron. 16 Geometry. 18 Oppose. 21 New Age. 23 Bout. 25 Emit.

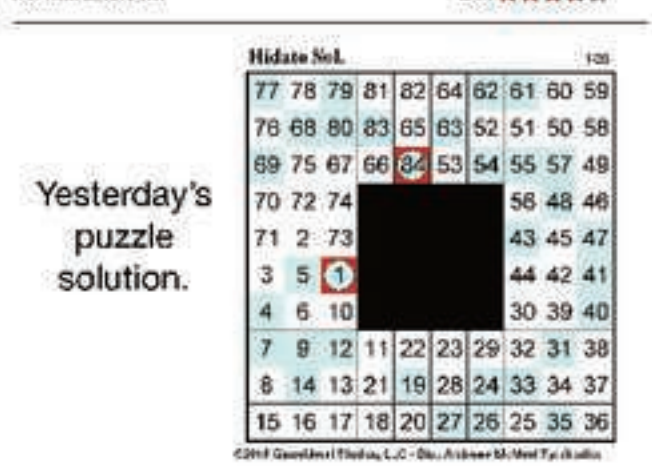
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Dilbert

by S Adams



HIDATO FIND THE PATH - SOLVE THE PUZZLE



7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 uses soap and water (6)	
2 gym storage (8)	
3 Cannes attendees (10)	
4 related to ruling families (8)	
5 Sally of the comics (5)	
6 masses, as of water (6)	
7 Fatty Arbuckle's given name (6)	

PH

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IL

TH

ES

BO

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TIC

NE

ROS

Yesterday's Answers: 1. HUSKS 2. BOMKERS 3. GRAPE 4. ELBOW 5. TICKET 6. SAMOSAS 7. WITHHOLDING