

QUICK HITS

Pompeo's North Korean Counterpart Booked on Flight to Washington

SEOUL: Three North Korean officials, including its top envoy involved in negotiations with the United States, are booked on a flight to Washington from Beijing on Thursday, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and senior North Korean official Kim Yong Chol are expected to meet on Thursday or Friday in the US capital to discuss a second summit between their leaders, CNN and South Korean media reported citing sources familiar with the issue. A meeting could mean the two sides are nearing a compromise after months of standoff over how to move forward in ending North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes. Kim Yong Chol, along with North Korea's vice foreign minister Choe Son Hui, and a third official, have reservations on a United Airlines flight leaving Beijing on Thursday evening for Washington, Yonhap said on Wednesday. Reuters

'China Using Media, Think Tanks and Tourism to Influence Public Opinion'

WASHINGTON: China has been using its massive investment in media, foreign educational institutions and think tanks in addition to the little known field of tourism to influence global public opinion in its favour, the Pentagon has said. In a report titled "Assessment on United States Defence Implications of China's Expanding Global Access", the Pentagon said China has made both direct and indirect investments in news media organisations abroad. PTI

Anger at Malaysia Textbook Telling Girls to 'Protect Sex Organs'

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's government will alter an elementary-school textbook which suggested girls should dress modestly to prevent sexual assault, authorities said on Wednesday, after it sparked widespread anger. Social media exploded with outrage after images circulated of a section of the book, which is used by nine-year-olds, entitled "Saving one's modesty". It featured a series of pictures of a fictional girl called Amira, whose parents advise her to protect "the modesty of her sexual organs" by wearing the correct attire. Activists said the book was teaching children from a young age that female victims of sex attacks only had themselves to blame. "We are appalled," said Meera Samanther, vice-president of rights group Women's Aid Organisation. AFP

FB Brings Stricter Ad Rules Ahead of Polls

To extend political ad tools for curbing election interference to India, Nigeria, Ukraine and EU where polls are due this year

SAN FRANCISCO Facebook Inc told Reuters on Tuesday that it would extend some of its political advertising rules and tools for curbing election interference to India, Nigeria, Ukraine and the European Union before significant votes in the next few months. As the largest social media service in nearly every big country, Facebook since 2016 has become a means for politicians and their adversaries to distribute fake news and other propaganda.

Buying Facebook ads can widen the audience for such material, but some of those influence efforts may violate election rules and the company's policies. Under pressure from authorities around the world, Facebook last year introduced several initiatives to increase oversight of political ads. Beginning on Wednesday in Nigeria, only advertisers located in the country will be able to run electoral ads, mirroring a policy unveiled during an Irish referendum last May. Katie Harbath, Facebook's director of global politics and outreach, said in an interview. The same policy will take effect in Ukraine in February. Nigeria



FACEBOOK HAS SINCE 2016 BECOME A MEANS FOR POLITICIANS AND THEIR ADVERSARIES TO DISTRIBUTE FAKE NEWS

holds a presidential election on February 16, while Ukraine will follow on March 31. In India, which votes for parliament this spring, Facebook will place electoral ads in a searchable online library starting from next month, said Rob Leathern, a director of product management at the company. "We're learning from every country," Leathern said. "We know we're not going to be perfect, but our goal is continuing, ongoing improvement." Facebook believes that holding the ads in a library for seven years is a key part of fighting interference, he added.

The Indian archive will contain contact information for some ad buyers or their official regulatory certificates. Reuters

'May Needs to Extend Brexit Deadline'

EDINBURGH If British Prime Minister Theresa May wants a cross-party compromise on Brexit, the first thing she needs to do is to extend the March 29 time limit, Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said on Wednesday. The day after a parliamentary loss by the worst margin for a British government in modern times, the pressure is on May to show she can find a workaround with opposition political parties to take Britain out of its current relationship with the world's largest trading bloc.

May "doesn't seem to be prepared to abandon or move any of her red lines in order to open any space for new ideas," says Sturgeon. The EU says it could extend the Brexit deadline if London provided a valid reason. Sturgeon added, however, that the political complexities of delivering Brexit meant that the most credible option was now to offer a second EU referendum vote.

But asked whether her Scottish National Party could support a Norway-style customs union arrangement. Reuters

Labour Calls on May to Try a Brexit Compromise to Get Deal Passed

LONDON Prime Minister Theresa May could eventually get a Brexit deal through parliament if she negotiated a compromise with the opposition Labour Party, the second most powerful man in the party told Reuters on Wednesday. May's Brexit deal suffered a crushing defeat in parliament on Tuesday, triggering political chaos that could lead to disorderly exit from the EU, a reversal of the 2016 decision to leave or a compromise deal of some sort.

The Labour Party's finance policy chief, John McDonnell, said Labour would support May if she agreed to stay in a permanent customs union with the EU, a close relationship with its single market and greater protections for workers and consumers. "We will support a deal that brings the country back together,"



protects jobs and supports the economy," McDonnell said. "We have had that open door policy all the way through. For two years she has not contacted, not approached us, not reached out." With the ruling Conservative party divided, the opposition party holds great influence over the eventual outcome of Brexit. It is difficult to see how any Brexit

plan can pass the House of Commons without the support of some of Labour's 256 lawmakers. In an indication of the scale of the political crisis gripping Britain, May has indicated she is ready to reach out to opposition lawmakers in cross-party talks to find an amicable divorce deal to leave the EU. But Labour like much of Britain is deeply split over Brexit, with many younger supporters in urban areas enthusiastic supporters of the EU, while many supporters in the party's traditional heartlands back leaving the bloc. A group of 71 Labour lawmakers on Wednesday urged their leader Jeremy Corbyn to swing behind a second referendum on remaining part of the EU. Corbyn is far more wary of a calling a second referendum than many of his centrist Labour colleagues. Reuters

Apple Supplier O-film Tech Plumbs Near 3-yr Low on Bleak Outlook



BEIJING Shares in Chinese optical and opto-electronic components maker O-film Tech Co slumped as much as 9.3% to their lowest since March 2016, amid dismal smartphone industry outlook in China, and as Apple cut forecast. The company, which produces touch display, optical, sensor and smart car products, is a supplier to Apple and Huawei. The stock has pulled back nearly 70% from a record high of 26.12 yuan hit on November 14, 2017, and

is set for a fifth straight monthly loss. Smartphone shipments in China fell 12-15.5% last year, market data showed, suggesting a bleak outlook for the sector at a time when behemoths Apple and Samsung Electronics have already issued their forecasts. Apple Inc took the rare step in early January of cutting its quarterly sales forecast, with chief executive

officer Tim Cook blaming slowing iPhone sales in China. The Chinese smartphone market, the world's largest, could shrink another 3% this year, market research firm Canalys said, in what would be a third straight yearly decline. As of January 15, investors held a total of 51.3 million O-film shares via the stock connect linking Hong Kong and Shanghai, a programme designed to allow foreign investors further access to China's A-share market. Reuters

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

1 in 3 UN Workers Experienced Sexual Harassment: Survey

United Nations One in three staff and non-staff personnel at the UN experienced sexual harassment in the last two years, a new report released by the world body said, amid the global #MeToo movement against sexual harassment and assault. The confidential survey obtained information on sexual harassment across the United Nations system and related entities globally. The survey was completed by 30,364 staff and non-staff personnel from across 31 entities, representing a 17% response rate overall. The survey 'Safe Space: Survey on Sexual Harassment in our Workplace' found that one in three (33%) respondents reported that they had experienced at least one instance of sexual harassment in the last two years. Overall, 10,032 out of the total 30,364 respondents (33%) had experienced an incident of sexual harassment in the last two years. One in five survey respondents (20.2%) reported experiencing at least one type of sexual harassment prior to 2016. PTI

Seoul Seizes N K Korean Paintings due to Sanctions



SEOUL South Korean officials said on Wednesday they have stopped businessmen from bringing North Korean paintings into the country that a report said were purchased at an art studio under UN sanctions. Observers say similar incidents could occur frequently as South Korea's liberal government pushes for deeper exchanges with North Korea. The Korea Customs Service said it has nine North Korean paintings that an unidentified number of businessmen tried to bring into the country after a trip to Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, last November. It said the businessmen did not have the required South Korean government permission to bring in North Korean products. South Korea's largest newspaper, Chosun Ilbo, reported Wednesday that the paintings were purchased from Pyongyang's Mansudae art studio, which is on a UN sanctions blacklist. The studio is subject to an asset freeze and travel ban because of its dispatch of artists and other workers abroad to do projects to generate revenue for the North Korean government. AP

Vietnam's Bamboo Takes Flight

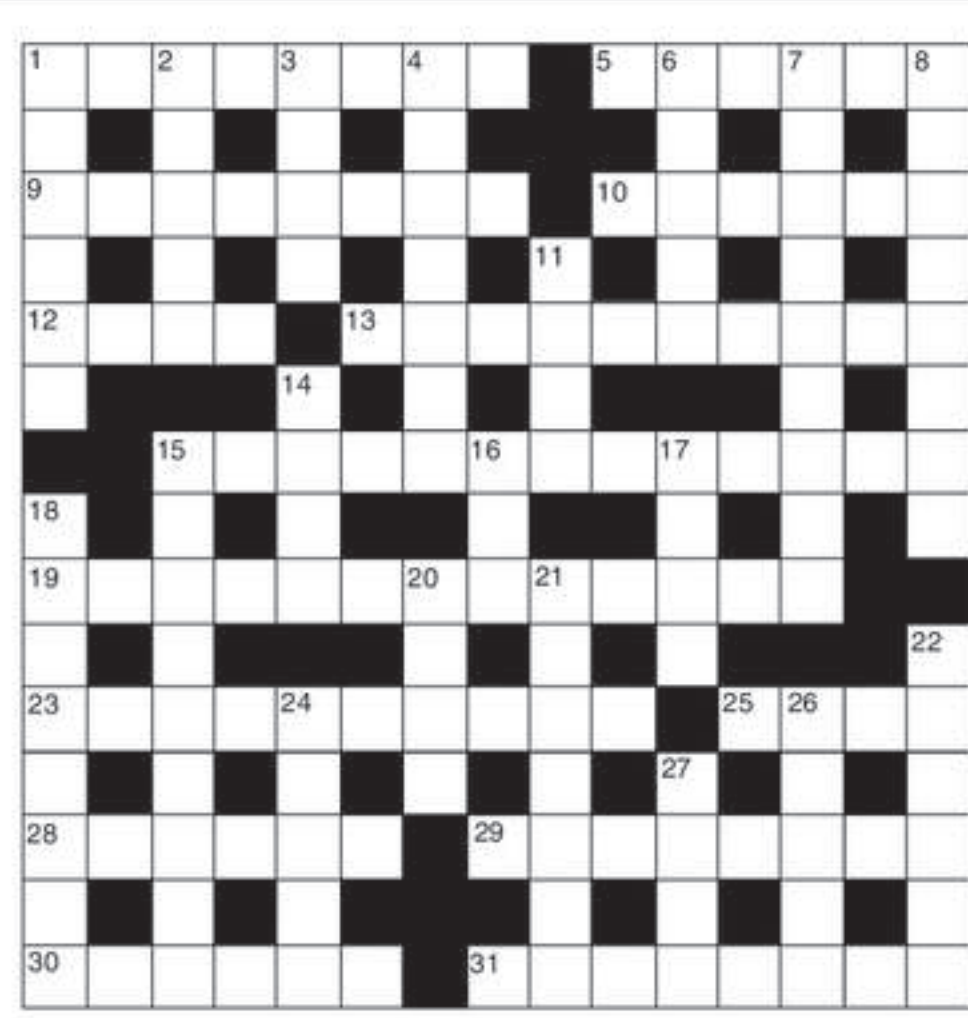
HANOI Vietnam's newest commercial carrier Bamboo Airways took flight Wednesday, officially entering Southeast Asia's crowded aviation sector where it will face stiff competition from established players. Air travel in the region has boomed in recent years as appetites – and budgets – for travel have soared among spendthrift flyers. Bamboo is hoping to tap into the saturated market by offering routes to lesser-known destinations in Vietnam currently underserved by heavy-hitters like Vietnam Airlines and budget carrier Vietjet. "Bamboo Airways will become a five-star airline to serve domestic and international passengers," Bamboo owner Trinh Van Quyet said at Hanoi's Noi Bai airport after the inaugural flight landed from Ho Chi Minh City Wednesday morning. AFP

Pope to Attend Sex Abuse Summit

VATICAN CITY Pope Francis has confirmed he will attend all sessions of his high-stakes sex abuse prevention summit next month that will include plenary meetings, witness testimony and a penitential Mass. The Vatican said on Wednesday that the organisers of the February 21-24 meeting met last week in Rome and briefed the pope on their preparations. Francis tasked the former Vatican spokesman, the Reverend Federico Lombardi, to moderate the plenary sessions. The meeting organisers have urged bishops to meet with victims before they come. AP

Crossword

7306



- ACROSS
- 1 My alternative route cuts borders of Surrey – pity (8)
 - 5 Catch colleague backing off after recession (6)
 - 9 Most remote thefts abroad are nearly hidden (8)
 - 10 Time to send out paper (6)
 - 12 Hat lost at first during match (4)
 - 13 Police raid controversial magazine perhaps (10)
 - 15 Like plantsman's area for putting on felt (5-8)
 - 19 Papers I'd pack round object (8,5)
 - 23 Person who works well, creating vault (10)
 - 25 I prepare large image (4)
 - 28 Incomplete task nearly all performed by singers (6)
 - 29 Lucy ran off round institute of Cookery (8)
 - 30 Gothic writer describes crazy shock treatment (6)
 - 31 Clothing department males use of offensive language (8)

- DOWN
- 1 Iron tank top in, for instance, shelter (6)
 - 2 Good marks based on exam (5)
 - 3 Amateur reserved grey (4)
 - 4 D-lister maybe isn't completely skint, I hear (3-4)
 - 6 Immature dragonfly agitates Diana (5)
 - 7 Snooker items needed to wrap up rare healthy breaks? (4-5)
 - 8 Prevent college blocking opening (8)
 - 11 A sample of Frenchified audio equipment (2-2)
 - 14 Former PM's endless passion (4)
 - 15 Verdant heath up where actors can relax (5,4)
 - 16 It may bite filly in odd places (3)
 - 17 Resident in Berlin ignores an originator of disease (4)
 - 18 Fancy patching cover for retirement (8)
 - 20 Dessert Italian restaurant served up ... (4)
 - 21 ... to eat? Add in ice cream (7)
 - 22 Competitor makes plea, changing sides (6)
 - 24 Small firm's big building in London (5)
 - 26 Duck well-known bowler (5)
 - 27 Heckle that man's son (4)

SOLUTION TO No. 7304

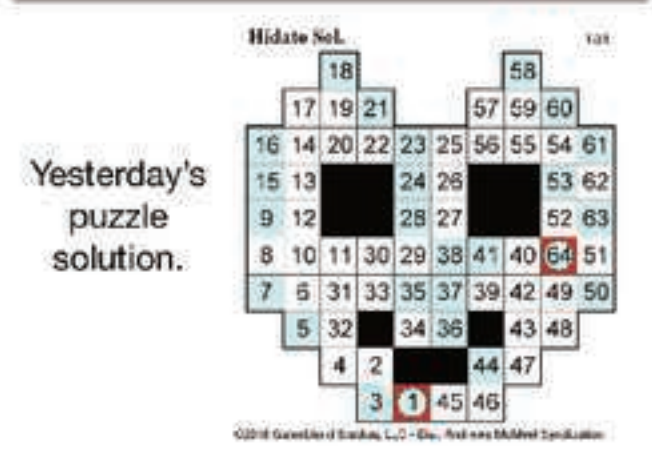
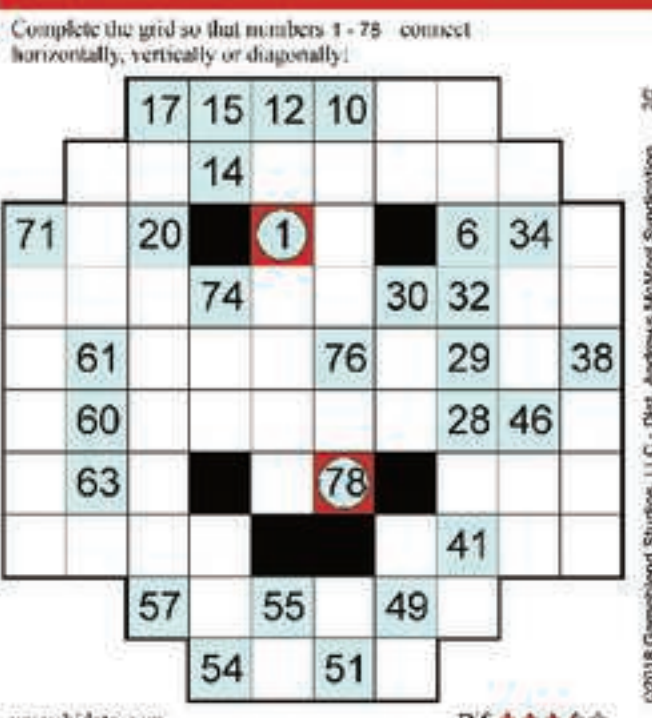
ACROSS: 6 Wallpaper music. 9 Astern. 10 Involved. 11 Cassette. 13 Set off. 15 Mettle. 17 Mystic. 19 Ski run. 20 Absentee. 22 Dianthus. 24 Unlock. 26 Leave of absence. DOWN: 1 Swiss army knife. 2 Blue. 3 Spinet. 4 Travesty. 5 Pull. 7 Primer. 8 Inefficiencies. 12 Satyr. 14 Titan. 16 Lens hood. 18 Nausea. 21 Squash. 23 Nave. 25 Lino.

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 this puzzle.

CLUES

- 1 sweet papier-mâché target (8)
- 2 prepare, as tea (5)
- 3 tongue, technically (6)
- 4 undiplomatic (8)
- 5 cause great wonder (5)
- 6 Czech cybersecurity software (5)
- 7 lack of visibility from snow (8)

SOLUTIONS

- 1. TARGET
- 2. TEA
- 3. TONGUE
- 4. UNDIPLOMATIC
- 5. WONDER
- 6. CYBERSECURITY
- 7. VISIBILITY

PI	SS	GL	TA	SA
EET	AV	UT	AMA	IT
ZE	WH	CT	OS	ST
TA	EO	NA	AST	LE

Yesterday's Answers: 1. DAYTIME 2. CRACKLE 3. WAVY 4. DISINFECTS 5. SPLAYED 6. POINTS 7. MIMICRY