



JOHN MALKOVICH TO STAR IN A PLAY INSPIRED BY DISGRACED MOVIE PRODUCER HARVEY WEINSTEIN

THE HARDER THE CONFLICT, THE MORE GLORIOUS THE TRIUMPH — THOMAS PAINE



EL CHAPO TELLS JUDGE HE WON'T TAKE WITNESS STAND IN HIS DEFENCE AT US DRUG-TRAFFICKING TRIAL

Huawei, top executive face criminal charges in the US

China Co Accused Of Trying To Steal Trade Secrets, Obstruct Investigation, Evade Sanctions On Iran

David E Sanger, Katie Benner & Matthew Goldstein

Washington: The US justice department unveiled sweeping charges on Monday against the Chinese telecom firm Huawei and its chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, outlining a decade-long attempt by the company to steal trade secrets, obstruct a criminal investigation and evade economic sanctions on Iran.

The pair of indictments come amid a broad campaign by the US to try to thwart China's biggest telecom equipment maker. Officials have long suspected Huawei of working to advance Beijing's global ambitions and undermine US' interests and have begun taking steps to curb its international presence.

The charges underscore Washington's determination to prove that Huawei poses a national security threat and to convince other nations that it cannot be trusted to build their 5G networks. The indictments, based in part on the firm's internal emails, describe a plot to steal testing equipment from a competitor T-Mobile laboratories in Washington. They also cite internal memos, obtained from Meng, that prosecutors said link her to a bank fraud that helped Huawei pro-



Huawei has denied violating laws.

fit by evading Iran sanctions. Acting AG Matthew G Whitaker said the US would seek to have Meng extradited from Canada, where she was detained last year at the request of the US. The new charges come at a sensitive moment as a high-level Chinese trade delegation has arrived in Washington for two days of talks aimed at resolving a trade war between the two countries. Trump administration officials have said Meng's detention will not affect the talks, but the timing of the indictment is likely to further strain ties between the countries.

Meng's arrest has outraged the Chinese government, which has since arrested two Canadians, in apparent retaliation. The indictment now presents Canada with a politically charged decision: whether to extradite Meng to face the fraud charges, or make a le-

gal or political determination to send her back to Beijing.

China's foreign ministry on Tuesday called on the US and Canada to let Meng go.

A spokesman for Huawei, Joe Kelly, said it "is not aware of any wrongdoing by Meng, and believes the US courts will ultimately reach the same conclusion". The company also denied violating American laws. The indictment claimed that Huawei defrauded four large banks into clearing transactions with Iran in violation of international sanctions through a subsidiary called Skycom. Federal authorities did not identify the banks, but in an earlier court proceeding in Canada after Meng's arrest, prosecutors had identified one of the banks as HSBC.

The most serious new allegation in the indictment is the contention by federal prosecutors that Huawei sought to impede the probe into the company's attempt to evade economic sanctions on Iran by destroying or concealing evidence. The indictment said Huawei moved employees out of the US so they could not be called as witnesses before a grand jury in the Brooklyn. Meng's lawyer in the US, Reid Weingarten, a lawyer at Steptoe & Johnson in Washington, did not comment on the indictment. **NVT**

Stop suppression of Chinese firms, says Beijing

Saibal Dasgupta | TNN

Beijing: China reacted sharply against the US after Washington slapped criminal charges against Huawei. It described the US move as unreasonable suppression of Chinese companies.

"The US has been using state power to smear and attack specific Chinese enterprises," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said. There are strong political motives behind the US actions, the ministry said. "We strongly urge the US to stop unreasonable suppression of Chinese companies, including Huawei, and treat Chinese enterprises fairly and objectively."

India recently invited Huawei to test its 5G technology in the country. But the company has come under pressure in the UK, Australia and Poland, besides US and Canada where it is suspected of involvement in espionage. The US has charged Huawei with selling equipment to Iran despite sanctions and with stealing robotic technology from T-Mobile Inc. Huawei has denied the first charge and said it had already settled the second issue with T-Mobile in 2017.

May calls for reopening Brexit pact with EU in bid to win over hardliners

Stephen Castle

London: Facing a series of critical votes in Parliament, PM Theresa May on Tuesday raised the stakes by promising to reopen Britain's withdrawal agreement with the European Union, putting her on a direct collision course with the bloc.

May told her cabinet, according to an official spokesman, that she would try to renegotiate parts of the 585-page text, painstakingly negotiated over more than two years, to secure changes in the so-called Irish backstop plan that aims to ensure that goods cross the Irish frontier without any customs checks. In doing so, May yielded to the demands of Brexit hardliners in her Conservative Party who hate the Irish backstop plan, which they fear will tie Britain to the bloc's trade rules indefinitely.

EU officials have repeatedly made clear that there is no prospect of reopening the withdrawal agreement, and that at most they can offer only clarifications to reassure British lawmakers that the backstop will eventually disappear.



Anti-Brexit demonstrators protest outside the Houses of Parliament

Nonetheless, faced with a series of votes in Parliament tonight on amendments to her plan, May appears to be gambling that the only hope of saving her plan for Brexit, which was rejected overwhelmingly by lawmakers this month, is to ask the EU for something that it has always said was impossible.

One of those amendments would effectively rule out a "no-deal" Brexit if May cannot persuade lawmakers to approve her plan by the end of next month. The Labour Party has put its weight behind the

measure, which May fears would weaken her in negotiations with the EU. Many lawmakers suspect that May is simply trying to run down the clock before bringing back a version of her deal to Parliament, tweaked with only cosmetic changes, and presenting it as the only alternative to an economically damaging departure without any deal.

After almost two years of negotiations over Brexit, Britain faces its biggest political crisis in decades, with Parliament plainly opposed to May's

plans but apparently unable to find consensus on an alternative approach. The Boles-Cooper amendment is designed to head this off by giving May until the end of February to negotiate in Brussels, revise her plan and win approval for it from lawmakers, and ordering her to try to postpone Brexit if she fails. May would be required to request an extension of negotiations with the European Union under Article 50 of the bloc's treaty — something that all member governments would need to approve.

The amendment, drafted by Nick Boles, a Conservative lawmaker, and Yvette Cooper, from Labour, is important not just in its substance but also how it overturns years of protocol by giving Parliament the power to legislate to stop a disorderly, possibly chaotic, British exit.

Analysts believe that the vote will be close: Some lawmakers from the opposition Labour Party are likely to reject the measure, because they fear it might anger Brexit-supporting voters whose support they need, particularly in the English North and Midlands. **NVT**

US intel report contradicts Trump

Countering Top Tenets Of Prez's Foreign Policy, Report Says North Korea Unlikely To Give Up N-Stockpiles, Iran Not Trying To Develop N-Weapons

Julian E Barnes & David E. Sanger

Washington: A new American intelligence assessment of global threats has concluded that North Korea is "unlikely to give up" all of its nuclear stockpiles, and that Iran is not "currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons-development activity" needed to make a bomb, directly contradicting two top tenets of President Trump's foreign policy.

Daniel Coats, the director of national intelligence, also challenged Trump's insistence that the Islamic State had been defeated, a key rationale for his decision to exit from Syria. The terror group, the annual "Worldwide Threat Assessment" report to Congress concluded, "still commands thousands of fighters in Iraq and Syria," and maintain eight branches and a dozen networks around the world.

Trump is expected to meet next month with Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, in a second round of direct negotiations aimed at ridding



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Pyongyang of its nuclear weapons. But Coats told the Senate Intelligence Committee on Tuesday that "we currently assess North Korea will seek to retain its WMD capability and is unlikely to completely give up its nuclear weapons and production capability." "Its leaders ultimately view nuclear weapons as critical to regime survival," Coats said.

Coats said Iran continued to sponsor terrorism in Europe and West Asia, supporting

Trump, Pelosi agree on SOTU speech date

President Trump on Monday accepted House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's invitation to deliver his State of the Union speech on February 5. "It is my great honor to accept," Trump said in a letter to Pelosi. The speech had initially been scheduled for January 29, but Pelosi postponed it over shutdown crisis. It was the first known time that a speaker had rescinded an invitation to deliver the State of the Union. **AP**

Houthi in Yemen and Shia militants in Iraq. He also said that he believed Iran hardliners would continue to challenge centrists rivals.

"We do not believe Iran is currently undertaking the key activities we judge necessary to produce a nuclear device," Coats said, but he added that Iranian officials have "publicly threatened to push the boundaries" of the nuclear deal it struck with world powers in 2015 if it did not see the

benefits it expected. Trump withdrew the US from that agreement last year. He called it "defective at its core" and said if the deal remained in place, Iran "will be on the cusp of acquiring the world's most dangerous weapons."

Perhaps the strongest rebuke of Trump's security priorities comes in what is missing from the report: Any rationale for building a wall along the southern border, which Trump has advertised as among the most critical security threats facing the US. The first mention of Mexico and drug cartels comes on page 18 of the 42-page assessment, well after a range of other, more pressing threats are reviewed.

Most pressing, as it has been for the past five years, are cybersecurity threats to the US. For the first time, the report concluded that China is now positioned to conduct effective cyberattacks against American infrastructure, and specifically cited Beijing's ability to cut off natural gas pipelines, at least briefly. **NVT**

Suman Kumari becomes Pak's first Hindu woman judge

Islamabad/Karachi: Suman Kumari has become the first Hindu woman to be appointed as a civil judge in Muslim-majority Pakistan. Suman, who hails from Qambar-Shahdadkot in Sindh province, will serve in her native district.

She passed her LLB examination from Hyderabad and did her masters in law from Karachi's Szabist University. "I have entered the field of law because I know that in the backward areas of Sindh poor people need a lot of advice and assistance in legal matters," she said. "My father and my family supported me a lot as in our community it is not easy for women to enter such fields," she added.

Her father, Dr Pawan Kumar Bodan, wants his daughter to provide free legal assistance to the poor people specially from the Hindu community. "Suman has opted for a challenging profession, but I am sure she will go places through hard work and honesty," the father said.

This is not the first time that a person from the Hindu community has been appointed as a judge. The first judge from the community was Justice Rana Bhagandas, who served as the acting chief justice of Pakistan for brief periods between 2005 and 2007. Last year, Hindu woman Mahesh Kumar Malani became the first non-Muslim to be elected on a general seat in the National Assembly. **PTI**

Aasia Bibi free to leave Pak after SC upholds acquittal

Omer Farooq Khan | TNN

Islamabad: Aasia Bibi, the Christian woman who spent nearly a decade on death row for a blasphemy accusation, is free. The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Tuesday dismissed a review petition against its October 2018 verdict that had overturned her conviction.

The blasphemy-related offence carries mandatory death penalty under Pakistani law. A review petition was filed on November 1, 2018, by Qari Muhammad Salam, a cleric who had filed the alleged case against Bibi in 2009, requesting the top court to reconsider its decision. On Tuesday, Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa heading the three-member bench of the SC said the review petition "is dismissed on merit". The petitioner's lawyer demanded that a larger bench comprising Islamic scholars be constituted to hear the petition. However, the CJ rejected the plea saying, "We are not hearing the case again, the lawyer was unable to point out a single error in the judgment."

The rejection of the petition has removed the last legal hurdle in the years-long fake blasphemy case and potentially paved the way for Bibi to leave the country to join her family in exile in Canada. The SC had cleared Bibi of blasphemy charges in October last year.

AROUND THE WORLD



England and Wales are on alert for heaviest snow of winter. The Met office has warned that by Wednesday temperatures will plummet under clear skies, leading to widespread frost and icy roads

Woman spends weekend stuck in elevator, rescued

An employee of a New York billionaire's family spent the weekend stuck in the elevator of the family's townhouse before she was rescued on Monday, officials said. The homeowners spent the weekend away and discovered the woman was trapped when they arrived back home on Monday, according to the New York Times. The townhouse is owned by Warren Stephens, the head of the financial firm Stephens Inc, who according to Forbes is Stephens is worth an estimated \$2.6 billion. The woman was stuck between the 2nd and 3rd floors. Frank Thomas, a vice-president at

Stephens Inc, said the incident was being investigated "and appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that something like this never happens again". The woman was in good condition, Berke said.

Rush to collect free food coupons kills 2 in Malaysia

A stampede in a Malaysian market that killed two elderly women as people rushed to collect free food coupons will be investigated by police, an official said on Tuesday. Almost 1,000 people descended on the indoor market in Kuala Lumpur on Monday to get their hands on 200 vouchers for a buffet meal during next month's Lunar New Year festivities. Two women, aged 85 and 78, collapsed in the crush. Attempts to resuscitate them failed. Two other women

who fainted during the rush, were revived. "We will investigate whether the organisers had put in place safety measures," police chief Shaharuddin Abdullah said.

911 dispatcher helps boy with his maths homework

A police dispatcher in Indiana had to know her numbers when a boy called 911 seeking help with his homework. Antonia Bundy answered the call from the boy, who said he had "a bad day at school". It seemed the boy had "tons of homework" and was having trouble with fractions. In the recording Bundy can be heard helping the child solve the equation: three-fourths plus one-fourth. She tells him to take out a piece of paper to figure out the answer: one. The boy then thanks her and apologises for calling 911.

'Come back, global warming!' Trump tweets on cold snap

President Donald Trump has again appeared to fundamentally misunderstand climate change by suggesting extreme cold weather in the US is evidence global warming does not exist. "In the beautiful Midwest, wind chill temperatures are reaching minus 60 degrees, the coldest ever recorded," Trump tweeted on Monday. "In coming days, expected to get even colder. People can't last outside even for minutes. What the hell is going on with Global Warming (sic)? Please come back fast, we need you!" he added. It follows a number of recent tweets by the president expressing disregard for global temperature increases.

His latest outburst is a reference to a polar vortex currently moving through the American Midwest, blasting much of the country with sub-zero temperatures and arctic winds. Chicago will take the main brunt of the cold weather, the weather service said, with wind chills as low as -46C expected by Tuesday through Thursday. **THE INDEPENDENT**

US slaps oil curbs on Venezuela state oil firm

Edward Wong & Nicholas Casey

Washington: The Trump administration imposed sanctions against Venezuela's state-owned oil company on Monday, seeking to cripple the government of embattled President Nicolas Maduro by cutting off its main source of cash. The move marked the first punitive step by the US to force Maduro to give up power since the opposition leader, Juan Guaido, declared himself interim president last week.

The sanctions prohibit most American businesses from engaging in transactions with the oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela, SA, or PdVSA. Administration officials said the financial penalties are expected to block \$7 billion in assets and result in \$11 billion in export losses over the next year for Venezuela's government.

In Caracas Maduro immediately denounced the sanctions as "unilateral, illegal, immoral and criminal". "You will have blood on your hands, President Trump," Maduro said. He said he had ordered PdVSA to pursue legal action to retain its assets. **NVT**



Venezuela's chief prosecutor said on Tuesday he had asked the Supreme Court to open a preliminary investigation into self-proclaimed interim president Juan Guaido (above), as well to freeze the opposition leader's accounts and impose a travel ban on him

Hint to Maduro? '5,000 troops to Colombia,' reads Bolton notepad

Acting defence secretary Pat Shanahan on Tuesday would not rule out sending US military forces to Colombia or the region in connection with the political upheaval in Venezuela. Shanahan told reporters that he has not spoken to national security adviser John Bolton about sending troops to Colombia. But he said he would not comment when asked if he had other conversations about such a deployment plan or if he could rule it out. Bolton had "5,000 troops to Colombia" written on a notepad he held during a news conference on Monday announcing new sanctions on Venezuela. The White House, when asked about the note, later said in an email that "as the President has said, all options are on the table." Colombia, which shares a 2,200-kilometre border with Venezuela, is backing Juan Guaido. Asked about Bolton's note, Shanahan joked, "I didn't bring a notepad today." Colombia foreign minister Carlos Holmes said his government does not know the "importance and reason" for Bolton's note. **AP**