

QUICK HITS

Singapore Vows to Prosecute American over HIV Data Leak

Singapore: Singapore vowed on Tuesday it will bring back and prosecute an American man accused of leaking data on thousands of people with HIV, after the breach caused widespread anger. The health ministry announced last month that confidential information of 14,200 people diagnosed with the virus that causes AIDS had been dumped online, with foreigners a majority of those affected. Mikhy Farrera Brochez, an HIV-positive man who used to live in the city-state, is believed to have obtained the information from his Singaporean doctor partner, who had access to the ministry's HIV Registry. The data leak, which included people's HIV status, names and addresses, has provoked an outcry, especially among the LGBT community and NGOs involved in the fight against AIDS. AFP

China Calls US Concerns over Huawei 'Groundless'

Beijing: Beijing called the latest US warning against using Huawei equipment "groundless" on Tuesday, as the Chinese telecom giant faces espionage fears in a growing number of countries. The world's second-largest smartphone maker and biggest producer of telecommunications gear has been under fire in recent months after the arrest of a top executive in Canada and a global campaign by Washington to blacklist its equipment. "The US has spared no effort in unscrupulously fabricating all kinds of groundless charges," said Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying at a regular press briefing in Beijing Tuesday. She also accused the US of "sowing discord" between China and other countries, and called the actions of Washington "neither fair nor moral". AFP

Trial of Catalan Separatist Leaders Begins in Spain

Madrid: Twelve Catalan separatist leaders arrived at the Supreme Court here on Tuesday to stand trial over their alleged roles in the regional independence crisis that pitched Spain into its worst political turmoil for four decades. If convicted, some could face up to 25 years in prison, the BBC reported. The Catalonia crisis is considered the most serious to hit Spain since the era of fascist dictator Francisco Franco, who died in 1975. The defendants face serious charges after having held an illegal regional referendum on October 1, 2017, that led them to trigger a bid to secede unilaterally from the rest of Spain, acts that went against the country's Constitution as well as numerous court rulings. IANS

US Lawmakers Reach Tentative Deal to Avoid Another Shutdown

Bipartisan move provides \$1.375 b for fencing, far less than what Trump had sought

Washington: US congressional negotiators on Monday reached a tentative deal to try to avert another partial government shutdown on Saturday, but congressional aides said it did not contain the \$5.7 billion President Donald Trump wants for a border wall.

"We reached an agreement in principle" on funding border security programmes through Sept. 30, Republican Senator Richard Shelby told reporters.

"Our staffs are going to be working feverishly to put all the particulars together," Shelby said. Neither he nor three other senior lawmakers flanking him provided any details of the tentative pact.

But it was far from clear if the Republican president would embrace the agreement. His December demand for \$5.7 billion this year to help pay for a wall on the US-Mexico border — rejected by congressional Democrats — triggered a 35-day partial government shutdown that ended last month without him getting wall funding. A congressional aide, who asked not to be identified, said the outline of the deal included \$1.37 billion for erecting new fencing along the southern border. That is about the same amount Congress



A Trump supporter dressed up as a border wall at a rally in El Paso

allocated last year and far below what Trump has demanded.

The aide said none of the money would be for a "wall", which Trump has been touting since he launched his campaign for president in 2016. Democrats say the wall would be costly and ineffective.

Two other congressional sources said only currently deployed designs could be used for constructing 55 miles (90 km) of additional

barriers. Those designs, which include "steel bollard" fencing, have been in use since before Trump became president.

Shortly after the deal was reached in the US Capitol, Trump held a rally in the border city of El Paso, Texas, to argue for the wall he says can protect Americans from violent criminals, drugs and a "tremendous onslaught" of migrant caravans. Reuters

US CEOs Call for Laws to Protect 'Dreamers'

Washington: More than 100 corporate leaders and other prominent figures on Monday called on US lawmakers to protect immigrants brought illegally to the United States as children.

In an open letter to Congress, the heads of General Motors, Facebook, Coca Cola, Apple, Amazon, Google, AT&T and Microsoft, among others, said these immigrants, known as "Dreamers", were a boon to the US economy and a dedicated workforce.

"These are our friends, neighbours and co-workers and they should not have to wait for court cases to be decided to determine their fate when Congress can act now," the executives said in the letter, which appeared a full-page ad in The New York Times on Monday.

In a campaign lasting nearly 20 years, activists have pressed for lawmakers to pass legislation, known as the DREAM Act, that would make the "Dreamers" legal US residents, and create a path to citizenship. AFP

Trump Wants to Meet Xi Very Soon over Trade War, Says Conway

Washington: The Trump administration said the US president still wants to meet China's Xi Jinping in an effort to end the trade war, a sign of optimism as negotiators from the world's two-biggest economies start their latest round of talks this week.

"He wants to meet with President Xi very soon," White House adviser Kellyanne Conway said on Monday on Fox News. "This president wants a deal. He wants it to be fair to Americans and American workers and American interests."

Uncertainty whether the leaders will meet to finalise an agree-

ment has stoked concerns that negotiations are faltering as the March 1 deadline approaches. If there's no deal by then, President Donald Trump has threatened to more than double the rate of tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese imports.

Negotiators from the two countries are meeting this week in Beijing, with US officials pressing China to commit to deeper reforms to a state-driven economic model that they say hurts American companies. Mid-level officials began discussions on Monday in preparation for two days of talks starting on Thursday. Bloomberg

Tencent Investment in Reddit Sparks Censorship Worry

San Francisco: Reddit confirmed on Monday a new funding round that included a \$150 million investment by Chinese technology behemoth Tencent, prompting concerns that "the front page of the internet" might wind up censored.

San Francisco-based Reddit raised a total of \$300 million at a \$3-billion valuation, with investors including Andreessen Horowitz, Fidelity, Sequoia and Tencent, the company's CEO told CNBC. The TechCrunch website reported about the funding round last week, but that information was unconfirmed until now. Reddit said it planned to use the money for international expansion and to enhance its digital ad platform to better compete in a market where Facebook and Google currently take in most of the revenue. "We are the only company at our scale that is still a private company, so we have had a lot of investor attention in the last year," Reddit chief executive Steve Huffman told CNBC. AFP

Samsung Reaches Settlement over 'Exploding' Washing Machines

Seoul: Samsung Electronics has reached a settlement in a class-action lawsuit over 2.3 million "exploding" washing machines recalled in the US, the South Korean company said on Tuesday.

The faulty appliances were recalled in 2016 after reports that the top "can unexpectedly detach from the washing machine chassis during use, posing a risk of injury from impact", according to The US Consumer Product Safety Commission. The lawsuit claimed some of the washers were "exploding". "Samsung has chosen to settle class-action lawsuits involving top-load washing machines that were subject to a voluntary recall," Samsung said in a statement, adding the decision was reached to "avoid distraction and expense of litigation".

The washing machines in question have long been off the market, Samsung said. Those covered by the settlement may receive benefits ranging from a "rebate, refund or reim-



The faulty appliances were recalled in 2016 after reports that the top 'can unexpectedly detach from the washing machine chassis during use, posing a risk of injury from impact'

bursement of certain expenses, costs, and repairs", according to the statement. Samsung said at the time that the recall applied to models built between 2011 and 2016 for "reports highlighting the risk that the drums in these washers may lose balance, triggering excessive vibrations, resulting in the top separating from the washer". The company has suffered several blows to its reputation in recent years. In 2016 it was forced to issue a worldwide recall of its

flagship Galaxy Note 7 smartphone over exploding batteries, costing the firm billions of dollars. The group's heir, Lee Jae-yong, was soon after embroiled in a major corruption scandal that ousted South Korean president Park Geun-hye, and he spent nearly a year in jail for bribing her close confidante. But in just a decade, Samsung has gained considerable ground in the US washing machine market with its share jumping from 1.8% in 2008 to 19.8% in 2017, according to market research firm TraQline. AFP



UK Must Regulate Power of Facebook Over News: Report

London: The UK should tackle the power of Alphabet Inc's Google and Facebook Inc over Britain's news publishers and push the tech platforms to promote quality journalism, according to a report commissioned by the government to find remedies for the struggling local press.

The Cairncross Review called for codes of conduct to govern commercial relationships between the Silicon Valley giants and news publishers that would be overseen by a regulator with enforcement powers, according to its findings published late Monday.

"While each platform should devise solutions which best fit the needs of their particular users, their efforts should be placed under regulatory scrutiny — this task is too important to leave entirely to the judgement of commercial entities," said the authors of the review led by Frances Cairncross, an economist and former journalist.

The report comes as the UK government considers how to sustain high-quality journalism as print circulations plunge and even new digital news outlets like BuzzFeed Inc make harsh retrenchments.

The tech giants have become a vital gateway to readers of local jour-

nalism and are under pressure to share more of their ad income. A proposed copyright law devised by European regulators would give publishers the right to demand more money from the web platforms, according to a report commissioned by the government to find remedies for the struggling local press.

Cairncross focused on themes including the role and impact of search engines, social media platforms and digital advertising.

Under its proposals, Facebook and Google could commit not to impose their own advertising software — as Facebook does with its Instant Articles. The review said the Competition and Markets Authority should investigate the online advertising market, which is dominated by Google, Facebook and Amazon.com Inc, and where intermediaries and profit margins are less transparent than those in print.

Britain's opposition Labour Party said the recommendations didn't go far enough.

"As long as tech giants continue to completely dominate the market it's difficult to see how a sustainable financial footing for journalism can be achieved," Tom Watson, deputy leader of Labour and shadow culture secretary, said in an emailed statement. Bloomberg

Theresa May Asks MPs for More Time on Brexit

London: UK Prime Minister Theresa May will address lawmakers in the House of Commons on Tuesday as she seeks more time to renegotiate her Brexit deal with the European Union.

Four weeks after she saw her agreement with the bloc defeated by the biggest margin in modern Parliamentary history, May met with MPs from across the political divide on Monday as she continued to seek a deal that can win a majority in the House of Commons.

May, who is trying to renegotiate the controversial backstop intended to ensure the Irish border remains open after Brexit, will update Parliament on the progress of talks with the EU and outline a motion she'll put before MPs for debate on Thursday, her office said.

After buying time two weeks ago, when she won a vote giving her a mandate to reopen talks with the bloc, the embattled premier is expected to ask Parliament to restate its demand to remove the backstop from the Withdrawal Agreement



Theresa May

and to promise a further vote if she hasn't brought a renegotiated deal back to Parliament by Feb. 27.

With just over six weeks before Britain's scheduled exit day on March 29, the move is intended to reassure members from across the House of Commons who are concerned that May is deliberately running down the clock and risking a potentially disastrous no-deal divorce. Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay travelled to Brussels for talks with the EU's Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier on Monday evening to try to find a way out of the impasse. Bloomberg

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

Banned Chinese Billionaire Calls Australia 'Giant Baby'

A Chinese billionaire barred from Australia on suspicions he is part of a Communist Party influence campaign has lashed out at Canberra, calling it a "giant baby" that hasn't found its place in international politics. Huang Xiangmo, a long-term Sydney resident, had been a prominent donor to Australia's two major parties before he was blocked from re-entering the country last week — with his permanent residency visa revoked and a citizenship bid rejected.

Katy Perry's Fashion Line under Fire

Singer Katy Perry was slammed on social media for designing shoes which resemble "blackface" imagery. The shoes in question are black "Rue Face Slip On Loafers" and "Ora Face Block Heel Sandals" that have cut-out faces, red lips, big blue eyes and a triangular nose on the top, reports hollywoodreporter.com. Social media users have compared the shoes to "blackface make-up". One user even cited that "ignorance is never a fashion statement". Following the backlash, the shoes were pulled from stores. Perry and Global Brands Group issued a statement saying they did not have any intention to inflict any pain. "The Rue and the Ora were part of a collection that was released last summer in 9 different colourways (black, blue, gold, graphite, lead, nude, pink, red, silver) and envisioned as a nod to modern art and surrealism. I was saddened when it was brought to my attention that it was being compared to painful images reminiscent of blackface. Our intention was never to inflict any pain. We have immediately removed them from Katy Perry Collections," it read. IANS



French Journalists Suspended over Alleged Cyberbullying

Several French journalists have been suspended for allegedly coordinating online harassment through a private Facebook group. French newspaper Liberation and cultural magazine Les Inrockuptibles announced on Monday they have suspended three journalists working for them, including the creator of the group named "League of LOL" allegedly harassed other web users with sexist, homophobic and racist insults, mostly between 2009 and 2012. The group has been dubbed by French media a "boys club" in reference to its apparent macho culture. In recent days, several people including some female journalists have publicly accused group members of having cyberbullied them, over a year after the #MeToo movement showed that victims of harassment often felt defenceless and kept silent for years. AFP

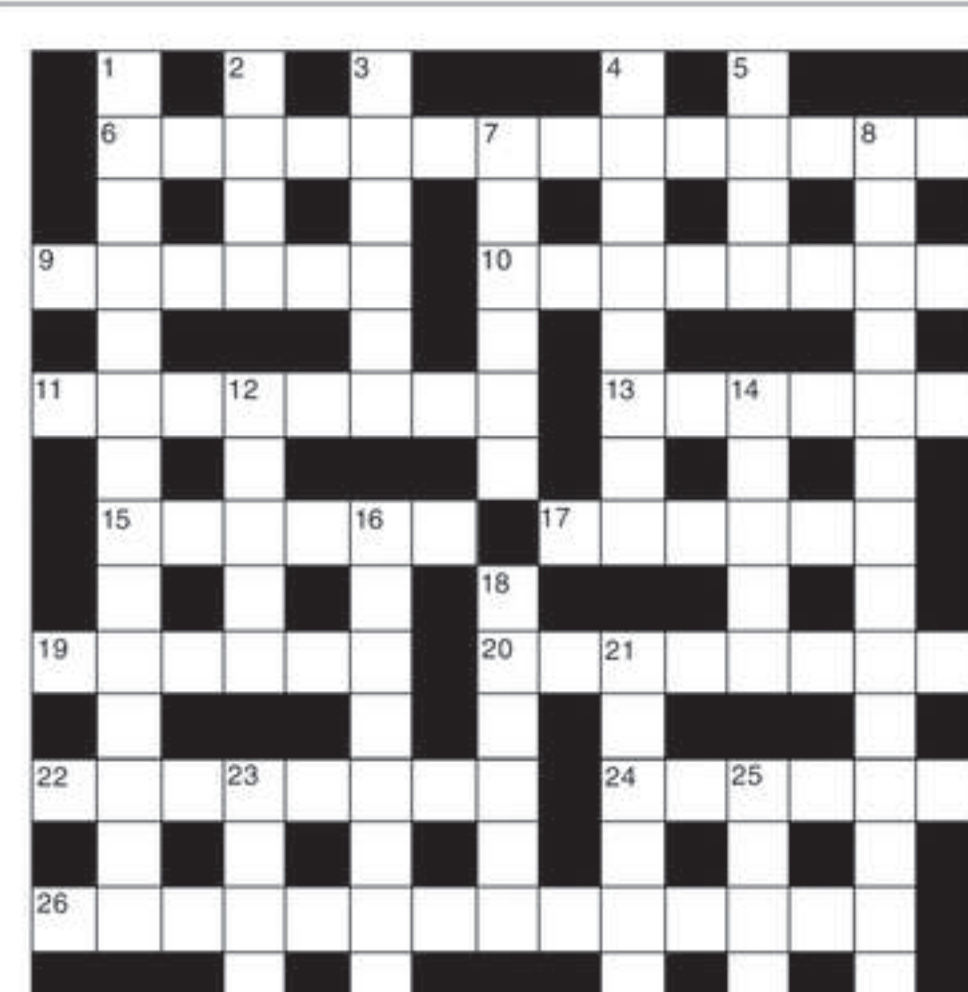
400-Year-Old Bonsai Tree Stolen in Japan

A Japanese cultivator of bonsai trees appealed on Tuesday for the thieves, who made off with his expensive potted plants, to take good care of them. Seiji Iimura, a fifth-generation bonsai cultivator who runs a garden in Kawaguchi, north of Tokyo, told AFP the seven tiny trees stolen from his garden were his "family treasure". "It's something I would never sell even if I got 10 million yen (\$90,000)," he said. "Of course I hate the thief who stole them, but I want to tell him or her: please pour water on them and please take care of them," Iimura said. "I would feel sad if they die." Iimura reported to police last month that seven bonsai trees, worth more than seven million yen in total — including a 400-year-old gnarled juniper — had been stolen from his garden. His wife Fuyumi wrote in a recent Facebook entry that the couple had raised the bonsai trees "like our children". Iimura keeps some 3,000 miniature trees on display at the 5,000 square metre garden so that visitors can appreciate bonsai art. Since the theft he has installed security cameras. Bonsai is a Asian art form of sculpting small trees. AFP



Crossword

7329



ACROSS  
6 A group keeps one trophy table in clothes store (6,8)  
9 Start to kill rampant fungus mostly in self defence (4,2)  
10 Chart showing columns save space round Royal Hotel (3,5)  
11 Ambassador cracking foreign prince's code (8)  
13 Cover son in cool river (6)  
15 It's so wonderful gathering rotten wood (6)

DOWN  
1 Pacific nation develops a genuine papaw with bend in it (5,3,6)  
2 Vessel's black sails etc. (4)  
3 The Noughties offered more than a sufficient amount (6)  
4 Evaluate the value of a very quiet lift (8)  
5 Forbidding river not entirely in Iberia (4)  
7 Fancy tennis star snubbing fan! Schwarzenegger played him (6)  
8 What House journalist did that doesn't use direct quotes (8,6)  
12 One fish trap spans large fjord (5)  
14 Alarm transport in home counties (5)  
16 He checks pupils' work on Italian artist, I hear (8)  
18 Stick poster in this spot (6)  
21 In-crowd supplies hint about smart measure? (6)  
23 Persuade helmsman to tour area (4)  
25 Kelvin's regularly upset QC (4)

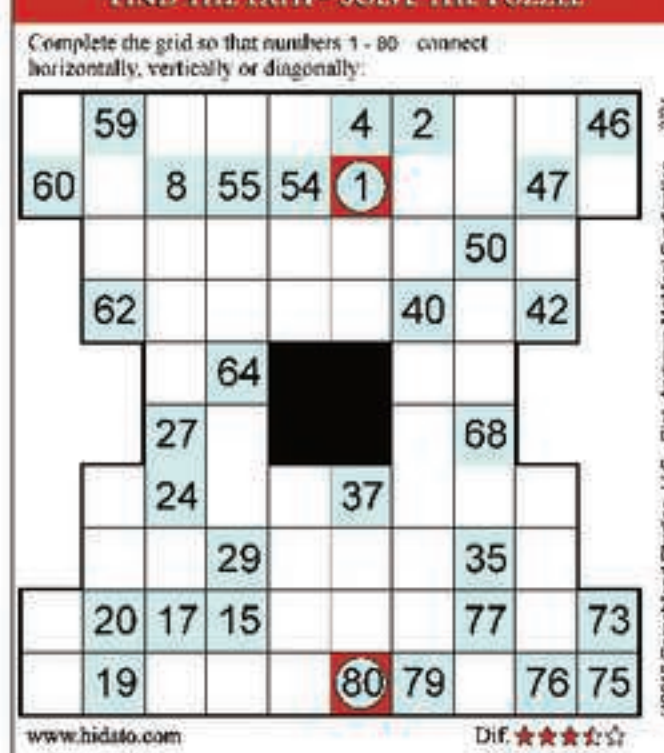
SOLUTION TO No. 7328  
ACROSS: 6 Housemaid's knee.  
9 Agenda. 10 Sclatica. 11 Cyclamen.  
13 Occupy. 15 Orator. 17 Asimov.  
19 Estate. 20 Damnable.  
22 Socrates. 24 Slouch. 26 Systems analyst.  
DOWN: 1 Shaggy dog story. 2 Ruin. 3 Be calm. 4 Advisors. 5 Skit. 7 Absent. 8 Escape velocity. 12 Llama. 14 Comma. 16 Overtime. 18 Odessa. 21 Mislaid. 23 Ruth. 25 Onyx.

Dilbert

by S Adams



HIDATO



Yesterday's puzzle solution.  
Hidato Sol. 320  
11 12 14 15 1 77 78 79 80 81  
10 13 16 5 2 75 76 71 83 82  
9 7 6 17 4 3 74 72 70 84  
8 19 18 73 65 69  
20 22 24 64 66 66  
21 23 25 63 53 67  
30 28 26 62 62 64  
31 29 27 45 44 47 49 51 61 55  
32 34 35 38 46 43 48 50 56 56  
33 36 37 39 40 41 42 59 58 57

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.

Table with 7 columns (PAN, SM, PRE, TER, RE, TA, FIX, GR, INA, ICK, USH, ST, LIA, ING, OC, TED, IF, ING, TET, AM) and 7 rows of solutions.