

IN BRIEF

**New Greek Prime Minister promises tax cuts**

ATHENS
Greece's new Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said in Cabinet on Wednesday he would honour a pledge to cut taxes. Mr. Mitsotakis said a tax bill would be submitted by the end of the month. **AFP**

U.S., China negotiators resume trade talks

WASHINGTON
Top U.S. and Chinese negotiators held phone talks on Tuesday as the world's top two economies seek to resolve their trade war, more than a week after they declared a truce. A White House official said the talks "went constructively". **AFP**

France says its missiles were found in Libya

PARIS
France confirmed on Wednesday its missiles had been found at a Libyan base used by forces loyal to strongman Khalifa Haftar, raising fresh questions about its role in the conflict. **AFP**

British envoy resigns after Trump leak

U.S. President had called him stupid after Ambassador Darroch termed the administration inept

STEPHEN CASTLE
LONDON

Kim Darroch resigned on Wednesday as Britain's Ambassador to the United States after the leak of his candid observations on the Trump administration, a ferocious response from President Donald Trump and the failure of the likely next Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, to support the British envoy.

Sir Kim submitted his resignation in a letter that said the situation was making it impossible for him to carry out his role. "Although my posting is not due to end until the end of this year, I believe in the current circumstances the responsible course is to allow the appointment of a new ambassador," he wrote.

Leaked email

On Monday, Mr. Trump said the White House would no longer deal with Darroch after the leak of confidential emails written by the Ambassador that had described the Trump administration as

"clumsy and inept." The President described the Ambassador as "wacky," a "very stupid guy" and a "pompous fool," and called Prime Minister Theresa May "foolish" for ignoring his advice on Brexit, Britain's plan to leave the European Union.

The dispute has cast a shadow over ties between London and Washington and taken center stage in the Tory leadership contest to succeed Ms. May as Prime Minister, which Mr. Johnson is heavily favoured to win.

During a TV debate on Tuesday night, Mr. Johnson, the former Foreign Secretary, ignited a firestorm by refusing several opportunities to say that he would keep Sir Kim in his post until a scheduled departure date in January. He also declined to criticise Mr. Trump, stressing his good relationship with the White House and playing down the rift. Within hours, the Ambassador had submitted his resignation.

Mr. Johnson's failure to back the Ambassador was



In hot water: Kim Darroch said the situation was making it impossible for him to carry out his role.

met with withering criticism from opponents. "The fact that Sir Kim has been bullied out of his job, because of Donald Trump's tantrums and Boris Johnson's pathetic lickspittle response, is something that shames our country," said Emily Thornberry, the Opposition Labour Party's shadow Foreign Secretary.

Even Mr. Johnson's rival in the leadership race, Jeremy Hunt, the current Foreign Secretary, described Mr. Trump's comments as "un-

acceptable" and said during the debate that he would keep Sir Kim in his job.

Mr. Johnson said on Wednesday that he regretted Sir Kim's departure, and that whoever leaked the Ambassador's messages should be "run down, caught and eviscerated."

With Mr. Johnson intent on Britain leaving the European Union in October, the "special relationship" with Washington is of particular importance given that Mr. Trump has promised a trade

agreement with Britain.

"I think the reality was that in light of the last few days his ability to be effective was probably limited," Vice-President Mike Pence's chief of staff, Marc Short, said on Wednesday morning in Washington. "So it was probably the right course."

Support for Sir Kim

In response to Sir Kim's decision, Ms. May paid tribute to him in Parliament and said that the whole Cabinet had rightly given him its support.

"Good government depends on public servants being able to give full and frank advice. I want all our public servants to have the confidence to be able to do that, and I hope the house will reflect on the importance of defending our values and principles, particularly when they are under pressure," she said. Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition Labour Party, said of Sir Kim, "the comments made about him are beyond unfair and wrong." **NY TIMES**

Pakistan curbs on news channels slammed

Brazen censorship: media watchdog

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ISLAMABAD

A global media watchdog has slammed Pakistani authorities over the removal of three television channels from the country's airwaves, saying the move was "indicative of disturbing dictatorial tendencies" as pressure mounts on journalists in the South Asian nation.

The statement from Reporters Without Borders (RSF) comes days after Abbot TV, 24 News, and Capital TV all had their broadcasts cut, after screening a press conference with Opposition leader Maryam Nawaz.

Pakistani authorities say the channels were unavailable due to "technical issues", but RSF described the outage as an act of "brazen censorship".

"Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is appalled to learn that three Pakistani TV news channels have been suspended from cable networks at the behest of

the authorities in reprisal for broadcasting an Opposition leader's news conference," the watchdog said late on Tuesday. It went on to pin the removal of the channels on the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority, saying "the all-powerful broadcast media regulator" takes its lead from the country's "military establishment".

Maryam interview

A senior official with knowledge of the case confirmed the move against the channels, saying the broadcasters had violated Pakistan's "code of conduct" and been warned against airing the press conference with Maryam Nawaz.

Ms. Nawaz is the daughter of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif - who is currently behind bars for corruption - and her press conference featured a judge claiming he had been blackmailed into convicting the former premier.

Iran warns U.K. of 'consequences'

President Rouhani terms seizure of tanker 'a foolish act'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TEHRAN

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani warned Britain on Wednesday of "consequences" over the detention of an Iranian oil tanker off the coast of Gibraltar.

"I point out to the British that you initiated insecurity (on the seas) and you shall grasp the consequences of it later on," Mr. Rouhani said in comments to the Cabinet broadcast by state TV.

Iran's President called the seizure of the tanker "a foolish act."

The 330-m *Grace 1* tanker,



Hassan Rouhani

capable of carrying two million barrels of oil, was halted on Thursday by the police and customs in Gibraltar - a tiny British overseas territory on Spain's southern tip - with the aid of a detachment

of British Royal Marines.

Iran condemned the detention as an "illegal interception," but Gibraltar officials said the cargo was believed to be destined for Syria, which is subject to European sanctions.

'Somewhere else'

Iran denied this, saying that the destination "was somewhere else."

"The port named in Syria does not even have the capacity for such a supertanker to dock," Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday.

Sri Lanka government faces no-confidence vote

'Failed to prevent attacks despite intel'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Parliament on Wednesday began debating a no-confidence motion against the government for failing to prevent Easter suicide bombings that killed more than 250 people.

The Opposition Marxist Peoples' Liberation Front submitted a motion accusing the ruling coalition of failing to prevent the April 21 attacks despite the "fact that proper information had been made available regard-

ing suicide terrorists."

Voting on the motion is expected on Thursday.

Anura Dissanayaka, the leader of the Peoples' Liberation Front, said the attacks occurred because the government failed to fulfil its responsibility. "People have no confidence in this government," he said.

Minister of Economic Reforms Harsha de Silva rejected the allegation. "If we knew about it, we would have taken preventive measures."

News anchor shot dead in Pak.

He was gunned down over personal enmity, say police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KARACHI

A news anchor of a prominent Pakistani channel was shot dead over personal enmity here, the police said on Wednesday.

Bol News anchor Mureed Abbas had a heated argument with some people over a monetary dispute which escalated into a violent clash in the Khayaban-e-Bukhari area on Tuesday night, they said.

The accused opened fire, killing the anchor and his friend, DIG South Sharjeel Kharal said.



Mureed Abbas ■ FACEBOOK

Abbas sustained multiple bullet wounds in the chest and abdomen, he said.

The police raided the house of the suspect and caught him attempting sui-

cide. "The suspect shot himself in the chest," he said. He was admitted into hospital in a critical condition.

Report sought

Sindh Inspector General of Police Kaleem Imam directed the concerned Deputy Inspector General to furnish a report. He also directed the concerned officials to conduct a forensic examination of the evidence.

Chief Minister of Sindh Murad Ali Shah, who was on a visit to Iran, issued directions to maintain law and order following the incident.

Now is the time for peace, says Ghani

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL

Now is the "right moment" for peace in Afghanistan, President Ashraf Ghani said on Wednesday as he once more called on the Taliban to negotiate with his government.

The Taliban has steadfastly refused to discuss peace with Mr. Ghani, whom it considers a U.S. stooge heading an illegitimate regime. But a series of talks in recent days seems to have shifted the needle in Afghanistan's war, with the U.S. and the Taliban claiming to have made significant progress during a summit in Doha.

"In the past 18 years the time was not right for peace, for a realistic peace. Today is the right moment," Mr. Ghani said at an EU anti-corruption conference being held in Kabul.

"If we lose this opportunity then the responsibility (for the loss) is big."

Biden earned over \$15 mn after leaving White House

Disclosure dents his working class aura

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, took in more than \$15 million since leaving the Obama White House, according to newly released documents, catapulting the Democratic presidential candidate into millionaire status and denting the working-class aura he's developed over decades.

Long fond of describing himself as "Middle Class Joe" while he took in little more than his government salary, the former Vice-President stressed his working-class roots from the very beginning of his bid for his party's 2020 presidential nomination. But federal tax returns and a financial disclosure released on Tuesday show that since Mr. Biden left public office, his income has surged thanks to a lucrative book deal and constant publicity tours that brought in more than \$4 million.



Joe Biden

Mr. Biden's disclosure showed that he also made at least \$2.7 million in business income as part of his publicity tour and writing and took a \$425,000 salary from CelticCapri Corp., the business entity the Bidens used for their post-White House work.

Mr. Biden and his wife signed a multibook deal with Flatiron Books valued at \$8 million, according to Publishers Weekly. He earned \$540,000 as a professor and namesake of the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement.

Twitter to curb hate speech against religion

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Twitter is moving to filter out inappropriate content based on religion as part of its effort to curb hate speech.

In a policy update on Tuesday, Twitter said it would take down "dehumanizing language" that targets specific religious groups. Examples shown by Twitter that would be removed would be description of members of a religion as "disgusting" or "filthy animals."

"After months of conversations and feedback from the public, external experts and our own teams, we're expanding our rules against hateful conduct to include language that dehumanizes others on the basis of religion," the Twitter safety team wrote. "Starting today, we will require tweets like these to be removed...when they're reported to us."

Taliban targets Afghan soldiers' kin

In 'retaliatory' attacks, insurgents kill family members and burn down homes

DAVID ZUCCHINO
FAROOQ JAN MANGAL
KABUL

Muhammad Didar Mukhlis Afghan, a sergeant serving at a remote Afghan Army base, was pleased when his nephew invited his wife and son to his wedding back home in eastern Afghanistan.

The sergeant pitched in almost \$400 to help with the nephew's wedding costs. But instead of a wedding, the event became a murder scene. The nephew, Qari Aziz, was among a group of Taliban fighters who killed the sergeant's wife and son inside Aziz's home in May.

"They attacked my wife and son because I am serving in the ranks of the Af-



The attacks continued even as U.S. and Taliban negotiators reported progress in talks. **■ AP**

ghan National Army," Mr. Afghan said.

The killings were the latest in a series of retaliatory Taliban attacks against the families and homes of Afghan soldiers and police officers.

They have continued even as U.S. and Taliban negotiators have reported progress in talks.

Taliban infiltrators have repeatedly joined government units, then spiked soldiers' or police officers' food with drugs and shot them dead as they slept. In some rare instances, government infiltrators have done the same to the Taliban.

Equally disturbing for many Afghans is the Taliban tactic of burning the homes of soldiers' families while the men are serving elsewhere.

In Kandahar, an Army Colonel, Zahir Jan Abdali, said the families of at least seven soldiers and police officers had been burned out of their homes in recent months.

Among them was Khano Slimanzai, a border police officer who said his unit retreated from his village, Slimanzai, during a Taliban offensive.

Mr. Slimanzai said he arranged for a relative to help his wife and children flee their home, in their bare feet, to a dry river bed outside their village as the Taliban approached.

Less than 30 minutes later, he said, Taliban fighters burned the home and destroyed the family's belongings, he said.

Another effective Taliban tactic is dressing in Army or police uniforms and driving stolen, explosives-laden Humvees into government outposts. **NYTIMES**