

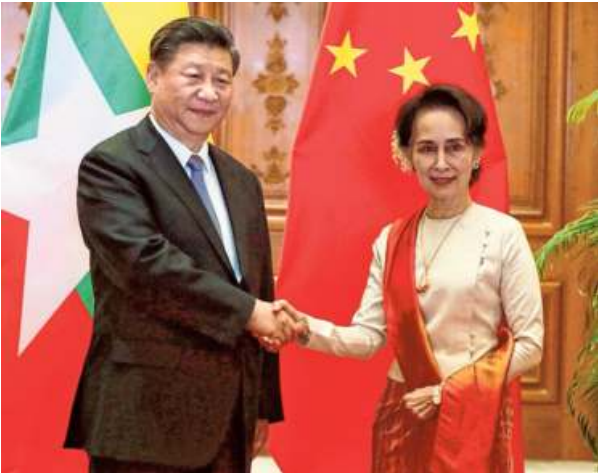
# Xi voices firm support for Myanmar

33 deals signed during the final day of the visit by the Chinese President; leader also meets Suu Kyi

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
NAY PYI TAW

China's Xi Jinping doubled down on his support for fallen rights icon Aung San Suu Kyi on Saturday, signing dozens of infrastructure and trade deals and meeting with the Myanmar Army chief accused of overseeing a genocide against Rohingya Muslims. The Chinese President's state visit to Myanmar's purpose-built capital came as Western investors give a wide berth to the country due to the Rohingya crisis.

A 2017 military crackdown on the minority, which UN investigators called genocide, forced around 740,000 people from western Rakhine state over the border into Bangladesh. Beijing has stood by the increasingly isolated nation and reaffirmed its position in a joint statement in Chinese state media as Mr. Xi's plane left the capital after two days, escorted by fighter jets. China "firmly supports



**Standing by an ally:** Chinese President Xi Jinping with Aung San Suu Kyi in Nay Pyi Taw on Saturday. •AP

Myanmar's efforts to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests and national dignity in the international arena" and for it to advance "peace, stability and development in Rakhine State".

### Largest investor

The Asian giant is now Myanmar's largest investor even as distrust of its ambitions

Kyaukhphyu deep-sea port and economic zone, located in a part of Rakhine State left largely unscathed by the 2017 violence.

There was also a letter of intent for "new urban development" in Myanmar's biggest city Yangon and feasibility studies for rail links.

### China-Myanmar corridor

The aim is to carve out a so-called "China-Myanmar Economic Corridor" – a path of infrastructure from China's landlocked south to Myanmar's western Rakhine state which would serve as Beijing's long-awaited gateway to the Indian Ocean.

The signing ceremony came between sit-down meetings with Ms. Suu Kyi and powerful Army chief Min Aung Hlaing, who was put under sanctions by the U.S. after being accused of masterminding the Rohingya crackdown.

Myanmar says it was defending itself against attacks by militants.

## FB apologises for name gaffe

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
NAY PYI TAW

Facebook apologised on Saturday for a distasteful mistranslation of Chinese President Xi Jinping's name from Burmese language posts during his much-touted visit to Myanmar.

The automatic translation feature on Myanmar's Facebook rendered the visiting President name from Burmese into English as "Mr S\*\*\*hole".

The error most notably appeared on the official Facebook page of Myanmar's civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

"Mr S\*\*\*hole, President of China arrives at 4 PM," said a translated announcement posted earlier Saturday.

"We sincerely apologise for the offense this has caused," Facebook said in an emailed statement.

# China reports four new cases caused by coronavirus strain

Nearly 50 people have been infected across the world

REUTERS  
BEIJING

China reported four more cases of pneumonia believed to be caused by a new coronavirus strain, causing rising concern globally that a disease health officials do not yet fully understand could spread during a key holiday period.

The new virus, which was discovered in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, belongs in the same large family of coronaviruses that includes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which killed nearly 800 people globally during a 2002/03 outbreak that also started in China.

Though experts say the new virus does not appear to be as lethal as SARS, there is little known about its origins and how easily it can spread. Thailand and Japan have confirmed new cases of the virus earlier this week, stock



A woman with a protective mask in Wuhan. •GETTY IMAGES

ing worries globally as many of the 1.4 billion Chinese people will travel abroad during the Lunar New Year holidays that begin next week.

Authorities around the world including in the United States, Thailand and South Korea have stepped up monitoring of travellers from Wuhan as part of their efforts to prevent the disease from spreading.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has also warned that a wider outbreak is possible, though it

has advised against any travel restrictions for China.

The Wuhan Municipal Health Commission (WMHC) said on Saturday the four new individuals diagnosed with the new virus are in stable condition, adding it has confirmed 45 cases in the city as of Thursday. A day earlier, the commission confirmed the death of a second patient.

Nearly 50 people are now known to have been infected globally, but all of them either live in Wuhan or have travelled to the city.

A report published by the London Imperial College's MRC Centre for Global Infectious Disease Analysis said there are likely "substantial" more cases of the new coronavirus than currently announced by Wuhan authorities: its base scenario estimate is that there would be 1,723 cases showing onset of related symptoms by Jan. 12.

## 4 killed in Shabaab bomb attack near Mogadishu

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOGADISHU

Four people were killed in a car bombing in Somalia on Saturday that apparently targeted Turkish engineers working on a road near the capital Mogadishu, police and witnesses said. The attack was claimed by the Al-Qaeda-linked Islamist militant group Al-Shabaab, which has stepped up its activities in Somalia and neighbouring Kenya in recent weeks.

The bomb struck near the town of Afgoye about 30 km west of the capital, killing

four people and wounding several others including several Turkish nationals, said local police officer Abdirahman Adan.

"The blast was huge, it destroyed a container used by the Turkish engineers who work on the Afgoye road construction," said witness Muhidin Yusuf.

"There were police who were guarding the Turkish engineers and several other people gathering near the checkpoint where the temporary shelter is located," said another witness Ahmed Said.

## Iran to send black boxes to Ukraine

Tehran to take assistance from experts in France, Canada and the U.S.

REUTERS  
DUBAI

Iran is sending to Ukraine the black boxes of the Ukrainian passenger plane that its military accidentally shot down this month, Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday. The Iranian authorities are also prepared for experts from France, Canada and the United States to examine the data from the boxes, the semi-official news agency said.

All 176 people aboard the plane were killed when the Ukrainian International Airlines flight was shot down on January 8 shortly after take-off from Tehran en route to the Ukrainian capital Kiev.

"With the use of the expertise of the countries of France, Canada and America we will try to read the (flight data recorder) in Kiev," Hassan Rezaifar, a director in charge of accident investigations at Iran's Civil Aviation Organisation was quoted as saying by Tasnim. "If this effort is unsuccessful then the black box will be sent to France." The black boxes will not be read in Iran, Mr.

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One of the two black boxes. •REUTERS

Rezaifar said, according to Tasnim.

Fifty seven of the dead were Canadian. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who has been pressing for a full investigation into the plane downing, said on Friday that Iran should send the black boxes to France for analysis. France was one of the few countries with the ability to read the flight and cockpit data recorders from the jet, which he said were badly damaged, Mr. Trudeau told a news conference in Ottawa.

Iran has faced a deepening crisis abroad and at home over the plane disaster, with authorities taking several days to announce that its military had accidentally shot the plane down.

## Taliban aims to sign deal with U.S. by month-end

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KABUL

The Taliban is aiming to reach a withdrawal agreement with the U.S. by the end of January and is prepared to "scale down" military operations ahead of signing the deal, according to their chief spokesman.

The statement by Suhail Shaheen to Pakistani daily Dawn comes as the group and the U.S. held discussions in Doha this week, after insurgent sources said they had offered to initiate a brief ceasefire.

"We have agreed to scale down military operations in days leading up to the signing of the peace agreement with the United States," Mr. Shaheen told Dawn in a report that was published on Saturday.

He added that the Taliban was "optimistic" a deal with Washington could be signed before the end of the month and that the reduction in fighting across the country would also include the targeting of Afghan forces. "It's now a matter of days," said the spokesman.

## Simpsons actor says he will no longer voice Indian character Apu

This comes 2 years after racism claims marred the show

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LOS ANGELES

Actor Hank Azaria will no longer voice the Indian character Apu in *The Simpsons*, U.S. media reported, more than two years after accusations of racism marred the long-running animated series. Apu Nahasapeemnet is the manager of the show's Kwik-E-Mart convenience store and a mainstay of the TV comedy, which recently celebrated its 30th year on air.

He is voiced by white actor Mr. Azaria, whose marked accent for the role has been criticised by viewers, who have also accused writers of using Indian stereotypes in their treatment of



Hank Azaria. •AP

the character. "What they're going to do with the character is their call," Mr. Azaria told U.S. film news website SlashFilm on Friday. "It's up to them and they haven't sorted it out yet. All we've agreed on is I won't do the voice anymore." Creators of *The Simpsons* found themselves under fire in late 2017 with the release of a documentary by comedian Hari Kondabolu, who interviewed fellow entertainers of Indian and South Asian origin to document their feelings about the character. Both Mr. Azaria and *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening refused to appear in the documentary to answer questions. But Mr. Azaria later told a reporter from the TMZ celebrity website that Kondabolu "made some really interesting points" and "gave us a lot at *The Simpsons* to think about."

The *Simpsons* stars Homer, the family patriarch working for a nuclear power station, his wife and voice of reason Marge, and children Bart, Lisa and Maggie.

**Three weeks to Iowa**

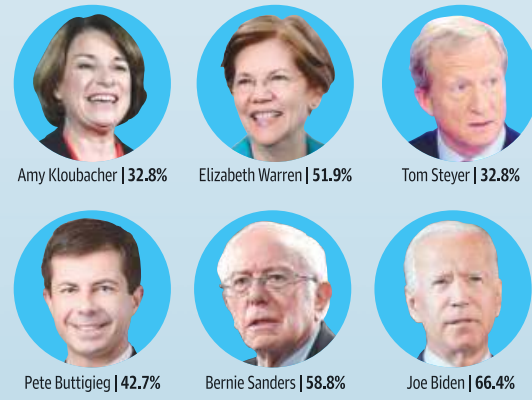
On January 14, with the first nominating contest in Iowa less than three weeks away, six Democratic presidential candidates sparred over war and trade, gender and health care in their seventh debate as the contest in the party to find the best person to beat President Donald Trump became more intense. These are some key trends and numbers ahead of the Iowa caucus on February 3

**ISSUES THAT DOMINATED THE 7TH DEBATE (IN TERMS OF THE NUMBER OF WORDS SPOKEN)**  
Foreign policy was the dominant theme in the seventh debate, which came amidst the U.S.-Iran tensions in the aftermath of Qassem Soleimani's assassination



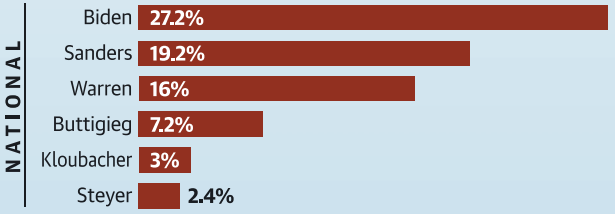
### CHANCES OF BEATING TRUMP

A poll conducted by the website fivethirtyeight.com has found that Joe Biden is the candidate voters think is best positioned to beat President Trump, though his favourability over the months has remained largely unchanged



### POLL AVERAGE

Biden leads the polls among all Democratic candidates



Candidate	Iowa	New Hampshire	Nevada	South Carolina
Joe Biden	20.7	21	25	32
Bernie Sanders	20.3	22.5	19.3	15
Elizabeth Warren	16	16.3	14.7	14
Pete Buttigieg	18.7	14.5	7.7	6.3
Amy Kloubacher	7	6.3	2.7	1.3
Tom Steyer	2.7	3.3	7.3	8.3

**POLL AVERAGE** | While Sanders ranks close to Biden in Iowa and beats him in New Hampshire, Biden comfortably leads in the other two early-primary States. The former Vice-President has consistently led the polls, from even before he announced his candidacy

SOURCE: REALCLEARPOLITICS.COM, FIVETHIRTYEIGHT.ORG, BLOOMBERG NEWS

## SUDOKU

2	4			6		7	
		6		7			
1						6	9
					3	5	
5			4	3			8
	8	2					
4	3						6
			3			9	
	7		1			2	3

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

### Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

4	6	8	3	9	5	2	1	7
2	3	1	7	6	8	5	4	9
7	9	5	2	4	1	6	8	3
3	8	9	5	1	2	7	6	4
5	4	7	9	8	6	3	2	1
6	1	2	4	3	7	9	5	8
8	7	4	6	2	3	1	9	5
9	5	6	1	7	4	8	3	2
1	2	3	8	5	9	4	7	6

## Rain douses fires across Australia

But they also bring new threat of flooding in some areas

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SYDNEY

Rain and thunderstorms doused long-burning bushfires across much of eastern Australia on Saturday, but they also brought a new threat of flooding in some areas. Major bushfires continued to rage in regions of the south and southeast of the country that have so far missed out on the rain, including in wildlife-rich forests on Kangaroo Island off the southern coast.

The fire service in New South Wales (NSW) State, the country's most populous and the hardest hit by the crisis, said 75 fires continued to burn on Saturday, down from well over 100 a few days earlier. "Rain continues to fall across a number of fire grounds," the State's rural fire service said, adding that "benign conditions" of rain and cooler temperatures were helping efforts to contain the remaining blazes.

To the north, Queensland



**Quenching thirst:** A koala licking rainwater near Moree, New South Wales, Australia. •PAMELA SCHRAMM VIA REUTERS

State was hit by severe storms overnight, causing some flash flooding and road closures though no deaths or injuries were reported.

Both States have suffered from one of the longest droughts in modern Australian history and some areas saw more rain on Friday and on Saturday than had fallen

in more than a decade.

Fires continued to burn out of control in southern New South Wales and neighbouring Victoria State, but forecasters expected significant rainfall in those areas Sunday and Monday, raising hopes that some of those blazes could be brought under control as well.

## House Democrats outline case against Trump

The trial is to open later this month

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON

House Democrats were on Saturday preparing to outline their case for removing President Donald Trump from office, as opposing sides in the impeachment case look ahead to the opening of the trial in the Senate.

Mr. Trump on Friday appointed several nationally known lawyers to the team that will defend him in the proceedings, set to open on Tuesday.

The submission of the legal brief follows the latest revelations in the case against Mr. Trump. Democrats on Friday released more information – documents, text messages and photos – turned over by Lev Parnas, an indicted associate of Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani. The release included multiple photos of Mr. Parnas, a Soviet-born Florida businessman, posing with

Mr. Giuliani or Mr. Trump or Donald Trump Jr.

Mr. Trump on Friday named Ken Starr, the prosecutor whose investigation two decades ago led to the impeachment of President Bill Clinton, along with former Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz, to his defence team. The additions bring experience in the politics of impeachment as well as constitutional law to Mr. Trump's made-for-TV legal team. Both Mr. Starr and Mr. Dershowitz have been fixtures on Fox News Channel, Mr. Trump's preferred television network.

Mr. Dershowitz said he will deliver constitutional arguments defending Mr. Trump from allegations that he abused his power.

Mr. Trump says he did nothing wrong and argues that Democrats have been out to get him since before he took office.

## ELSEWHERE



### Macron rushed from theatre during protest

PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife were rushed from a Paris theatre late on Friday after protesters tried to burst in and disrupt the performance. Riot police were out in force as dozens of people staged a demonstration outside the theatre where the two were watching *The Fly*. AFP

### Indigenous leaders oppose Amazon policy

PIARACU

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's pledge to open up the Amazon to mining companies was tantamount to "genocide", indigenous leaders said on Friday at a meeting to oppose the government's environmental policies. Hundreds of elders gathered this week at Piaracu to form a united front against Mr. Bolsonaro's environmental policies. AFP