



TWITTERATI

BERNIE SANDERS, DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE
 "Trump says the economy is doing great. If you're a billionaire, he's right! It's not doing so well if you're one of the millions of working people living paycheck to paycheck"

TOP OF THE WORLD



Nawaz Sharif

PAKISTAN
 Anti-corruption officials raid Sharif properties

Lahore: Pakistan anti-corruption officials raided the properties of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Lahore on Saturday to collect evidence in a money laundering case, even as his mother left for London to be with her son ahead of his cardiac treatment. An accountability court here has already exempted the 69-year-old from appearing before it on medical grounds and adjourned the hearing till February 28. "Nawaz Sharif's mother Shamim Bibi left for London to be with her son while he undergoes heart treatment," PML-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb tweeted.

US
 Weinstein abused power: Prosecutor

New York: New York prosecutors told jurors that Harvey Weinstein abused his power and pushed back against claims by the former Hollywood producer's defense team that his accusers were not credible. Assistant District Attorney Joan Illuzzi said Weinstein, 67, had counted on his victims never coming forward. "The defendant not only ran roughshod over the dignity and the very lives of these witnesses, but he also underestimated them," she said. Since 2017, more than 80 women have accused Weinstein of sexual misconduct.

MALI
 Death toll in central Mali violence hits 40

Bamako: Forty people, including nine soldiers, have been killed in a spate of attacks in central Mali, authorities said Friday, with most of the deaths caused by inter-ethnic violence in the deeply troubled region. Thirty-one people were killed in an attack overnight in Ogosagou, a village mainly inhabited by Fulani people, the government said, raising the death toll. About 30 gunmen carried out the new attack, village chief Aly Ousmane Barry told AFP. "Huts and crops were set alight, livestock was burned or taken away," he added, vowing that the government would find the perpetrators.

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

France reports first casualty outside Asia, US plans evacuation from ship

Toll climbs to 1,523 in China; over 67,000 cases globally

AGENCIES
 BEIJING, FEBRUARY 15

FRANCE'S HEALTH minister, Agnès Buzyn, said on Saturday that a 80-year-old Chinese tourist had died of coronavirus on Friday at a hospital in Paris.

This comes even as more than 2,600 new cases were confirmed in China, with deaths up by 143, health officials said on Saturday. The death toll rose by 143 to 1,523, as per officials.

Meanwhile, The United States has urged its citizens to leave a virus-struck cruise ship under quarantine in Japan.

Buzyn said the deceased man, who was from the Chinese province of Hubei, the centre of the outbreak, arrived in France on January 16 and had been hospitalised at the Bichat-Claude Bernard Hospital since January 25. "His condition had quickly worsened and he had been in critical condition for several days," Buzyn said.



A medical worker at a hospital in Wuhan. Reuters

The death is the fourth from the virus outside of mainland China, where about 1,500 people have died, most of them in Hubei Province. The Philippines, Hong Kong and Japan have each reported one death.

Outside mainland China, there have been about 500 cases in some 24 countries and territories, and three deaths - one in Japan, one in Hong Kong and one in the Philippines.

Africa has recorded its first case, in Egypt. The biggest cluster outside China has been on the Diamond Princess, a cruise ship owned by Carnival Corp, that has

been quarantined since its arrival in Yokohama, Japan, on February 3. Of its 3,500 passengers and crew, 285 have tested positive for the infection.

The US urged its citizens on the ship to leave, "out of an abundance of caution", on a special flight due in Japan on Sunday, although they will face quarantine for another 14 days upon return.

"We understand this is frustrating and an adjustment, but these measures are consistent with the careful policies we have instituted to limit the potential spread of the disease," the embassy said.

EXPLAINED
 Shortage of equipment on frontlines an issue

AMID REPORTS of medical workers in China being infected, it also emerged that they were facing equipment shortages. The measures taken to curtail the outbreak, such as travel restrictions and road checks, have also delayed the delivery of supplies, as per reports. Production, too, has become an issue, as factories have been unable to function properly. Bureaucracy has been cited as another hurdle that many doctors face. Given that these medical workers are the main line of defence against the virus, experts said more attention has to be paid to the issues they face.

China must keep social, economic order: Xi

REUTERS
 BEIJING, FEBRUARY 15

CHINA MUST make every effort to maintain economic and social control as it battles the coronavirus epidemic, and avoid causing panic that could lead to secondary "disasters," President Xi Jinping told senior officials.

His February 3 speech to the Politburo's Standing Committee was published in full by the leading Communist Party journal

Qjushi on Saturday. It showed how Xi had urged officials to roll out policies to support the economy even as they worked to control the spread of the virus.

In the speech, he said the epidemic was impacting the economy, especially service industries. Actions needed to be taken to maintain China's industrial chain and encourage enterprises to resume production, he said.

China "still has to adhere to this year's economic and social development goals", Xi said.



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at a trilateral meeting with Japan and South Korea in Munich on Saturday. Reuters

REJECTS CLAIMS THAT US QUIT GLOBAL ROLE

West is winning, Pompeo tells China, Russia

REUTERS & PTI
 MUNICH, FEBRUARY 15

US SECRETARY of State Mike Pompeo defended on Saturday his nation's global role despite misgivings in Europe, vowing that Western values would prevail over Russian and Chinese desires for "empire".

Seeking to reassure Europeans troubled by US President Donald Trump's "America first" rhetoric, his ambivalence over the NATO military alliance and tariffs on European goods, Pompeo said there was no crisis in Western leadership.

"I'm happy to report that the death of the transatlantic alliance is grossly exaggerated. The West is winning, and we're winning together," he said in a speech at the Munich Security Conference, listing US steps to protect liberal democracy.

Pompeo's Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, accused him of telling "lies, not based on facts" about Beijing's intentions.

Pompeo had been, in part, responding to German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who on Friday accused the United States, Russia and China of making the world more dangerous.

French President Emmanuel

'NEFARIOUS STRATEGY'
 US Secretary of Defence Mark Esper accused Beijing of a 'nefarious strategy' through Huawei

'MANIPULATION'
 "It is essential that we... wake up to the challenges presented by Chinese manipulation of the international rules-based order," Esper said.

'NOT TOO LATE'
 He said it was not too late for Britain, which last month said it would allow Huawei a limited role in building its 5G networks, to take 'two steps back'.

Macron told the conference of international leaders, lawmakers and diplomats he was not surprised by Steinmeier's speech and had liked it.

"We cannot be the United States' junior partner," Macron said, adding that while he supported NATO, Europe needed to be able to tackle threats in its neighbourhood and at times act independently of Washington.

"I'm impatient for European solutions," Macron said.

PROTEST AGAINST GENDER-RELATED VIOLENCE



Demonstrators confront police at a protest in Mexico City. Reuters

■ Angry demonstrations broke out in Mexico City on Friday as hundreds of women protested the gruesome slaying and mutilation of a young woman, a case that has come to personify outrage over the rising incidence of gender-related killings.

■ About 10 women are slain each day across Mexico just because they are women, the government and activists say. Last year there were 3,825 in all, which was up 7% from 2018, according to federal figures

■ Dozens of protesters spray-painted slogans such as 'We won't be silenced' on the facade and doorway of the capital's National Palace. They also confronted and clashed with police in the city

US, Taliban agree to reduce violence, in first step to finalising peace deal

DAVID E. SANGER AND RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA
 MUNICH, FEBRUARY 15

AMERICAN OFFICIALS said on Friday they had agreed with the Taliban on a seven-day reduction in violence in Afghanistan that, if it holds, would be followed by an Afghan peace agreement after 18 years of war.

The decrease in hostilities would be the first step in a plan leading to withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, though there have been indications that the United States would want to keep some counterterrorism and intelligence forces there.

The agreement on a reduction in violence was announced by a senior administration official at the annual Munich Security Conference, where Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper are defending American policies.

But the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the Taliban would have to adhere to that reduction for seven days before a peace pact could be signed.

The timing is notable. If the seven-day period begins this weekend or early next week, and it holds for a week, the peace agreement would be ready to sign around the time that President Trump is scheduled to travel to India. NYT



AIRSTRIKE KILLS EIGHT CIVILIANS: An air strike in Afghanistan has killed at least eight civilians. "The target of the attack was Taliban militants... but unfortunately civilians were hit," a spokesperson said. Reuters

US A-G moves to take reins of cases that are politically charged

CHARLIE SAVAGE & ADAM GOLDMAN
 WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 15

WHILE ATTORNEY General William P Barr asserted his independence from the White House this week, he has also been quietly intervening in a series of politically charged cases, including against Michael T Flynn, President Trump's former national security adviser, people familiar with the matter said on Friday.

Barr installed a phalanx of outside lawyers to re-examine national security cases with the possibility of overruling career prosecutors, a highly unusual move that could prompt more accusations of Justice Department politicisation. The case against Flynn, who twice pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI in the Russia investigation, is a cause célèbre for Trump and his supporters, who say the retired general was en-

snared in a "deep state" plot against the president.

The disclosures came as Trump made clear on Friday he believes he has free rein over the Justice Department and its cases, rejecting Barr's public demand of a day earlier that the president stop commenting on such cases.

Hours later, the Justice Department told defense lawyers for Andrew G. McCabe, the former acting FBI director whom Trump has vilified for his role in the Russia case, that McCabe would not be charged in connection with a leak case, ending a nearly two-year criminal investigation.

"We consider the matter closed," the department wrote to McCabe's lawyers.

Together, the developments send conflicting signals at a time when the Justice Department's independence from political interference by the White House has come under sharp scrutiny. NYT

'THEY CAME INTO THE MIDDLE OF OUR LIVES AND RUINED THEM. MY PAST IS FOR NOTHING NOW AND I HAVE NO FUTURE'

He observed a protest in Turkey, now he faces a possible life sentence

CARLOTTA GALL
 ISTANBUL, FEBRUARY 15

WHEN THE police banged on his door and took him away for questioning one dawn in November 2018, Yigit Aksakoglu assumed he would be home in time to catch his afternoon swim.

But after a 10-hour interrogation, he was hauled off to court and thrown into jail in solitary confinement for seven months on a charge that is among Turkey's most heinous crimes, violently attempting to over-

throw the government. The Turkish representative for a Dutch charitable foundation specializing in programs for the social development of young children, Aksakoglu, 43, never expected to run into trouble with the law. Even when President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey began mass arrests after a failed coup in 2016, sweeping up many innocent academics, journalists and human rights activists, he never thought he would be caught up in it, too.

"I was picked accidentally," Aksakoglu said in an interview

at his office in central Istanbul. "And now they are unable to unpick me." A verdict in his trial is expected on Tuesday and he, along with 15 co-defendants, faces a possible sentence of life without parole. "Just like a lottery I will probably spend a long time in prison," he said.

The prosecutor has called for the sentence despite Aksakoglu's insistence that the charges are baseless and the evidence flimsy. Fears are mounting that under Erdogan's increasingly autocratic rule, he and his co-defendants will be punished in order to send



Yigit Aksakoglu with his family. NYT

a chill through Turkey's dwindling community of independent organisations and activists.

The case stems from the Taksim Square protests of 2013, when students, artists and environmentalists opposed the construction of a shopping mall in one of Istanbul's central parks.

Aksakoglu's fate is indicative of just how twisted Turkey's justice system has become: Someone who pulled himself up thanks to a state education is seeing his career crushed by his own government.

Aksakoglu was locked in soli-

tary confinement in the main high-security prison at Silivri, outside Istanbul.

"It was really hard to cope with the shock on my own," he said. "I was not able to talk to anyone about my situation."

He saw his lawyers and received visits from his wife and two daughters, 8 and 4, but began to dread his elder daughter's questions as she counted the days he had been jailed and asked when he was coming home.

After seven and a half months in detention, he was released under orders to report to

the police once a week. He quietly went back to work. But as the trial draws to a close, the prosecutor has requested the toughest sentence possible — a life sentence without parole.

Aksakoglu has little faith in the possibility of a fair judgment after seven months of hearings.

The government treats the defendants "like small change in their pockets," he said. "They came into the middle of our lives and they ruined them. My past is for nothing now and I have no future." NYT