

16 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



Placido Domingo

SPAIN

Opera star 'truly sorry' over sexual harassment

Madrid: Opera star Placido Domingo, facing multiple allegations of sexual harassment, on Tuesday apologised for "the hurt" caused to his accusers, saying he accepted "full responsibility" for his actions. "I want them to know that I am truly sorry for the hurt that I caused them. I accept full responsibility for my actions," he said in a statement sent to Spanish news agency Europa Press. The 79-year-old — who has been a director and conductor at some of the world's most prestigious opera houses — has been accused by at least 20 women of forcibly kissing, grabbing or fondling them in incidents dating back to at least the 1980s. Until now, Domingo has denied the allegations.

PAKISTAN

Pak's Punjab not to extend bail to Nawaz Sharif for treatment abroad

Lahore: Pakistan's Punjab government on Tuesday decided not to extend the bail granted on medical grounds to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who is currently in London for treatment, according to media reports. Punjab Law Minister Raja Basharat said the Punjab Cabinet decided that there was "no legal, moral or medical basis without any concrete proof" for the further extension of the bail to the 70-year-old leader. Amid bickering between the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party and Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, the three-time PM left for London for medical treatment on November 19, 2019.

WEST ASIA

Israel-Gaza truce takes hold after flare-up

Gaza: A ceasefire brokered by Egypt and the UN took hold on the Israel-Gaza border on Tuesday after two days of fighting between Israel and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group. Islamic Jihad had fired 80 rockets towards Israeli communities along the Gaza border since Sunday, an Israeli military spokeswoman said, while Israel attacked sites in Gaza and Syria that killed three members of the militant group. No casualties were reported on the Israeli side and many of the rockets were intercepted by Israel's missile system.

SWITZERLAND, CROATIA, AUSTRIA REPORT FIRST CASES

Desperate to stop coronavirus spread, countries limit travel

KIM TONG-HYUNG & MATT SEDENSKY
SEOUL, FEBRUARY 25

POLICEMANNED checkpoints in quarantined towns, guests were confined to their rooms in a hotel in the Canary Islands, governments issued travel warnings and more flights were suspended Tuesday as officials desperately sought to stop the seemingly inevitable spread of a new virus. Clusters of the illness continued to balloon outside mainland China, fuelling apprehension across the globe. The crisis pushed into areas seen as among the worst-equipped to deal with an outbreak as well as some of the world's richest nations, including South Korea and Italy. As it proliferates, the virus is bringing a sense of urgency for local officials determined to contain it but often unsure how. "It's a matter of speed and time: We must create a clear turning point within this week," said President Moon Jae-in of South Korea, where the caseload grew by 144, with a total of 977 people sickened. Cases of people who could



A resident pulls back a rope tying groceries delivered by community workers as the residential compound is under sealed management, in Yichang, Hubei province. Reuters

have infected many others spurred fears. Korean Air said one of its crew members tested positive, but the airline didn't disclose the flights the employee had worked on. On a US military base in Daegu, the centre of infections in South Korea, officials said the spouse of a late servicemember had also been infected. And in the tiny Persian Gulf nation of Bahrain, one of those infected was a school bus driver who had transported students as recently as Sunday. In Italy's north, where more than 200 people were sickened, a dozen towns were sealed off and police wearing masks patrolled. Three neighbours of Italy — Switzerland, Croatia and Austria — reported their first cases of the virus. And an Italian doctor staying at a hotel in the Canary Islands tested positive for the virus, prompting the quarantine of hundreds of guests. Croatia, Hungary and Ireland advised against travelling to Italy's affected area, one of a number of governmental moves seeking to limit further exposure. AP

Iran's deputy health minister tests positive for virus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TEHRAN, FEBRUARY 25



Harirchi occasionally coughed and wiped sweat from his brow repeatedly during a press conference in Tehran on Monday

IRAN'S DEPUTY health minister confirmed on Tuesday that he has tested positive for the new coronavirus, amid a major outbreak in the Islamic republic. Iraj Harirchi coughed occasionally and wiped sweat from his brow repeatedly during a news conference in Tehran on Monday with government spokesman Ali Rabiei. In a video broadcast on state television, the deputy minister put on a brave face as he admitted he was infected. "I too have been infected with coronavirus," Harirchi said in the video apparently shot by himself. "I had a fever as of last night and my preliminary test was positive around midnight," he said. "I've isolated myself in a

place since. A few minutes ago, I was told that my test was final, and now I am starting medication. "I wanted to tell you that... we will definitely be victorious against this virus in the next few weeks," Harirchi declared.

Indians on virus-hit cruise ship to be brought back today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TOKYO, FEBRUARY 25



16 Indians tested positive for the virus on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship docked at the Yokohama port in Japan

INDIANS, ON board the cruise ship off the Japan coast, who have not tested positive for the novel coronavirus will be repatriated on Wednesday by a chartered flight, the Indian embassy here said on Tuesday, as the number of infected Indians on the vessel rose to 16 after the completion of all tests. A total of 138 Indians, including 132 crew and 6 passengers, were among the 3,711 people, on board the *Diamond Princess* ship

when it docked at the Yokohama port, near Tokyo, on February 3. "PCR test results for all Indian

nationals declared — 2 more Indians tested positive to #COVID19, taking the total to 16..." the mission tweeted. "A chartered flight is being arranged to repatriate Indian nationals on board *Diamond Princess*, provided they have (a) consented, (b) not tested positive for COVID19, (c) cleared by the medical team," the mission tweeted earlier. "An email advisory to this effect, with details, has been sent to them," it said. Passengers showing no signs of the deadly disease started deboarding the ship after the quarantine period ended last week. Over 1,000 passengers and crew still remain on board the ship after the disembarkations. The ship was quarantined after a passenger who disembarked last month in Hong Kong was found to have been infected. Seventy-one new virus deaths were reported in China, taking the total number of casualties to 2,663, while the confirmed cases rose to 77,658.

China court jails HK bookseller for 10 years, Sweden objects

REUTERS
BEIJING, FEBRUARY 25



Protesters carry photos of Gui Minhai, a bookseller previously based in Hong Kong who sold books critical of China's leadership

A CHINESE court sentenced Chinese-born Swedish citizen Gui Minhai to 10 years in jail for illegally providing intelligence overseas on Monday, the Ningbo Intermediate People's Court said in a statement on its website. Gui, a bookseller previously based in Hong Kong who sold books critical of China's political leadership, was detained by mainland police in 2018. He was seized by plainclothes police while with Swedish diplomats on a Beijing bound train. Relations between Sweden and China soured in the months leading up to Monday's sentencing, with Chinese officials warning Swedish counterparts of meddling in China's internal affairs. Swedish foreign minister Ann Linde said Gui Minhai should be released, sticking by a position that Sweden has held throughout. "We also require access to our citizen to provide the consular support he is entitled to," Linde said in a text message sent by her spokesman.

"We have not had access to or knowledge of any trial. Thus, we have not been able to review the indictment nor been able to offer access to legal counsel," she said. The Ningbo court statement said Gui, 55, had stated that he would not appeal the sentence and had asked to have his Chinese citizenship reinstated. A spokesman for China's foreign ministry told a news briefing in Beijing on Tuesday that Gui Minhai's rights and interests have been fully guaranteed. He said consular visits in general were put on hold due to the coronavirus outbreak.

After a Four Seasons breakfast, Weinstein sent to dank NY jail

TOM HALS
NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 25



Weinsteing at a courthouse in Manhattan. Reuters

HARVEY WEINSTEIN'S day began with expensive coffee and Acqua Panna mineral water at a breakfast meeting with his lawyers in a Four Seasons hotel near Manhattan's criminal courts. It was due to end at New York's violence-plagued Rikers Island jail complex, where the former Hollywood film producer was ordered to await sentencing after a jury found him guilty on Monday of raping one woman and sexually assaulting another. Weinstein, however, was rerouted for unspecified reasons to Manhattan's Bellevue Hospital, which has a special ward for treating jail inmates, and presumably will be moved to Rikers once "he no longer needs to be in a hospital", his spokesman, Juda Engelmayer, told Reuters. Other news outlets, including *Variety*, reported the onetime movie mogul had complained of chest pains or heart palpitations. His lawyers had asked that Weinstein, 67, be sent to the jail's

North Infirmary Command - two dank buildings that house sick inmates and those with enough notoriety to require protection from their neighbours. Violence and neglect at the jail have become so entrenched that Mayor Bill de Blasio vowed in 2017 to close it down within a decade. In 2015, federal prosecutors in New York concluded after an investigation that guards routinely abused inmates at the jail, which sits on an island in the East River, beneath the LaGuardia Airport flight path. Housed partly in the jail's original hospital building, the North Infirmary Command is not much of a respite, according to people who have worked there. A lawyer for Weinstein reminded Judge James Burke on Monday of some of her client's ailments, noting he takes several medications and requires injections in his eyes to forestall blindness. He entered and left the Manhattan court each day leaning on a walker, a remnant, according to his lawyers, of back surgery he had in December. REUTERS



Chitetsu Watanabe after being recognised as the world's oldest living male by Guinness World Records, in Joetsu, Niigata prefecture, Japan earlier this year. AP

World's oldest man, who said his secret was smiling, dies at 112

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO, FEBRUARY 25

A JAPANESE man who received his certificate as the world's oldest man with a raised fist and big smiles earlier this month has died at 112. Guinness World Records had given the certificate to Chitetsu Watanabe on Feb. 12. The organisation and the funeral home handling his services confirmed Tuesday he had died Sunday. No cause was given. He had not been able to eat recently and developed a fever and difficulty breathing a couple of days before his death, Japan's *Mainichi* newspaper reported. Watanabe is survived by his five children, 12 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild, *Mainichi* said. His family did not immediately answer calls to their home. Watanabe was born in 1907 and worked in Taiwan for 18 years. After returning to Niigata, Japan, he worked for the prefectural government until retirement. He grew fruit and vegetables on the family farm and loved cream puffs. He used to say the secret to longevity was to keep smiling.

IDLIB PROVINCE HAS SEEN A FEROCIOUS MILITARY CAMPAIGN AND RELENTLESS BOMBARDMENT SINCE DECEMBER

Syrian father teaches daughter to laugh when the bombs fall

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIRUT, FEBRUARY 25

ABDULLAH MOHAMMED would do anything for his daughter, even forcing himself to laugh with her at the sound of bombs to help her overcome her fear. In Idlib, that's a lot of laughter. The province in northwestern Syria is the last opposition-held stronghold in the war-ravaged country. It has been the subject of a ferocious military campaign and relentless bombardment by Russia-backed Syrian govern-

ment troops since early December. More than 900,000 civilians have been on the move since then. Many now live in tents, abandoned buildings, makeshift shelters and in open fields near the Turkish border. As the advancing troops neared his hometown of Saraqeb two months ago, Mohammed fled with his wife and daughter further north to the town of Sarmada, where they are now staying in an abandoned house. Mohammed and his daughter, 3-year-old Salwa, became overnight celebrities after a video



Abdullah Mohammed plays with his daughter, 3-year-old Salwa, inside a house he recently fled to, in Sarmada, Syria. AP

they shot was shared widely on social media — a reminder of the horrors faced by children in Syria. In the video, Salwa, wearing a pink dress, stands next to her father. Mohammed asks his daughter: "Is that a plane or a shell?" "A shell, and when it falls we will laugh!" she replies. As the boom of the explosion is heard in the distance, the little girl jumps slightly and then bursts into hysterical giggles as her father laughs along and says: "It's funny, right?" Mohammed said he came up with the game to help his daughter

cope with her fear. Salwa has heard bombs all her life. As a baby there was no fear, but that changed after her first year. One day, they were at home in Saraqeb during Eid al-Fitr, the three-day Muslim holiday that marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Children outside were celebrating with fire crackers, and a big one exploded nearby. "She was frightened, but I took her out and showed her that children were playing and laughing... she was convinced," he recalled. That was how he got the idea to connect the sound of bombs with

laughter and kids playing, and to film himself laughing with her every time warplanes hit. He said now every time they hear the jets or outgoing artillery shells, Salwa turns to him and waits for his reaction. He pulls out his cellphone for a selfie video and they wait for it — and then they burst into laughter. On a recent day, Mohammed sat watching Salwa as she played with plastic Lego bricks, her hair in pigtails and wearing a blue dress. He said the war has wiped out the hopes and dreams of his generation and those of their children.