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TOP OF THE WORLD



Mohammad Rasoulof had just won the Berlin Film Festival's Golden Bear

IRAN
Noted filmmaker summoned to prison: Lawyer

Tehran: An Iranian filmmaker who just won the Berlin Film Festival's Golden Bear has been summoned to serve a one-year prison sentence over his movies, his lawyer said Wednesday. Mohammad Rasoulof's sentence came from three films he made that authorities found to be "propaganda against the system", his lawyer Nasser Zarafshan told *The Associated Press*. Rasoulof's sentence also included an order that he stop his filmmaking for two years as well, the lawyer said. The filmmaker received the order via a text message from the judiciary, Zarafshan said.

NEPAL
Oli undergoes kidney transplant

Kathmandu: A team of doctors that included noted Indian surgeon Anant Kumar carried out a kidney transplant on Nepal Prime Minister KP Oli at the Manmohan Cardiothoracic Vascular and Transplant Centre on Wednesday. The procedure was the second kidney transplant that Oli has undergone, and took nearly six hours. The hospital said his condition was stable and all parameters were normal, but declined to say if he could be described as out of danger. He was shifted to the ICU in the evening, the hospital said. Oli had undergone a kidney transplant for the first time in 2007 in New Delhi's Apollo hospital. **YUBARAJ GHIMIRE**

EGYPT
Ex-elite soldier turned Islamist militant hanged

Cairo: Egypt executed an ex-special forces officer turned top Islamist militant, Hisham Ashmawy, on Wednesday over involvement in several high-profile attacks, said the army. "The execution by hanging was carried out based on a decision by the military court ... and after taking all the relevant judicial procedures," said army spokesman Tamer al-Rifai. Ashmawy — dubbed Egypt's "most wanted man" by local media — was a former officer with Egypt's special forces who went on to fight with Al-Qaeda linked groups.

WORLD BRACES FOR LONG CORONAVIRUS FIGHT

Italy shuts all its educational institutes as toll rises to 107

Iran cancels Friday prayers in big cities, Saudi extends ban on travel to holy sites

MATT SEDENSKY & LORI HINNANT
BANGKOK, MARCH 4

SAUDI ARABIA banned citizens from performing the Muslim pilgrimage in Mecca, Italy ordered schools to close nationwide and Iran canceled Friday prayers for a second week as nations scrambled Wednesday to control the coronavirus outbreak.

From religion to sports, countries were taking drastic and increasingly visible measures to curb the new coronavirus that first emerged in China and was spreading quickly through Europe, the Mideast and the Americas. In the United States, frustration mounted over US officials' delays and missteps in testing people for the virus. Deaths spiked in Iran and Italy, which along with South Korea account for 80% of the new virus cases outside China, according to the World Health Organisation. In all, more than 94,000 people have contracted the virus worldwide, with more than 3,200 deaths.

"People are afraid and uncertain. Fear is a natural human response to any threat," said WHO's leader, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "But as we get more data, we are understanding this virus and the disease it causes more and more". In Daegu, the South Korean city at the centre of that country's outbreak, a shortage of hospital space meant about 2,300 patients were being cared for in other facilities while they awaited a hospital bed. South Korea reported 435 new infections Wednesday, far smaller than its high of 851 a day earlier. A total of 5,621 people in South Korea have contracted the virus and 32 have died. Italy's virus deaths rose to 107, the most of any country outside of China. Its outbreak has



Soldiers spray disinfectant on a street in Gyeongang, South Korea, Wednesday. AP

W.H.O. RELEASES FIGURE

MORTALITY RATE FOR COVID-19:
3.4%

WHO said data suggests that the COVID-19 is more fatal than the common flu, which has a mortality rate of less than 1%. However, the new coronavirus is not as easy to catch as the common flu.

been concentrated in the northern region of Lombardy, but fears over how the virus is spreading inside and outside the country prompted the government to order all schools to close nationwide through March 15. Iran reported 92 deaths among its 2,922 confirmed cases, although many fear the outbreak is far broader. Among the ill are members of the government, and the country cancelled Friday prayers for a second week. AP

Researchers identify 2 coronavirus types

ANDREW GALBRAITH & DAVID STANWAY
SHANGHAI, MARCH 4

SCIENTISTS IN China studying the coronavirus outbreak said they had found two main types of the disease could be causing infections. The researchers, from Peking University's School of Life Sciences and the Institut Pasteur of Shanghai under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, cautioned that their analysis examined a limited range of data, and said follow-up studies of larger data sets are needed to better understand the virus's evolution. The preliminary study found that a more aggressive type of the new coronavirus associated with the disease outbreak in Wuhan accounted for about 70% of analysed strains, while 30% was linked to a less aggressive type. The prevalence of the more



At Beijing Capital Airport on Wednesday. Reuters

aggressive virus decreased after early January 2020, they said. "These findings strongly support an urgent need for further immediate, comprehensive studies that combine genomic data, epidemiological data, and chart records of the clinical symptoms of patients with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)," they wrote. **REUTERS**

HONG KONG COURT FINDS BAN UNCONSTITUTIONAL
'UNLAWFUL TO DENY GAY COUPLES PUBLIC HOUSING'

Hong Kong's high court ruled that married same-sex couples should be allowed to apply for public housing after a government ban was found to be unconstitutional. It is a step forward for LGBTQ rights in Hong Kong, which has been criticised by campaigners for lagging behind on equality issues.

SUPER TUESDAY: BLOOMBERG DROPS OUT

Biden revives campaign, winning nine states, but Sanders takes California

JONATHAN MARTIN & ALEXANDER BURNS
MARCH 4

THE DEMOCRATIC presidential race emerged from Super Tuesday with two clear front-runners as Joe Biden won Texas, Virginia, North Carolina and at least six other states, largely through support from African Americans and moderates, while Sen. Bernie Sanders harnessed the backing of liberals and young voters to claim the biggest prize of the campaign, California, and several other primaries. The returns across the country on the biggest night of voting suggested that the Democratic contest was increasingly focused on two candidates who are standard-bearers for competing wings of the party, Biden in the political centre and Sanders on the left. Their two other major rivals, Sen. Elizabeth Warren and Michael Bloomberg, were on track to finish well behind them. Bloomberg has since dropped out of the race, just over three months after he began a campaign that was fuelled by his vast fortune and quickly grew to a sprawling political operation but failed to win the groundswell of moderate support he had sought. Bloomberg endorsed Biden, saying he had the best shot to beat President Donald Trump.

Biden's victories came chiefly in the South and the Midwest, and in some of them he won by unexpectedly wide margins. In a surprising upset, Biden even captured Warren's home state of Massachusetts, where he did not appear in person, and where Sanders had campaigned aggressively in recent days. It was a remarkable show of force for Biden, the former vice president. In just three days he resurrected a campaign that had been on the verge of collapse after he lost the first three nominating states. But he bounced back with a landslide win in South



Joe Biden speaks at a rally in Los Angeles. Reuters

Candidate	BIDEN	SANDERS	WARREN	BLOOMBERG	GABBARD
Super Tue	380	328	28	12	1
Total	433	388	36	12	1

■ 1,991 delegates to win nomination
Note: 749 of 1,338 Super Tuesday delegates awarded. Counting ongoing.

Carolina on Saturday, and on Tuesday, in addition to victories in Texas, Virginia, North Carolina and Massachusetts, he prevailed in Arkansas, Alabama, Tennessee, Oklahoma and Minnesota. Sanders rebounded late in the evening in delegate-rich Western states: He was quickly declared the winner in Colorado and Utah after polls closed there, and he also claimed the largest delegate lode of the primary race, California. Sanders also easily carried his home state of Vermont. Yet Biden's sweep of states across the South and the Midwest showed he had the makings of a formidable coalition that could propel him through the primaries. "We were told, well, when you got to Super Tuesday, it'd be over," a triumphant Biden, 77, said at a celebration in Los Angeles. "Well, it may be over for the other guy!" **NYT**

EXPLAINED
Biden wins big, but Sanders still in it

WHILE BIDEN won nine states on Tuesday and surged ahead of Sanders on delegate count, the latter's win in California — the most delegate-rich state — keeps him still well in the race. Only 749 out of 1,338 Super Tuesday delegates have been awarded so far, and as the results keep coming in, it is likely that Sanders will close the gap with Biden. Beyond Tuesday, there are hundreds more delegates up for grabs, and the two-way fight is set to be a close one.



Greta Thunberg addresses the environment committee at the European Parliament in Brussels. Reuters

EU commission unveils climate law amid criticism

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRUSSELS, MARCH 4

AMID FIERCE criticism from environmental activists, the European Commission unveiled plans Wednesday for its first ever climate law, which will act as the basis of the European Union's aim to make the 27-country bloc climate neutral by 2050. Under its Green Deal agenda, the EU's executive arm wants to legislate to make its ambition of cutting greenhouse gas emissions to zero by mid-century irreversible, and legally-binding for all member states. "This climate law will set in stone Europe's position as a cli-

mate leader on the global stage," said European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen. To establish the 2050 goal, the European Commission is proposing a mechanism for regularly raising the EU's emissions reduction target over the next three decades. However, there is no plan to increase the bloc's overall emissions goal for 2030. Climate activist Greta Thunberg, who attended Wednesday's climate discussions with EU commissioners, dismissed the proposed law. In an open letter, 34 activists, including Thunberg, stressed that instead of setting long-term goals, the EU should focus on emissions of carbon dioxide right now.

Trump campaign sues Washington Post for libel over opinion pieces

JONATHAN STEMPEL
NEW YORK, MARCH 4

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump's re-election campaign sued the *Washington Post* for libel on Tuesday over two opinion pieces that it said suggested improper ties between the campaign and Russia, North Korea or both. The campaign filed its lawsuit six days after filing a separate libel lawsuit against the *New York Times*, over an opinion piece it said falsely suggested a quid pro quo between Russian officials and Trump's 2016 campaign. Both lawsuits escalate the Republican president's long-running battle with news media he believes demonstrate bias against him, a list also including CNN and MSNBC and which he frequently brands "fake news." Trump's campaign is seeking millions of dollars in damages. Kristine Coratti Kelly, vice president of communications at the *Post*, said: "It's disappointing to see the President's campaign committee resorting to these types of tactics and we will vigorously defend this case." **REUTERS**

US launches airstrikes against Taliban to defend Afghan forces

Trump says had 'very good' chat with Taliban political chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KABUL, MARCH 4

THE US launched an airstrike against Taliban fighters to defend Afghan forces on Wednesday, an American military spokesman said, as violence spirals after a string of deadly attacks by the insurgents, throwing the country's nascent peace process into grave doubt. News of the airstrike in southern Helmand province — the first in 11 days — came hours after US President Donald Trump told reporters he had had a "very good" chat with the Taliban political chief, who on Saturday signed a historic deal with Washington to withdraw foreign forces. Since the signing in Doha however, the militants have ramped up violence against Afghan forces, casting a pall over peace talks between Kabul and the Taliban, due to begin on March 10. The historic telephonic conversation, between Trump and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, lasted more than half an hour, the Taliban said. Trump "emphasised the need



Afghan Army soldiers at a checkpoint in Kunduz where clashes took place between Taliban and Afghan forces. Reuters

to continue the reduction in violence, which made possible the signing of the historic United States-Taliban agreement on February 29," the White House said in a readout of the telephonic conversation on Tuesday. "I spoke to the leader of the Taliban today, we had a good conversation, we have agreed there is no violence, don't want violence. We will see what happens. They're dealing with Afghanistan but we will see what happens," Trump said. "The relationship is very good that I have with the mul-

lah," he added. Later, US Forces-Afghanistan spokesman Sonny Leggett tweeted an airstrike targeted Taliban fighters who were "actively attacking" an Afghan forces checkpoint in Helmand. "This was a defensive strike to disrupt the attack," he tweeted. "We call on the Taliban to stop needless attacks and uphold their commitments. As we have demonstrated, we will defend our partners when required." He said insurgents had carried out 43 attacks on checkpoints in Helmand on Tuesday alone.

Malaysia's PM delays Parliament and vote of no-confidence

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KUALA LUMPUR, MARCH 4

MALAYSIA'S NEW leader has postponed the next session of Parliament by more than two months, effectively delaying plans by Mahathir Mohamad's former ruling alliance to seek a no-confidence vote against him. Lower house speaker Mohamad Ariff Mohamad Yusof said in a statement Wednesday that lawmakers will reconvene on May 18 instead of March 9 as originally scheduled. He said the decision was based on Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's order, but no reason was given for the postponement. Muhyiddin, 72, was sworn in Sunday as Malaysia's eighth prime minister after his surprise weekend appointment by the king capped a week of political turmoil. Muhyiddin led his Bersatu party out of the governing Alliance of Hope, depriving it of a majority and causing its collapse less than two years after its historic victory in 2018 ousted a corruption-tainted coalition that had ruled for 61 years.

'IMAGINE THIS WERE YOUR SISTER,' FARROW WROTE IN SCATHING LETTER TO THE PUBLISHER

Ronan Farrow cuts ties with publisher over Woody Allen memoir

JENNIFER SCHUESSLER & JOHN WILLIAMS
MARCH 4

THE JOURNALIST Ronan Farrow, the author of the bestselling book *Catch and Kill*, said Tuesday that he would cut ties with his publisher, Hachette Book Group, after it announced that one of its divisions was publishing Woody Allen's autobiography next month.

Farrow is Allen's son with actress Mia Farrow, and his adopted sister, Dylan Farrow, has long accused Allen of molesting her when she was a child, allegations he has denied. In an email exchange, obtained by *The New York Times*, Farrow, whose reporting on accusations of sexual assault against Harvey Weinstein and other powerful men helped touch off the #MeToo movement, criticised Hachette, calling

its decision to publish Allen's memoir a betrayal. "Your policy of editorial independence among your imprints does not relieve you of your moral and professional obligations as the publisher of *Catch and Kill*, and as the leader of a company being asked to assist in efforts by abusive men to whitewash their crimes," Farrow wrote in an email to Michael Pietsch, the chief executive of Hachette, whose Little, Brown imprint pub-



Farrow is Allen's son with actress Mia Farrow, and his adopted sister, Dylan Farrow, has long accused Allen of molesting her when she was a child, allegations he has denied. Reuters



Allen's memoir is set to be published by Hachette, announced that it had acquired Allen's autobiography, titled *Apropos of Nothing*, to be published April 7. A news release described the book as "a comprehensive account of his life, both personal and professional," that would cover "his relationship with family, friends and the loves of his life". In an interview Tuesday, Pietsch declined to provide further details on the book, such as its initial print run or how much Grand

lished *Catch and Kill*. "As you and I worked on *Catch and Kill* — a book in part about the damage Woody Allen did to my family — you were secretly planning to publish a book by the person who committed those acts of sexual abuse," Farrow added. "Obviously I can't in good conscience work with you any more," he wrote at the end of his message. "Imagine this were your sister." The email to Pietsch came the day after Grand Central, another

Central paid for it. And he declined to say anything else about the contents, beyond that it was "the complete story of his life, from the beginning to the present moment," told in "Woody Allen's unmistakable voice." Pietsch said he had called Farrow after hearing he was unhappy about the publication. And he reiterated what he said he had told Farrow: that a basic principle of publishing was that its divisions do not interfere editorially with each other. **NYT**