



BRITAIN HARRY, MEGHAN ON FINAL ROYAL DUTY

Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, will fulfil their final royal commitment when they appear Monday at the annual Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey in London. It's the last time they will be seen at work with the entire royal Windsor clan before they fly off into self-imposed exile in North America.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Abdullah Hussain with Sheikh Hamdan

UAE

Indian boy's wish to meet Dubai Crown Prince comes true

Dubai: The wish of a seven-year-old cancer-stricken Indian boy came true when Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan met him and posted their picture on social media. Abdullah Hussain from Hyderabad, suffering from third stage cancer, had expressed his wish on social media to meet Sheikh Hamdan, following which he was featured in a TV news report. *Gulf News* reported, "Shaikh Hamdan is so cool, adventurous and so kind. I want to meet his pets and I want to see his dresses," Abdullah said in a video. After the family's meeting with Sheikh Hamdan on Friday, Abdullah's mother Nausheen Fatima said the boy and their family was full of joy and gratitude.

AFGHANISTAN

Gunmen kill three including provincial official in Kabul

Kabul: Unknown gunmen shot and killed three people in Kabul on Sunday, including a member of eastern Logar province's provincial council, underscoring the ongoing risk of violence despite U.S.-led efforts to negotiate peace with the insurgent Taliban. "Logar provincial council member, Naser Ghairat and two of his bodyguards were killed and another wounded," Kabul police spokesman Ferdaus Faramarz said. No group has claimed responsibility for the killing in the capital, which has already had a violent few days.

USA

1 killed, 17 injured in party shooting

Cleveland: At least one person was killed and 17 people were injured when gunfire erupted following a fight at a party in Cleveland, Ohio, attended by multiple motorcycle clubs, police said. A 48-year-old man was found dead with multiple gunshot wounds when Cleveland police officers responded to an address in a neighbourhood on the city's east side at about 11.30 pm on Saturday. Police said many other victims left the scene in private vehicles and began to arrive at various hospitals.

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK: ITALY DEATH TOLL RISES TO 366

Quarter of Italy's population under lockdown, triggering travel chaos

Movement restricted for 16 million people in the country's north until April 3

PAOLO SANTALUCIA & YURI KAGEYAMA
ROME, MARCH 8

ITALY ANNOUNCED a sweeping quarantine early Sunday for its northern regions, igniting travel chaos as it restricted the movements of a quarter of its people in a bid to halt the new coronavirus' relentless march across Europe. Shortly after midnight, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte signed a decree affecting 16 million people in the country's prosperous north, including the Lombardy region and at least 14 provinces in neighboring regions. The extraordinary measures will be in place until April 3. "For Lombardy and for the other northern provinces that I have listed, there will be a ban for everybody to move in and out of these territories and also within the same territory," Conte said. "Exceptions will be allowed only for proven professional needs, exceptional cases and health issues."



The usually lively Duomo square in Milan wears a deseted look on Sunday. Reuters

There was chaos and confusion in the hours before Conte signed the decree, as word leaked to the news media about the planned quarantine. Students at the University of Padua in northern Italy who had been out at bars on a Saturday night saw the rumours on their cellphones and rushed back to their apartments to grab their belongings and head to the train station. Hundreds of passengers, some wearing face masks, crammed onto the last local train leaving Padua at 11.30 pm. Anxious students wrapped scarves around their heads, shared sanitizing gel, and sat on their suitcases in the aisles. No conductor came by to check tickets. Italy's death toll from the virus shot up by 133 to 366 Sunday and the number of infections rose by a record 1,492 to hit 7,375. AP

THE LOCKDOWN

AFFECTED AREAS
The region of Lombardy and the provinces of Modena, Parma, Piacenza, Reggio Emilia, Rimini, Pesaro, Urbino, Alessandria, Asti, Novara, Verbano-Cusio-Ossola, Vercelli, Padua, Treviso and Venice.

CURBS ON MOVEMENT
The decree says people should "avoid any movement in and out" of these territories and also any trips within this area.

GATHERINGS BANNED
All events from culture to sport, religious activities and fairs are suspended. Cinemas, museums, pubs, and discos must all close. Ceremonies, including funerals are also suspended. Schools and universities remain shut.

Attendee at event featuring Trump has coronavirus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, MARCH 8

A PERSON who attended a gathering of top US political conservatives including President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence has tested positive for the new coronavirus, officials said.



Trump at the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta

The Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) is one of the country's largest annual gatherings of political conservatives, and in addition to Trump and Pence the February 26-29 event near Washington also featured several Cabinet members. "The exposure occurred previous to the conference. A New Jersey hospital tested the person, and CDC confirmed the positive result," the event's organiser American Conservative Union tweeted on Saturday, referring

to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The individual is quarantined in New Jersey. "This attendee had no interaction with the President or the Vice President and never attended the events in the main hall," the statement added.

ACU chairman Matt Schlapp, however, said he interacted with the person at the event — and while the timeline is unclear, Schlapp shook Trump's hand on the last day of the conference.

10 die at collapsed hotel site in China

TEN PEOPLE have died and 23 remain trapped after the collapse of a hotel that was being used to quarantine people under observation for the coronavirus in the Chinese city of Quanzhou, authorities said on Sunday. More than 70 people were believed to have been initially trapped in the seven-storey building, which collapsed on Saturday evening. As of 4 pm Beijing time on Sunday, authorities had retrieved 48 individuals from the site of the collapse, the government said. REUTERS

US cruise ship to dock in California

THE GRAND Princess cruise ship, where 21 people have tested positive for the coronavirus, was headed to the port of Oakland, California, after idling off San Francisco for days. There is evidence the ship was the breeding ground for a deadly cluster of almost 20 cases during an earlier voyage. "Those that will need to be quarantined will be quarantined," US Vice President Mike Pence said. AP

Bangladesh reports its first three cases

BANGLADESH CONFIRMED its first three cases of coronavirus in the country, according to a media report. The affected were found positive for the infection Saturday, the *Dhaka Tribune* reported. "Among them, two of the victims had recently returned from Italy while the other is a relative of one of the returnees," Meerjady Sabrina Flora, the director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, said. PTI

Migrant crisis: Open your gates, Turkey President urges Greece

EZGI ERKOYUN
ISTANBUL, MARCH 8

TURKISH PRESIDENT Tayyip Erdogan urged Greece on Sunday to "open your gates" to refugees trying to enter the European Union from Turkey and said he hoped to win more support on migration from the EU at talks on Monday. Tens of thousands of migrants have been trying to get into Greece, an EU member state, since Turkey said on Feb. 28 it would no longer try to keep them on its territory as agreed in 2016 with the EU in return for billions of euros in aid.

Turkey hosts about 3.6 million war refugees from Syria, where its troops and allied rebel forces are battling Russian-backed government forces, and says the EU has failed to honour promises made to Ankara. "We were hoping to get much more support from the international community when it comes to refugees. I have a meeting with European Union officials tomorrow in Belgium. We will discuss these issues," Erdogan said. REUTERS

Kamala Harris endorses Biden's White House bid



TREVOR HUNNICUTT
JACKSON, MARCH 8

US SENATOR Kamala Harris, a former 2020 Democratic presidential candidate, on Sunday said she would endorse her one-time rival Joe Biden's bid for the White House. "I have decided that I am, with great enthusiasm, going to endorse Joe Biden for president of the United States," she said in a recorded message on Twitter. "I really believe in him and I have known him for a long time."

Biden has been eager to capitalise on a string of wins in South Carolina and a set of states that voted last Tuesday, where he was helped by the endorsements of one-time rivals Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar. On Saturday in St. Louis, Biden thanked them and supporters of Harris, fueling speculation that the former Democratic presidential candidate may be about to endorse him. "We're going to unite this party and unite this country," Biden said.

Biden has to win a primary against Bernie Sanders in order to be the Democratic nominee to face Donald Trump in the November presidential election. Democrats in Michigan, Missouri and four other places

EXPLAINED

Harris a potential V-P pick for Biden

DESPITE CLASHING on the debate stage when Harris was still in the running for the Democratic nomination, there has been weeks of speculation that she could be picked by Biden as his running mate. The 55-year-old Harris, who has Indian and Jamaican roots and is famous for her sharp rebukes of Republican policy in the Senate and on Congressional panels, has been seen as an ideal partner for the 77-year-old Biden, who has faced growing criticism for regular gaffes on the campaign trail. Biden has also praised Harris's record as attorney general of California, during which time she worked closely with his late son Beau, who was then the A-G of Delaware.

hold nominating contests on Tuesday. REUTERS



Rows of empty chairs, lined up by family members of victims of the MH17 crash line for each seat on the plane, during a protest outside the Russian Embassy in The Hague. Reuters

Empty chairs for MH17 victims outside Russian embassy on eve of trial

TOBY STERLING
THE HAGUE, MARCH 8

ROWS OF white chairs were placed in front of Russia's embassy in The Hague on Sunday in a quiet protest by families of those who were shot down with Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, on the eve of the trial — in absentia — of four men accused of murder for their involvement.

MH17 was downed over rebel-held territory in eastern Ukraine in July 2014, by what international investigators say was a Russian missile sent to help Moscow-backed rebels fight Ukrainian government forces. All 298 people aboard died, including 196 Dutch citizens.

Russia, which has been held politically responsible by the Netherlands and Australia, denies any involvement.

"This is for me a very beautiful symbol for 298 people who perished. They are gone. My brother never returned," said Piet Ploeg, whose older brother Alex died in the crash.

"The idea of the action is to make perfectly clear to the Russian state that they have to cooperate with the investigation".

Embassy officials did not comment. Last week a spokesman for President Vladimir Putin said the Kremlin would wait for the outcome of the trial, but that it doubted the objectivity of the Dutch-led investigation. REUTERS

ON WOMEN'S DAY

UN chief says gender inequality is biggest human rights challenge

EDITH M LEDERER
UNITED NATIONS, MARCH 8

CALLING HIMSELF "a proud feminist," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres lashed out at men who abuse power and declared before Sunday's observances of International Women's Day that the fight for gender equality is "the biggest human rights challenge we face".

Twenty-five years after 189 countries adopted a 150-page road map for achieving equality for women, a new report by UN Women says the reality is that millions of women still face poverty, discrimination and violence. It notes over 70% of lawmakers and parliamentarians and managers are men and nearly 500,000 women and girls over the age of 15 are illiterate. Guterres told the UN's International Women's Day observance Friday that "gender inequality is the overwhelming injustice of our day."



"Deep-rooted patriarchy and misogyny have created a yawning gender power gap in our economies, our political systems, our corporations, our societies and our culture." — ANTONIO GUTERRES, UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

misogyny have created a yawning gender power gap in our economies, our political systems, our corporations, our societies and our culture," he said. "Women are still very frequently denied a voice; their opinions are ignored and their experience discounted." AP

Women's rights activists attacked, then detained in Kyrgyzstan's capital

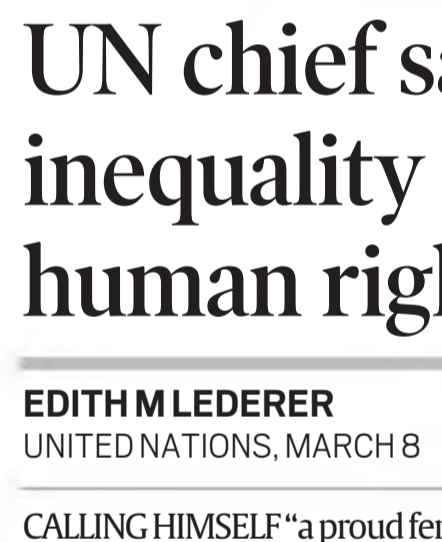
REUTERS
BISHKEK, MARCH 8

POLICE IN Kyrgyzstan detained dozens of women's rights activists on Sunday shortly after journalists witnessed the protesters being attacked by masked men.

The activists gathered in one of the squares of capital Bishkek in the Central Asian country, to stage a march of solidarity against violence on International Women's Day. But masked men, some of whom wore traditional Kyrgyz

white felt hats, attacked the protesters, grabbing and tearing apart their banners, in the presence of multiple journalists including a Reuters reporter. The attackers left as soon as police arrived on the scene and proceeded to detain about 50 activists, mostly women. It was unclear what charges they could face. The Bishkek police department could not be immediately reached for comment. Activists say women's rights are deteriorating in the country of 6 million amid a resurgence of right-wing ideology.

Critics say it flouts freedom of



Kyrgyz law enforcement officers detain an activist at a rally in Bishkek on Sunday. Reuters

'I WOULD NOT FEEL COMFORTABLE FACING A JUDGE WEARING A HEADSCARF HERE... I WOULD WORRY ABOUT THEIR NEUTRALITY'

A Quebec ban on religious symbols upends lives and careers

DAN BILEFSKY
MONTREAL, MARCH 8

A MUSLIM lawyer who wears a headscarf put aside her aspiration to become a public prosecutor. A Sikh teacher with a turban moved about 2,800 miles from Quebec to Vancouver, calling herself a "refugee in her own country." And an Orthodox Jewish teacher who wears a head kerchief is worried that she could be blocked from a promotion. Since the Quebec government in June banned school-

teachers, police officers, prosecutors and other public sector employees from wearing religious symbols while at work, people like these three women have been grappling with the consequences. Francois Legault, the right-leaning Quebec premier, says the law — which applies to Muslim headscarves, Sikh turbans, Jewish skullcaps, Catholic crosses and other religious symbols — upholds the separation between religion and state, and maintains the neutrality of public sector workers. The government has stressed

that the vast majority of Quebecers support the ban. "I would not feel comfortable being faced with a judge or lawyer in court wearing a headscarf here, because I would worry about their neutrality," said Radhia Ben Amor, a research coordinator at the University of Montreal, who is Muslim and said she moved from Tunisia to live in a more secular country. But the law has prompted vocal protests and legal challenges, as well as condemnation by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Critics say it flouts freedom of



Muslim, Sikh and Jewish women who wear religious headgear have had their careers affected by the law banning religious symbols at places of work. NYT

religion, breaches constitutional protections and excludes minorities who choose to wear symbols of faith from vital professions. They also say implementing the law will be fraught because it can be hard to discern a religious symbol from a fashion accessory or nonreligious garb. The English Montreal School Board said the law was forcing it to turn away qualified teachers. It said at least one teacher had removed her headscarf while at work to keep her job. The Coalition Inclusion Québec — a group that includes

Roman Catholics, Jews, Sikhs and Muslims — is challenging the law in court, along with three teachers, including two Muslims and a Roman Catholic. Perri Ravon, a lawyer who has worked on two of the lawsuits against the ban, said that at least for now, "the law is disproportionately affecting Muslim women because the hijab is an outwardly visible religious symbol." She noted that a Catholic cross was less conspicuous since it could be concealed in a blouse or a shirt while at work. Nonetheless, the Catholic

teacher named in one of the suits, Andréa Lauzon, who wears a visible cross and medallion of the Virgin Mary, said in court papers that her faith and identity were inextricably bound, and that her constitutional right to freedom of religion was being breached. The ban has its roots in Quebec's historic evolution into an abidingly secular society with a visceral distrust of religion, stemming from the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, when Quebecers revolted against dominance of the Roman Catholic Church. NYT