

IN BRIEF

Climate talks begin in Poland

■ **KATOWICE:** Delegates from nearly 200 nations on Sunday began two weeks of talks to tackle deep political divisions at the most important UN meeting on global warming since the landmark 2015 Paris deal to shift away from fossil fuels. Expectations are low that negotiations in Katowice, at the heart of Poland's coal region, will fully resolve concerns laid out in reports over recent weeks on the severity of rising greenhouse gas emissions. Reuters

Spanish boat

■ **BARCELONA:** Eleven migrants who were stranded on a Spanish fishing boat for more than a week after being rescued off Libya were brought to Malta on Sunday, ending an international standoff, but Valletta said they would later be taken to Spain. Reuters

SANTA RUN



A woman takes part in the Santa Claus Run in Budapest, Hungary, on Sunday. (Reuters)

Iran on missile test

■ **DUBAI:** Iran said on Sunday it would continue missile tests to build up its defences and denied this was in breach of UN resolutions following US allegations that Tehran had tested a new missile capable of carrying multiple warheads. US secretary of state Mike Pompeo on Saturday condemned what he called Iran's testing of a medium-range ballistic missile in violation of the 2015 international agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme, from which Washington has withdrawn. Reuters

Netanyahu blow

■ **JERUSALEM:** Israeli police on Sunday said they had found enough evidence for bribery and fraud charges to be brought against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife in a third corruption case against the Israeli leader. Authorities allege Netanyahu awarded regulatory favours to Israel's leading telecommunications company, Bezeq Telecom Israel, in return for more positive coverage of him and his wife on a news website, Walla, owned by the company. Netanyahu denies any wrongdoing. Reuters

ANXIOUS WAIT



Girls wait next to a charity tap where people collect drinking water amid fears of a new cholera outbreak in Sanaa, Yemen. (Reuters)

Spain polls

■ **SEVILLE:** Polls opened in Spain's Andalusia region on Sunday in a first electoral test for Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, whose minority government has struggled to pass a budget since taking office last summer. Reuters

America and China call truce in trade war

Trump and Xi exchange reassurances

MARK LANDLER

Buenos Aires: The US and China called a truce in their trade war on Saturday after President Donald Trump agreed to hold off on new tariffs and President Xi Jinping pledged to increase Chinese purchases of American products. The two also set the stage for more painstaking negotiations to resolve deeply rooted differences over trade.

The compromise, struck over a steak dinner at the Group of 20 meeting here and announced in a White House statement, was less a breakthrough than a breakdown averted. The two leaders remain far apart on basic issues of market access and trade policy, and there was no sign that either planned to back down on those.

Still, the handshake deal between Trump and Xi, after what the White House called a "highly successful meeting", pauses what was becoming a headlong race toward economic conflict. It will reassure jittery financial markets, as well as American farmers, who worried about the fallout from a prolonged trade battle.

In a significant concession, Trump will postpone a plan to raise tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods to 25 per cent, from 10 per cent, on January 1. The Chinese agreed to an unspecified increase in their purchases of American industrial, energy and agricultural products, which Beijing hit with retaliatory tariffs after Trump targeted everything from steel to consumer electronics.

The countries set an ambitious deadline of 90 days to reach a broader trade agreement, with the White House warning that if they did not come to terms by then, Trump would raise the existing tariff rate to 25 per cent.

"The relationship is very special — the relationship that I have with President Xi," Trump told reporters as he sat across a long table from the Chinese leader before dinner

was served. "I think that is going to be a very primary reason why we'll probably end up with getting something that will be good for China and good for the United States."

Xi replied: "Only with cooperation between us can we serve the interest of world peace and prosperity."

As the dinner ended, the Chinese and American officials applauded the two leaders.

For Trump, the agreement was an upbeat end to his subdued visit to the G-20 meeting. He dodged unsavoury friends, smiled through chilly encounters with allies and cancelled a news conference out of respect for his predecessor, George Bush, whose death on Friday was a reminder of the role that American Presidents once played at these gatherings.

On his second day in Buenos Aires, Trump said little about global security or diplomacy, keeping a single-minded focus on trade. That put leaders like Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in an awkward position, because Germany, as a member of the European Union, cannot negotiate by itself with the US on trade issues.

"We have a tremendous trade imbalance, but we're going to get that straightened out," he said before meeting Merkel on Saturday morning. "We all understand each other."

American and Chinese officials conducted quiet talks about a compromise over the last several weeks. But the outcome remained in doubt until the end, when Trump, flanked by his top aides, sat down with Xi and his aides to a meal of grilled sirloin and bottles of Malbec.

Trump had veered from optimism to wariness about a deal, sometimes in the course of a single statement. His economic team offered conflicting advice, with moderates like treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin counselling compromise, while hard-liners like Peter Navarro, the White House director of trade, urged him to double down on his pressure.

New York Times News Service

PETERS.GOODMAN

London: Only a few months ago, the world's fortunes appeared increasingly robust. For the first time since the global financial crisis, every major economy was growing in unison.

So much for all that.

The global economy is now palpably weakening, even as most countries are still grappling with the damage from that last downturn. Many nations are mired in stagnation or sliding that way. Oil prices are falling and factory orders are diminishing, reflecting slackening demand for goods. Companies are warning of disappointing profits, sending stock markets into a frenetic bout of selling that reinforces the slowdown.

Germany and Japan have both contracted in recent months. China is slowing more than experts anticipated. Even the US, the world's largest economy, and oft-trumpeted standout performer, is expected to decelerate next year as the stimulative effects of President Donald Trump's \$1.5-trillion tax cut wear off, leaving huge public debts.

The reasons for this turn run from rising interest rates delivered by the Federal Reserve and other central banks to the unfolding trade war unleashed by the Trump administration. The likelihood that Britain's torturous exit from the European Union will damage trade across the English Channel has discouraged investment.

None of this amounts to a screaming emergency, or even a pronounced drop in commercial activity. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a think-tank run by the world's most advanced nations, recently concluded that the global economy would expand by 3.5 per cent next year, down from 3.7 per cent this year.

Yet in declaring that "the global expansion has peaked," the brains at the OECD effectively concluded that the current situation is as good as it gets before the next pause or downturn. If this is indeed the high-water mark of global prosperity, that is likely to come as a shock to the tens of millions of people who have yet to recover from the devastation of the Great Recession.

Though the slowdown appears mild, it also holds the potential to intensify the wide-

Global economy: not alarming but worrying



US President Donald Trump (right) at a dinner with China's President Xi Jinping at the end of the G20 Leaders' Summit in Buenos Aires on Saturday. (AFP)

spread sense of grievance roiling many societies, contributing to the embrace of populists with autocratic impulses. In an age of lamentation over economic injustice, and with political movements on the march decrying immigrants as threats, weaker growth is likely to spur more conflict. Slower growth is not going to make anyone feel more secure about the prospect of robots replacing human hands, or jobs shifting to lower-wage lands.

"It's just going to exacerbate the tensions that have led to the socio-economic and political problems we have seen in the United States and parts of Europe," said Thomas A. Bernes, an economist at the Center for International Governance Innovation, a Canadian research institution. "Inequality is going to become even more pronounced."

In Greece, Spain and Italy, the youth unemployment rate is stuck above 30 per cent. In Britain, the typical worker has not seen a pay raise in more than a decade, after accounting for inflation. South Africa's economy is smaller today than it was in 2010, and now the country is ensnared in recession.

In the US, the unemploy-

ment rate has plunged to 3.7 per cent, its lowest level since 1969. Yet so many people have given up looking for work that less than two-thirds of the working age population was employed as of October, according to the labour department. That was a lower share than before the 2008 financial crisis.

"We see a lost generation," said Swati Dhingra, an economist at the London School of Economics. "There was already wage stagnation and productivity stagnation. The trade war has exacerbated all of that."

The biggest risk to global growth appears to be that the trade war is, at least in part, working as designed.

Although the US and China agreed on Saturday to further trade talks, Trump has excoriated China as a mortal threat to American livelihoods, accusing Beijing of subsidising exports and stealing intellectual property. He has affixed tariffs on some \$250 billion in Chinese exports in an effort to pressure Beijing to change its ways.

This has produced little change in China's economic practices. It has actually increased the American trade deficit with China, contrary to

Trump's stated aim.

But it has thrown sand in the gears of China's industrial juggernaut. As of September, China's rail freight usage, bank lending and electrical consumption had increased about 9 per cent compared with the previous year, down from a pace of more than 11 per cent in January.

China's growth was already slowing as its leaders seek to transition from an economy powered by prodigious exports, in enterprises that have spewed pollution, towards a cleaner future propelled by domestic consumption. But the American tariffs have prompted multinational companies to shift orders from Chinese factories to plants in other lands, from Vietnam to Mexico.

Given that China is the world's second largest economy, the consequences of its slowing ripple out widely, helping explain a pronounced drop in factory orders in Germany. American farmers have suffered lost sales as China has responded to tariffs by slapping duties on imports from the US, not least on soybeans. Stock markets and oil prices have plunged in part on fears that China will buy fewer goods.

Much of the dip in American share prices reflects the increasingly embattled state of major technology companies like Facebook, which has drawn public ire for failing to prevent its platform from serving as a primary conduit for hate speech and misinformation. But technology shares have also plunged because many companies, Apple among them, now depend on China for enormous volumes of sales — sales now at risk in the face of the trade war.

A glance at Trump's Twitter feed reveals that share prices are one of the data points he cares about deeply. As the markets recoil, the Trump administration has flashed signals that it may be prepared to entertain a ceasefire with China to limit economic damage.

But the conflict goes far beyond trade, with hawks inside the Trump administration seeking to inflict harm on China to impede its continued ascent as a global superpower. If that is the mission, Trump may be willing to absorb economic costs as the price of containment.

That take appears consistent with Trump's growing fixation on the Federal Reserve, which the president just branded "a much bigger problem than China".

In lifting interest rates, the American central bank has been acting under the accepted wisdom that too much easy money sloshing around for too long tends to produce trouble, from higher prices to financial mischief. Yet the effect of raising rates is to limit American economic growth, hence Trump's unhappiness.

The Fed's action has also visited distress on emerging markets. Higher American interest rates have prompted investors to abandon developing economies in favour of safer, more-rewarding opportunities in the US. The changing of the tide has contributed to crises in Turkey and Argentina, while denting the value of currencies and slowing growth prospects from India to South Africa.

The global economy is clearly far removed from the terrifying days of the financial crisis. Yet it never really got its groove back enough to generate impressive numbers of jobs, or put meaningful pay increases in the pockets of ordinary people.

And now, despite all that, leaner times are unfolding.

New York Times News Service

Contempt alert to May

London: Britain's main Opposition Labour Party said on Sunday it would press for contempt proceedings against the government if Prime Minister Theresa May fails to produce the full legal advice she has received on her Brexit deal.

The threat is yet another hurdle May must clear before parliament votes on December 11 on her deal for Britain's exit from the European Union, its biggest shift in foreign and trade policy for over 40 years.

With the odds looking stacked against her, May is touring the country and media studios to try to win over critics, including both eurosceptics and europhiles, who say the

deal will leave Britain a diminished state, still linked economically to the EU but no longer with a say over the rules.

May often says her deal will protect jobs and end free movement. She hopes her argument that it is the only feasible deal with the EU and that voting it down will raise the risks of a "no-deal" Brexit or no Brexit at all will concentrate minds. Labour has said it will vote against the deal. On Sunday its Brexit spokesman, Keir Starmer, increased the pressure on May by saying Labour would start contempt proceedings

against the government if it did not publish its legal advice. He also said Labour would seek a vote of no confidence in the government if she lost the vote, a widely forecast outcome.

"In nine days time, parliament has got to take probably the most important decision it has taken for a generation and it's obviously important that we know the full legal implications of what the Prime Minister wants us to sign up to," Starmer said. "I don't want to go down this path... (but) if they don't produce it tomorrow then we will start contempt proceedings. This would be a collision course between the government and parliament," he told Sky News.

British media said the contempt move was also supported by the small Northern Irish party which props up May's minority government.

The government has promised to give lawmakers access to the legal analysis of the Brexit deal and attorney general Geoffrey Cox will make a statement to parliament on Monday.

Opposition parties suspect it will only offer a summary of that advice.

"This is an unprecedented situation and that's why we've got an unprecedented situation just tomorrow (Monday) when the attorney general will be making a statement to parliament," Conservative Party chairman Brandon Lewis told Sky News. "And I would hope again that when colleagues hear what the attorney general has to say, they will be satisfied that the government has delivered on what it said it would do." Reuters



James Comey

Deal on Comey's deposition

Washington: Former FBI director James Comey on Sunday withdrew his bid to quash a congressional subpoena compelling him to testify in secret about the bureau's decisions on investigations ahead of the 2016 presidential election, his lawyer said.

Comey agreed to sit down for a closed-door deposition on Friday. Republicans on the US House of Representatives Judiciary Committee pledged to provide Comey with a full transcript within 24 hours of his testimony, and he will be permitted to "make any or all of that transcript public", Comey's lawyer David Kelley said. In addition, a representative from the FBI will attend to help advise Comey.

A judge had been set to issue a ruling on Comey's request to quash the subpoena and halt congressional proceedings — a request that has never previously been granted by a judge in the US.

At the heart of the case is whether the panel should be able to force Comey to testify in secret about the FBI's investigations into former secretary of state Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server and whether President Donald Trump's campaign colluded with Russia. The Republican-led inquiry has been lambasted by Democrats as a partisan effort. Reuters

Big boss safe: The Boss

NICK RUFFORD

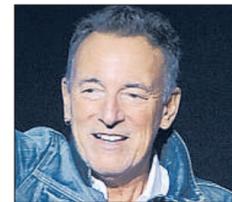
London: He is the authentic voice of blue-collar America and an outspoken supporter of the Democrats, but Bruce Springsteen admits his party is struggling to find a candidate with a chance of beating Donald Trump.

Springsteen, 69, who campaigned for Barack Obama, helping him win two terms as President, says in an interview with *The Sunday Times* that he can see no obvious Democratic rival to the Donald.

"I don't see anyone out there at the moment... the man who can beat Trump or the woman who can beat Trump."

The singer admits many of his American fans had been won over by Trump's persuasive rhetoric, and that a Democratic rival had to be able to "speak some of the same language" to have a hope of electoral success.

Springsteen also reveals how the recent deaths of a former bandmate had made a deep impression on him. George Theiss, the lead singer



Bruce Springsteen

of the Castles, a band that Springsteen joined as a teenager, died earlier this year from lung cancer.

He says he has recently grown "more spiritual", and feels drawn back to the Catholic faith and the church where he served as an altar boy in the 1950s. "As you grow older... you're closer to the other world, so maybe that has something to do with it. But I visit my small church quite often."

"I'm not sure whether that's for religious or nostalgic purposes (but) I continue to feel the Catholic Church's imprint on me rather strongly," he says.

The Sunday Times, London

MEDICINE TO COPE WITH PRESSURES OF ROYAL LIFE

Meghan, sip tea with Queen

ROYA NIKKHAIH

London: She is said to have had a meltdown over a tiara, been distressed by the "musty" smell in St George's Chapel, Windsor, and been unnecessarily rude to Kensington Palace staff.

A spate of unflattering media reports about the Duchess of Sussex's less than diplomatic debut suggests she needs an experienced royal role model to adjust to life under constant scrutiny.

Disturbed by the reports of tension behind palace walls, courtiers have been praising Sophie, Countess of Wessex, as someone who endured a rocky introduction to the royal family when she married Prince Edward in 1999, but went on to build an "incredibly close" relationship with the Queen.

Palace sources also said the Queen was keen to lend Meghan her support. "Her Majesty has seen it all and could offer the duchess some helpful advice at the moment," one source said.

"(Meghan) would do well to nurture that relationship and pop over for the occasional cup of tea with the Queen. That



Meghan Markle

is what Sophie Wessex has quietly done so well."

The former Sophie Rhys-Jones was running her own public relations firm when she became engaged to Edward, and overcame several unpleasant crushes with the media on her way to becoming one of the busier members of the royal family. Last year she performed more engagements than either Prince William or Prince Harry.

She also became close to the Queen at an early stage. The source added: "She

will go over for a chat, or take the children to watch some TV with her. She has built up that relationship, now they are incredibly close and discuss everything. Meghan doesn't need an invitation — this is a family, after all."

Such an approach would help divert attention from headlines such as "Meghan made Kate cry" and "Meghan kicks up a stink!", which have recently replaced glowing accounts of the duchess's growing baby bump.

The change of tone comes as the Duke of Sussex and his pregnant wife are to move away from Kensington Palace, home to the Cambridge family, to Frogmore Cottage, Windsor.

Aides have dismissed reports that the move was prompted by a feud between the two royal couples, but acknowledge that Kate and Meghan are "very different characters".

They might also be celebrating Christmas in different places this year. William and Kate are likely to miss Sandringham to spend Christmas at the Middleton's family home in Bucklebury, Berkshire.

The Sunday Times, London