

Groton Daily Independent

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Upcoming Events

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Boys' Basketball Regions: Groton Area hosts Aberdeen Roncalli, 7 p.m.
City Council Meeting at Groton Community Center, 7 p.m.

Thursday, March 5, 2020

Girls' Basketball Region at highest seed

Friday, March 6, 2020

Boys' Basketball Region at highest seed
State Debate at Huron

Saturday, March 7

State Debate at Huron
Regional DI Competition at Groton Area

Sunday, March 8, 2020

2:00pm- 6:00pm: Open Gym at GHS Arena

2:00-4:00 PM Grades JK-8 (Students must be accompanied by an adult) 4:00-6:00 PM Grades 6-12

Monday, March 9, 2020

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.
Girls SoDak 16

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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It's Boys' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Aberdeen
Roncalli
Cavaliers** VS



Groton Area Tigers

Region 1A

7 p.m., Tuesday, March 3

Groton Area Arena

Broadcast Sponsored By

Aberdeen Chrysler Center
BaseKamp Lodge
Bierman Farm Sales
BK Custom T's & More
Groton American Legion Post #39
Groton Chiropractic Clinic
Groton Ford
Groton Vet Clinic
Harr Motors - Bary Keith
K&K Pharis Partnership
Lori's Pharmacy
Milbrandt Enterprises
Olson Development
Professional Management Services
S & S Lumber & Hardware Hank
SD Army National Guard
Subway of Groton
Tyson DeHoet Trucking

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda
March 3, 2020 – 7:00pm
Groton Community Center

1. Bev Sombke – Garden Club President – Irrigation at the City Park
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Minutes
4. Bills
5. Department reports
6. Update on water meter system and swimming pool expenses
7. Baseball/Softball Foundation Annual Dueling Duo Fundraiser – April 4th at the American Legion – Request the City to donate 2 baseball season tickets
8. City to follow Governor Noem’s declaration for state government offices to be closed April 10th and 13th for Easter
9. Sioux Falls Employment Law Seminar – April Abeln attend
10. A&B Business Contract for printers at City Hall
11. Select an Equalization Meeting Date March 17th
12. Second Reading of the Summer Salary Ordinance #733
13. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
14. Adjournment

Snell rallies Webster Area in fourth quarter to end Groton Area's season

Groton Area's girls basketball season came to an end Monday night as Webster Area pulled out a 47-44 win. It was first round of the Region 1A tournament played in Groton Area.

The event was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Aberdeen Chrysler Center, BaseKamp Lodge, Bierman Farm Sales, BK Custom T's & More, Groton American Legion Post #39, Groton Chiropractic Clinic, Groton Ford, Groton Vet Clinic, Harr Motors - Bary Keith, K&K Pharis Partnership, Lori's Pharmacy, Milbrandt Enterprises, Olson Development, Professional Management Services, S & S Lumber & Hardware Hank, SD Army National Guard, Subway of Groton, Tyson DeHoet Trucking. Kaden Kurtz and Cade Guthmiller provided the play-by-play on GDILIVE.COM.

Groton Area started out strong with a 14-8 first quarter lead and a 23-18 lead at half time. The Bearcats scored nine straight points to tie the game at 25 and at 28, but Groton Area still had the lead at the end of the third quarter, 32-31. From there, it was close all the way to the end with the lead changing hands three more times and the game being tied twice. It was tied at 43 with 56 seconds left. Abby Snell scored nine points in the fourth quarter to help lead the Bearcats to the win down the stretch.

Gracie Traphagen had a double-double night with 13 points and 10 rebounds. Brooke Gengerke led the scoring with 15 points and she had three rebounds, one assist and one steal. Alyssa Thaller had seven points, three rebounds, four assists and two steals. Maddie Bjerke had four points. Allyssa Locke had three points, five rebounds and two assists. Madeline Fliehs had two points, one rebound and one steal. Kaycie Hawkins had eight rebounds and Trista Keith had four rebounds.

Groton Area made 10 of 37 field goals for 27 percent, four of 19 in three-pointers for 21 percent, and was 12 of 15 from the line for 80 percent. The Tigers had 34 rebounds, seven turnovers, seven assists, four steals and 17 fouls.

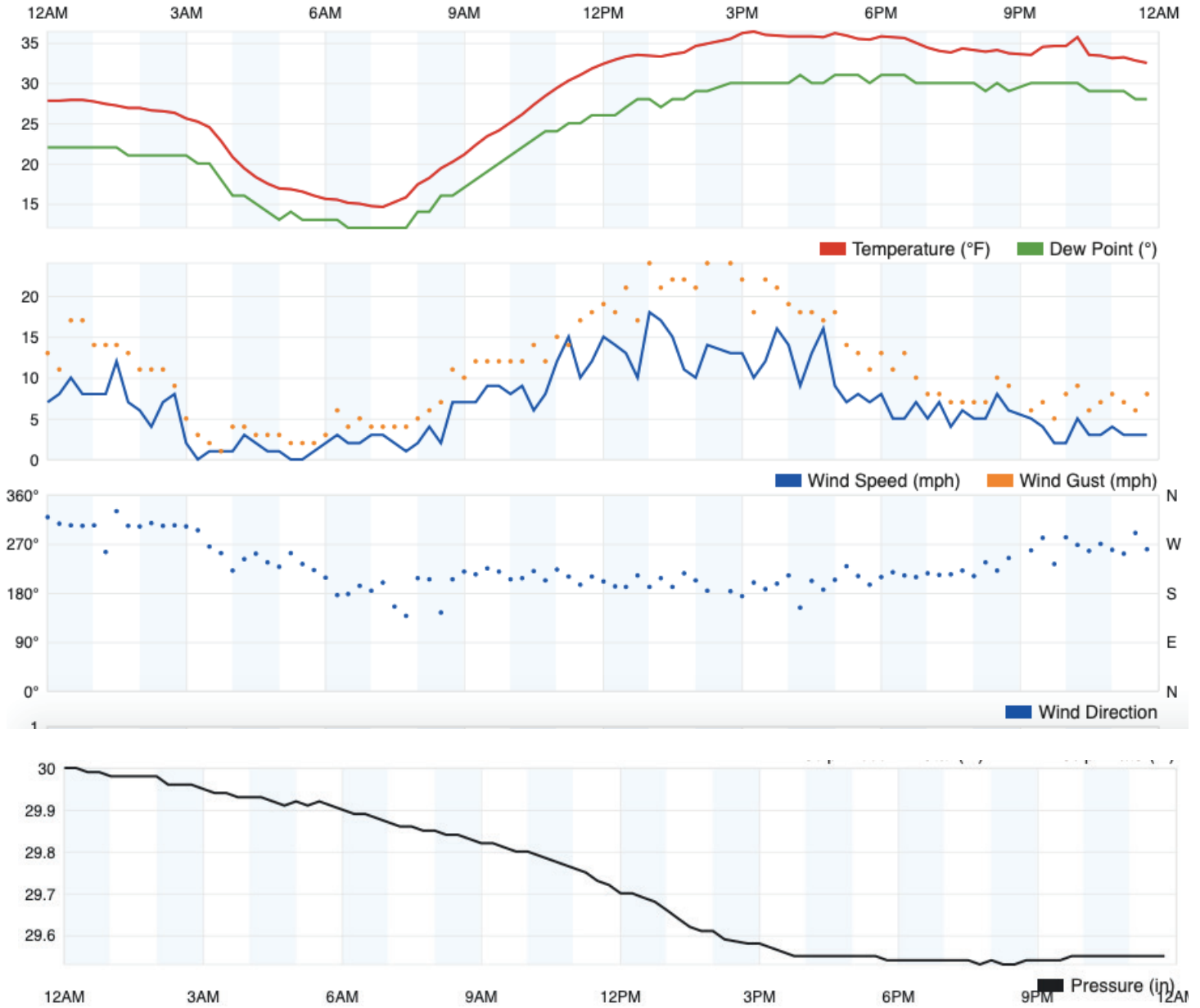
Webster Area was led by Abby Snell with 19 points followed by Cara Shoemaker with nine, Alivia Baumgarn five, Kayla Fischer five, Paige Snell five, and Morgan Jager four. The Bearcats made 16 of 46 field goals for 34 percent and was eight of 14 from the line and had 15 team fouls and eight turnovers.

Groton Area finishes its season with a 7-14 record. Webster Area is 6-15.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny then
Rain/Snow
Likely

High: 38 °F

Tonight



Rain/Snow
Likely then
Partly Cloudy

Low: 23 °F

Wednesday



Mostly Sunny

High: 39 °F

Wednesday
Night



Slight Chance
Rain/Snow
then Partly
Cloudy and
Blustery

Low: 30 °F

Thursday

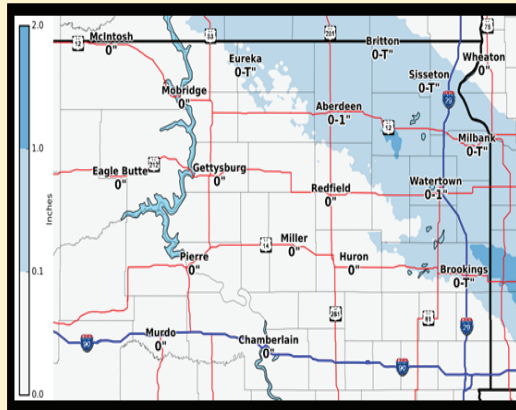


Sunny and
Breezy

High: 37 °F



Light Rain over central SD this afternoon, then light snow east



Today



Upper 30s, except
40 to 52° central SD

Light afternoon Rain central SD

A rumble of Thunder possible

Tonight



20s

Light snow, mainly over
ne SD & w MN

Snow amounts generally
1" or less

Wednesday



40s, except 50s to near
60° central SD

**Snow generally
around 1" or less
this evening**

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

www.weather.gov/abr

Created:
3/3/2020 5:20 AM

Light afternoon rain and a few rumbles of thunder over central SD will turn into a wintry mix and then mainly light snow over northeastern SD this evening. While around 1" or less of snow is expected this evening, a few pockets of localized higher amounts will be possible.

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Today in Weather History

March 3, 1994: The melting of a very high snowpack resulted in flooding along the James River, as well as other lowlands and farmland. Widespread problems included damaged roads, washed-out culverts, and flood damage to homes, especially basement flooding.

1896: The temperature in downtown San Francisco, California, fell to 33 degrees, which was the lowest ever for the city in March.

1966: An F5 tornado hit Jackson, Mississippi, killing 54 persons. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the NWS Office in Jackson, Mississippi.

1991: A significant ice storm coated parts of central and northwestern New York State with up to two inches of ice. The damage was totaled at \$375 million. It was the most costly natural disaster ever in the state up until that time. Nearly half a million people were without power at the height of the storm, and many would not see their power restored until the 16th.

1980 - A coastal storm produced 25 inches of snow at Elizabeth City, NC, and 30 inches at Cape Hatteras NC. At Miami FL the mercury dipped to 32 degrees. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1983 - The last of a series of storms to strike the California coast finally came to an end. Waves fifteen to twenty feet high pounded the coast for two days, and in a four day period up to 18 inches of rain drenched the Los Angeles and Santa Barbara area. On the morning of the first, thunderstorms spawned two tornadoes which moved through the Los Angeles area. (Storm Data)

1987 - A storm brought heavy rain and gale force winds to Washington and Oregon. Quillayute WA received 2.67 inches of rain in 24 hours, and winds gusted to 60 mph at Astoria OR. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A small but intense low pressure system roared across west central Mississippi at 90 mph early in the morning. A tornado in southern Mississippi picked up an automobile, carried it 150 feet, and tossed it through the brick wall of an unoccupied retirement home. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Wintry weather prevailed from the southern Rockies to the Upper Great Lakes. Neguanee MI received 19 inches of snow, and up to 24 inches of snow blanketed Colorado. Blizzard conditions were reported in Minnesota. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - An upper level weather disturbance produced snow in the Colorado Rockies, with eight inches reported at Winter Park, and a storm moving off the Pacific Ocean began to spread rain and snow across the western U.S. March continued to start off like a lamb elsewhere around the country. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - It was a day of temperature extremes. Miami reached a high temperature of 90 degrees, the earliest observed 90 degree temperature since March 5, 1964. Meanwhile Marquette, MI, dropped to 30 degrees below zero, the lowest temperature ever recorded in the city in March.

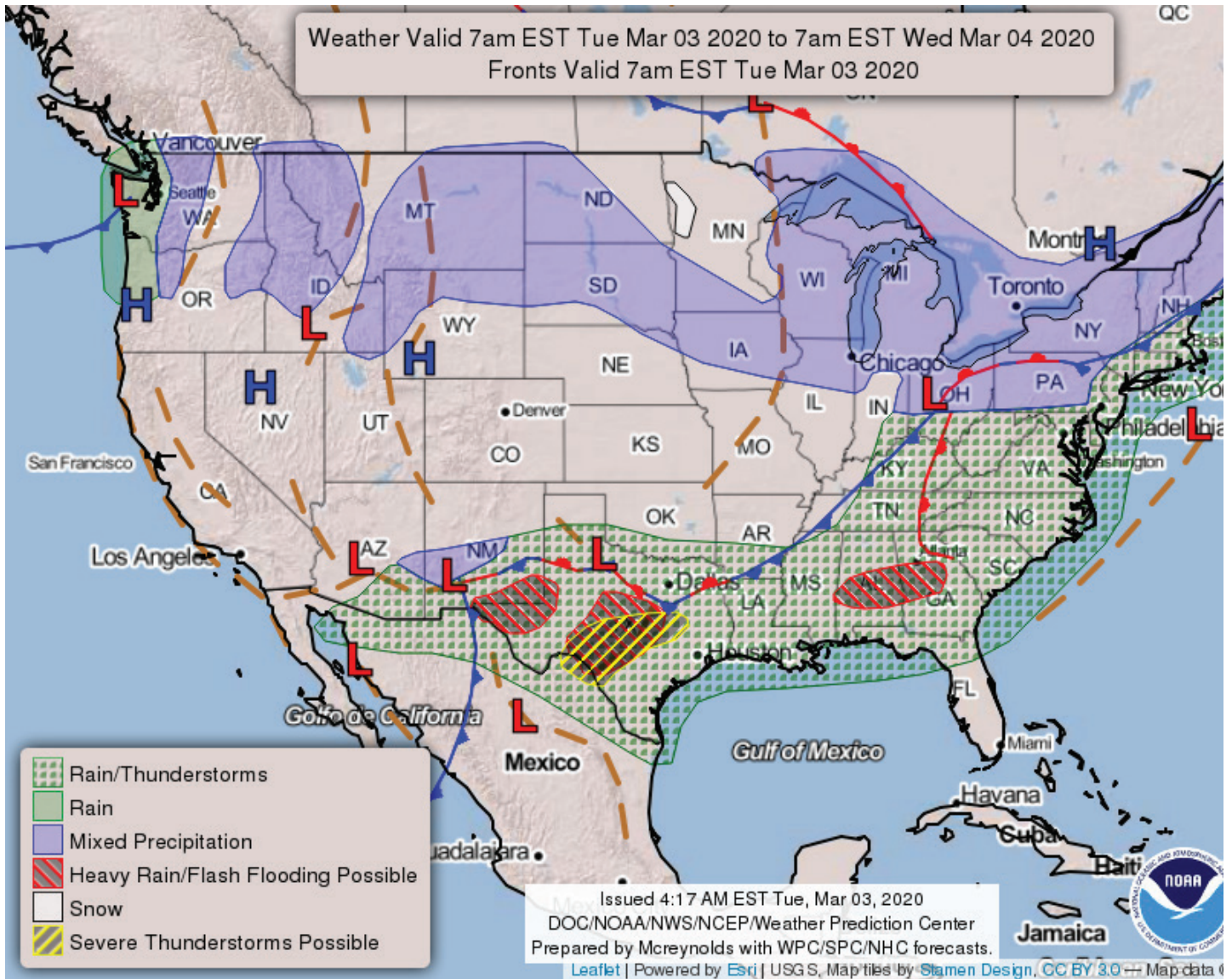
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 36 °F at 3:11 PM
Low Temp: 14 °F at 7:19 AM
Wind: 24 mph at 12:51 PM
Snow

Record High: 72° in 1905
Record Low: -20° in 1919
Average High: 34°F
Average Low: 14°F
Average Precip in March.: 0.06
Precip to date in March.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.08
Precip Year to Date: 0.35
Sunset Tonight: 6:24 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:06 a.m.



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DON'T DOUBT

Samuel Francis DuPont was a successful Admiral in the United States Navy. In spite of his brilliant career, on one occasion he suffered a humiliating defeat. Following this loss, he went to his commanding officer and carefully explained what went wrong.

At the end of his explanation, his commanding officer said, "There's one more reason you lost the battle that you did not mention. You did not believe that you could win."

Doubt leads to defeat. It destroys our determination and undermines our vision. The same is true in our relationship with God. Whenever we doubt God's power or ability and place our trust in ourselves, some other person, or something else, it is as though we are saying, "God, I don't trust You so I'm going to try to solve my problem on my own or with someone else's help because I don't need You."

Jesus once said, "If you really believe, you can say to this mountain - May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea - and it will happen!" Jesus used this powerful illustration to emphasize one fact: God can do the impossible with us, for us, or through us. God answers our prayers when we pray sincerely and honestly and place our faith in Him alone. When we are seeking to glorify ourselves and have selfish motives, He will neither hear nor answer our prayers. If what we ask for will bring ultimate glory to Him, is in agreement with His character, and extend His kingdom on earth, He will hear and answer.

Prayer: Lord, help us to realize that our prayers must be consistent with Your teachings and will. Help us to know Who You are and have confidence in Your Word and believe that all things are possible. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Mark 11:22 Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God."

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

- 03/14/2020 Youth Girls/Boys Basketball Tourney Grades 4th-6th (Baseball/Softball Foundation Fundraiser)
 - 04/04/2020 Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
 - 04/04/2020 Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
 - 04/25/2020 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
 - 04/25-26/2020 Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
 - 04/26/2020 Father/Daughter dance.
 - 05/02/2020 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
 - 05/11/2020 Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
 - 06/05/2020 Athletic Fundraiser at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
 - 06/19/2020 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/20/2020 Shriner's Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/22/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ladies Invitational
 - 06/26/2020 Groton Businesses Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
 - 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
 - 07/31-08/04/2020 State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
 - 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
 - 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
 - 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
 - 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
 - 10/31/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
 - 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
 - 11/14/2020 Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
 - 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
 - 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
 - 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
 - 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates
-
- Bingo every Wednesday 6:30pm at the American Legion Post #39
 - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Meat, American Legion Post #39 7pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
 - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Pizza, Jungle Lanes 8pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
-
- All dates are subject to change, check for updates here

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News from the Associated Press

Driver takes plea deal in crash death of 6-year-old girl

CHADRON, Neb. (AP) — A South Dakota woman is scheduled to be sentenced next month in northwest Nebraska for the drunken driving crash death of a 6-year-old girl.

Dawes County District Court records say Kimberly Eagle Bull, 35, of Box Elder, South Dakota, pleaded no contest to vehicular homicide while driving under the influence, driving under the influence and causing serious injury and to other charges. Prosecutors dropped child abuse charges in return. Her sentencing is set for April 7.

The Nebraska State Patrol has said the crash occurred Sept. 9, 2017, when the minivan Eagle Bull was driving went out of control and rolled on a road north of Chadron. Three adults and three children were taken to hospitals, including two children who were flown to a Denver hospital. The patrol said Christina Roubideaux died there the next day.

Monday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL=

Rapid City Stevens 90, Spearfish 41

Class B Region 1=

First Round=

Britton-Hecla 62, Great Plains Lutheran 42

Langford 62, Wilmot 50

Class B Region 2=

First Round=

Sunshine Bible Academy 50, North Central Co-Op 35

Class B Region 3=

First Round=

Deubrook 68, Estelline/Hendricks 56

Iroquois 81, James Valley Christian 53

Lake Preston 45, Hitchcock-Tulare 38

Class B Region 4=

First Round=

Chester 46, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 32

Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 58, Mitchell Christian 23

Class B Region 5=

First Round=

Centerville 76, Menno 43

Irene-Wakonda 72, Freeman 35

Scotland 50, Alcester-Hudson 45

Class B Region 6=

First Round=

Bon Homme 54, Avon 39

Kimball/White Lake 76, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 75

Tripp-Delmont/Armour 61, Colome 32

Class B Region 7=

First Round=

New Underwood 54, Edgemont 29

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Wall 62, Philip 51
Class B Region 8=
First Round=
McIntosh 75, Bison 25
Takini 61, Dupree 53
Wakpala 69, Newell 51
GIRLS BASKETBALL=
Class A Region 1=
First Round=
Redfield 68, Tiospa Zina Tribal 36
Sisseton 51, Milbank 37
Webster 47, Groton Area 44
Class A Region 2=
First Round=
Clark/Willow Lake 45, Flandreau Indian 41
Flandreau 70, Sioux Valley 45
Florence/Henry 52, Deuel 31
Class A Region 3=
First Round=
Garretson 68, Dell Rapids 46
Sioux Falls Christian 61, Baltic 29
Class A Region 4=
First Round=
Dakota Valley 62, Elk Point-Jefferson 49
Tea Area 66, Canton 30
Vermillion 43, Beresford 31
Class A Region 5=
First Round=
Madison 56, Wagner 43
Parkston 53, Parker 29
Class A Region 6=
First Round=
Chamberlain 54, Mobridge-Pollock 35
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 67, McLaughlin 50
Miller 48, Stanley County 19
Class A Region 7=
First Round=
Pine Ridge 79, St. Francis Indian 42
Red Cloud 83, Bennett County 15
Todd County 66, Little Wound 58
Class A Region 8=
First Round=
Belle Fourche 48, Custer 33
Hill City 58, Hot Springs 12
Lead-Deadwood 63, Rapid City Christian 58

Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Lawmakers advance competing strategies to 'get on' meth

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — As Gov. Kristi Noem tells South Dakotans she wants them to “get on” increasing rates of meth addiction and meth-related arrests, lawmakers this year are looking to do their part. They just can’t agree on the best approach.

Legislators have floated an assortment of proposals to curb the state’s meth problems — from pressuring people with drug felonies to participate in police investigations to easing the prosecution of some of the toughest laws in the country on drug users. The Republican-dominated Legislature has two weeks to pass its budget and bills, but a split remains on what should be prioritized: addiction treatment and helping people avoid incarceration or a tough-on-crime approach that gives law enforcement more leeway to threaten drug users with prison time.

Conservative legislators, including the attorney general, want to roll back the presumptive probation program that gives automatic probation to people convicted with low-level drug felonies. South Dakota is the only state to prosecute people for drug possession for ingesting drugs.

Sen. Lance Russell, a Hot Springs Republican, argued that prison may be the only way for people with drug addictions to get clean. He said that many addicted people end up in a “revolving door” system in which they go in-and-out of county jails, but never get addiction treatment.

Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg is pushing a bill that would make people eligible for probation only if they cooperate with law enforcement, including making drug buys, in order to go after dealers. He has argued that this would be an important “piece of the puzzle” in solving the state’s meth problem.

As a tight state budget is finalized in the next two weeks, lawmakers will weigh between targeting funds towards addiction programs that help people avoid prison and Ravnsborg’s proposal that would cost the state nearly \$8.5 million over ten years in an increased prison population.

Gov. Kristi Noem is requesting nearly \$3 million to boost the state’s meth treatment resources, with another \$700,000 for law enforcement targeted at meth addiction. She is calling it the next phase in her plan that started last year with the controversial “Meth. We’re On It.” media campaign. She said it highlighted the state’s meth epidemic and urged people to “get on it.”

“For her, prevention is critical, especially as it relates to keeping families together and children out of foster care,” said the governor’s spokeswoman, Kristin Wileman.

With the governor’s support, Republican lawmakers have pushed through a series of bills that overhauls the state’s mental health resources. The bills aim to expand access to the state’s hotline for people in distress, enable law enforcement to remotely connect people to counselors and establish a triage center in Sioux Falls.

Sen. Deb Soholt, a Sioux Falls Republican, said that the presumptive probation program has resulted in communities “experiencing some pain,” but rather than scaling back the program, she argued that “we have to keep pressing forward.”

“Putting people in jail is not the answer,” she said.

She argues that addiction, mental health and criminal justice are all interconnected and the state needs to come up with a comprehensive way to help people overcome these problems. She is asking the state to put \$200,000 towards the Sioux Falls triage center and hopes it could be a model for future triage centers across the state.

As cheap meth has flooded some South Dakota communities in recent years, lawmakers have gotten creative in trying to combat what they call an epidemic. Noem has requested that Native American tribes create cooperation agreements with law enforcement aimed at tackling meth traffickers. Another Republican lawmaker is pushing a bill that would allow pregnant women to get off drug-related charges if they seek prenatal care and addiction treatment.

“I’m sick and tired of hearing people talk about this issue. We need to do something.” said Rep. Spencer Gosch, the Glenham Republican who is pushing that bill.

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Corps decreasing water flowing into lower Missouri River

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The amount of water being released into the Missouri River from Gavins Point Dam will be decreased somewhat this week, so the river levels won't interfere with ongoing levee repairs downstream.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said Monday that the amount of water flowing out of Gavins Point on the Nebraska-South Dakota border will be reduced to 35,000 cubic feet (991.09 cubic meters) per second. That's down from the current 38,000 cubic feet (1076.04 cubic meters) per second.

Even at the new level, the releases from Gavins Point dam will remain more than double what is typical for this time of year.

The Corps is working to clear out as much space as possible in the reservoirs ahead of what is expected to be another wet year.

Officials say the releases from the dams may fluctuate frequently depending upon conditions downstream from the reservoirs.

Noem hires Venhuizen to take over as chief of staff

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Monday named a new chief of staff who's no stranger to the governor's office.

Tony Venhuizen, who held the top staff position under former Gov. Dennis Daugaard, will be Noem's newest adviser. He has been working for her office on a temporary basis since former chief of staff Joshua Shields left after less than three months on the job.

Venhuizen will be Noem's third chief of staff.

"Given his tenure and wealth of historical knowledge, Tony brings a unique set of skills to my team," Noem said in a statement.

After serving on Noem's transition team last year, Venhuizen took a job with Redstone Law Firm. He will now work for Noem full-time.

Venhuizen will continue to live in Sioux Falls, bucking the usual arrangement of having the chief of staff live in Pierre.

Girl's Basketball Polls

By The Associated Press`

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Sportswriters Association high school girl's poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records, total points and last week's ranking.

Class AA

1. O'Gorman (16) 20-0 80 1
2. Stevens 19-1 64 2
3. Lincoln 14-6 36 3
4. Yankton 14-6 32 4
5. Harrisburg 16-4 28 5

Class A

1. Winner (16) 20-0 80 1
2. Lennox 19-1 62 2
3. St. Thomas More 18-2 49 3
4. Crow Creek 18-2 27 4
5. Flandreau 18-2 15 5

Receiving votes: Hamlin 6, Red Cloud 1.

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Boy's Basketball Polls

By The Associated Press

The final South Dakota Prep Media Basketball Poll is listed below, ranking the top-five teams, the team's record, points received and ranking in the previous poll. First-place votes are listed in parentheses.>

Class AA

1. Huron (13) 16-4 77 1
2. Yankton (3) 16-4 67 2
3. Roosevelt 14-6 42 3
4. Stevens 13-6 23 5
5. Brandon Valley 13-7 14 RV

Receiving votes: O'Gorman 9, Washington 8.

Class A

1. St. Thomas More (13) 17-2 77 1
2. Sioux Valley (3) 19-1 67 2
3. SF Christian 15-5 40 3
4. Lennox 17-3 25 5
5. Crow Creek 18-2 23 3

Receiving votes: Dell Rapids 6, Tiospa Zina 1, Madison 1.

Class B

1. Aberdeen Christian (12) 18-2 76 1
2. De Smet (4) 18-2 68 2
3. Viborg-Hurley 16-3 43 3
4. White River 17-3 32 4
5. Hanson 17-3 14 5

Receiving votes: Arlington 6, Howard 1.

Midwest Economy: February state-by-state glance

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Institute for Supply Management, formerly the Purchasing Management Association, began formally surveying its membership in 1931 to gauge business conditions.

The Creighton Economic Forecasting Group uses the same methodology as the national survey to consult supply managers and business leaders. Creighton University economics professor Ernie Goss oversees the report.

The overall index ranges between 0 and 100. Growth neutral is 50, and a figure greater than 50 indicates growth in that factor over the next three to six months.

Here are the state-by-state results for February:

Arkansas: The overall index for Arkansas sank to 52.7 in February from 59.0 in January. Index components were new orders at 58.9, production or sales at 52.1, delivery lead time at 53.5, inventories at 51.5 and employment at 47.7.

Iowa: Iowa's overall index dropped last month to 53.1 from 55.7 in January. Index components were new orders at 59.9, production or sales at 54.0, delivery lead time at 52.3, employment at 51.3 and inventories at 48.1.

Kansas: The state's overall index declined to 54.7 in February, compared with 58.4 in January. Kansas' index components were new orders at 66.4, production or sales at 52.7, delivery lead time at 53.1, employment at 51.1 and inventories at 50.3.

Minnesota: Minnesota's overall index sank to 53.3 last month from January's 57.9. Index components were new orders at 64.9, production or sales at 53.1, delivery lead time at 52.8, inventories at 49.6 and employment at 46.1.

Missouri: The state's overall index slumped to 51.1 from 56.2 in January. Index components for Missouri were new orders at 60.0, production or sales at 54.4, delivery lead time at 52.0, inventories at 43.3 and

employment at 45.7.

Nebraska: Nebraska's overall index for February tumbled to 54.7 from 58.8 in January. Index components were new orders at 68.8, production or sales at 52.1, delivery lead time at 51.4, inventories at 53.5 and employment at 47.7.

North Dakota: The state's overall index inched up in February to 52.7 from 52.0 in January. Index components for North Dakota were new orders at 53.4, production or sales at 63.8, delivery lead time at 52.7, employment at 44.4 and inventories at 49.1.

Oklahoma: For only the second time since October, Oklahoma's overall index remained above growth neutral, but it slid in February to 51.5 from January's 52.2. Index components were new orders at 58.7, production or sales at 54.7, delivery lead time at 46.8, inventories at 51.8 and employment at 45.4.

South Dakota: South Dakota's overall index plummeted to 54.1 last month from January's regional high of 59.3. Index components were new orders at 69.0, production or sales at 52.1, delivery lead time at 50.1, inventories at 47.7 and employment at 51.6.

Report says virus outbreak making mark on Midwest economy

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Worries about a new virus first detected in China that's infected tens of thousands of people globally are making a mark on the economy of a nine-state region in the Midwest and Plains.

The Mid-American Business Conditions Index sank in February to 52.8 from 57.2 in January, according to a survey report issued Monday.

"This month's softer reading plus the mounting negative impacts from the (virus) should concern policymakers regarding the strength of the economy," said Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey. "Fully 40% of supply managers reported negative impacts from the (virus)."

The survey results are compiled into a collection of indexes ranging from zero to 100. Survey organizers say any score above 50 suggests growth. A score below that suggests decline. The survey covers Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

The regional trade numbers were mixed. The index for new export orders rose to 58.0 from January's 52.1. But the outbreak of the virus that causes the COVID-19 disease reduced purchases from Asia as the import index fell to 40.4 from January's 46.3.

About 24% of the supply managers who responded to the survey said the virus outbreak had pushed their companies to switch to domestic vendors for certain purchases. One in five supply managers reported that the outbreak forced their companies to rethink sources of supplies and raw materials.

The February employment index declined to 46.4 from January's 53.8. trade constraints, the lack of available workers and the virus outbreak produced job losses for the region's manufacturing sector.

Looking ahead six months, the business confidence index slumped to 51.4 last month from January's 58.8.

"The emergence of the (virus) offset the positive confidence impact of the recent passage of the U.S.-Canada-Mexico Trade Agreement and phase one of the trade agreement with China," Goss said.

Sioux Falls school threat not credible, officials say

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Officials say a threat on social media against a Sioux Falls middle school is not credible.

Sioux Falls School District officials sent a message to families Sunday night saying there is "no known credibility" to a threat against Edison Middle School.

The school district has been working with local and national law enforcement agencies to investigate the threat, officials said.

The district thanked "alert students and concerned adults" for notifying the school about the threat.

Tornado hits downtown Nashville, at least 7 die in Tennessee

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tornadoes ripped across Tennessee early Tuesday, shredding at least 40 buildings and killing at least 7 people. One of the twisters caused severe damage in downtown Nashville.

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Authorities pleaded with people to stay indoors, at least until daybreak could reveal the dangers of a landscape littered with blown-down walls and roofs, snapped power lines and huge broken trees. Schools, courts and transit lines were closed, and some damaged polling stations were moved only hours before Super Tuesday voting was set to begin.

"A tornado skipped across the county," Nashville Mayor John Cooper told the Tennessean while visiting an emergency shelter early Tuesday. "You do have people at the hospital and frankly there have been fatalities."

Tennessee Emergency Management Agency spokeswoman Maggie Hannan confirmed the initial death toll of 7. The sheriffs of Putnam and Benton counties joined Nashville's mayor in reporting fatalities.

A line of severe storms caused damage across Tennessee as it moved through the state after midnight. Buildings, roads, bridges, utilities and businesses were affected, Hannan said.

One tornado near downtown reportedly stayed on the ground into Hermitage, about 10 miles (16 kilometers) east of the city. Other areas reporting extensive damage included Mt. Juliet and Germantown.

"Our community has been impacted significantly," the Mt. Juliet Police Department tweeted early Tuesday. Multiple homes were damaged and multiple injuries were reported, the department said. "We continue to search for injured. Stay home if you can."

Police officers and fire crews were responding to about 40 building collapses around the city, Metro Nashville police said.

John C. Tune Airport, Nashville International's sister airport in West Nashville, "sustained significant damage due to severe weather," spokeswoman Kim Gerlock said in a statement early Tuesday morning. Several hangars have been destroyed and power lines are down, she said, adding that there are no reported injuries.

Gerlock asked that the public avoid the airport until further notice and that the Airport Authority has activated its Emergency Operations Center to coordinate response.

A video posted online from east Nashville showed what appeared to be a well-defined tornado moving quickly across the city. Lightning repeatedly flashed while much of the city was in the dark. The whir of the wind could be heard gusting after the tornado moved out of sight.

Images on social media showed extensive damage to buildings, mangled wires on downed power lines and structures that are now unrecognizable as the tornado had reduced them to rubble. One photo showed a white vinyl fence that had fallen a car. Another showed the roof and walls gone from a building that still had what appeared to be boxes stacked on shelves.

Among the collapsed buildings was a popular music venue that had just held an election rally for presidential candidate Bernie Sanders. The crowd left shortly before the twister struck the Basement East Nashville, the Tennessean reported.

A reported gas leak forced an evacuation of the IMT building in the Germantown community, according to WSMV-TV. Photos showed dozens of people in the street carrying their belongings not long after the tornado moved through the city.

The American Red Cross of Tennessee said on its Twitter account that a shelter had been opened for displaced residents downtown at the Nashville Farmers Market, just north of the state capitol, but a power outage there forced people to move again to the Centennial Sportsplex, the Tennessean reported.

Nashville Electric tweeted that four of its substations were damaged in the tornado. Power outages as of 4 a.m. were affecting more than 44,000 customers, the utility company said.

Metro Nashville Public Schools said its schools would be closed Tuesday because of the tornado damage. Wilson County, just east of metro Nashville will close schools for the rest of the week. Election polling sites at schools were expected to remain open, as well as district offices, according to tweets from its official account.

Jeff Roberts of the Elections Commission said in a statement early Tuesday that information about damage to polling stations is being collected as polls open for Super Tuesday. Any voter in Davidson County whose assigned precinct has been impacted may vote at the Election Commission Offices, the statement

said. Polls open at various times, starting at 7 a.m. CST, depending on the county.

The storm system was forecast to bring an isolated tornado, damaging winds and large hail, news outlets reported. Heavy rain was expected to impact Gulf Coast states over the next several days, according to WTVF-TV.

Iran orders troops to fight coronavirus outbreak as 77 dead

By AMIR VAHDAT and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's supreme leader put the Islamic Republic's armed forces on alert Tuesday to assist health officials in combating the outbreak of the new coronavirus — the deadliest outside of China — that authorities say has killed 77 people.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's decision was announced after state media broadcast images of the 80-year-old leader planting a tree wearing disposable gloves ahead of Iran's upcoming arbor day, showing how concern about the virus now reaches up to the top of the country's Shiite theocracy. Iranian media reported that 23 members of parliament now had the virus, as did the head of the country's emergency services.

"Whatever helps public health and prevents the spread of the disease is good and what helps to spread it is sin," Khamenei said, who has not worn gloves at past arbor day plantings.

After downplaying the coronavirus as recently as last week, Iranian authorities said Tuesday they had plans to potentially mobilize 300,000 soldiers and volunteers to confront the virus. It wasn't clear if Khamenei's order would set them in motion helping sanitize streets, direct traffic and track possible contacts those ill with the virus had with others, as initially suggested.

There are now over 2,530 cases of the new coronavirus across the Mideast. Of those outside Iran in the region, most link back to the Islamic Republic.

Yet experts worry Iran's percentage of deaths to infections, now around 3.3%, is much higher than other countries, suggesting the number of infections in Iran may be far greater than current figures show.

Iran stands alone in how the virus has affected its government, even compared to hard-hit China, the epicenter of the outbreak.

The death of Expediency Council member Mohammad Mirmohammadi on Monday makes him the highest-ranking official within Iran's leadership to be killed by the virus. State media referred to him as a confidant of Khamenei.

The virus earlier killed Hadi Khosroshahi, Iran's former ambassador to the Vatican, as well as a recently elected member of parliament.

Those sick include Vice President Masoumeh Ebtekar, better known as "Sister Mary," the English-speaking spokeswoman for the students who seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979 and sparked the 444-day hostage crisis, state media reported. Also sick is Iraj Harirchi, the head of an Iranian government task force on the coronavirus who tried to downplay the virus before falling ill.

On Tuesday, lawmaker Abdolreza Mesri told Iranian state television's Young Journalists Club program that 23 members of parliament had the coronavirus. He urged all lawmakers to avoid the public.

"These people have a close relationship with the people and they carry different viruses from different parts of the country, which may create a new virus, so we recommend the lawmakers to cut off their relationship with the public for now," Mesri said.

The semiofficial ILNA and Tasnim news agencies in Iran also reported that Pirhossein Koulivand, the head of the country's emergency services, had come down with the new illness. They offered no other immediate details.

An activist group also said Tuesday that Wikipedia's Farsi-language website appeared to be disrupted in Iran after a close confidant to the supreme leader died of the new coronavirus.

The advocacy group NetBlocks linked Mirmohammadi's death to the disruption, though Iranian officials and its state media did not immediately acknowledge it. Authorities face increasing criticism from the Iranian public over the outbreak amid concerns the number of cases from the virus may be higher than currently reported.

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NetBlocks described the disruption to accessing Farsi Wikipedia as being nationwide, saying its technical testing suggests the online encyclopedia is being blocked by the same mechanism used to block Twitter and Facebook. Those social media websites have been banned since Iran's disputed 2009 presidential election and Green Movement protests.

Some Iranians said they couldn't access Wikipedia's Farsi website since Monday night. Others said they could, including through the site's mobile-friendly pages.

"The new restrictions come as Iran faces a growing crisis following the loss of senior state figures to coronavirus and a spate of criticism and misinformation have spread through social media," NetBlocks said in its analysis.

The Wikimedia Foundation, which oversees the volunteer-edited encyclopedia, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. NetBlocks previously reported internet disruptions affecting Iran in recent days and users across the Islamic Republic have reported problems.

The disruption raises fears of Iran potentially shutting off the internet entirely again, as it did for a week during economic protests in November. Iran separately has created its own so-called "halal" net of government-approved websites.

Meanwhile Tuesday, the Middle East's largest airline, Emirates, said it had to reduce or ground flights due to the new virus. Because of the slowdown, the government-owned carrier has asked its employees to take paid and even unpaid leave for up to a month at a time. Emirates' operates out of Dubai, the world's busiest for international travel.

"We have been tested before and Emirates will come out stronger," Chief Operating Officer Adel Al-Redha said.

The world's largest airline trade association, IATA, says Mideast carriers have already lost around \$100 million in revenue due to a drop in ticket sales because of disruptions caused by the virus.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writer Aya Batrawy in Dubai contributed to this report.

Virus alarms sound worldwide, but China sees crisis ebbing

By KEN MORITSUGU and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The virus epidemic spread through Iran's parliament, travel warnings broadened to include Italy and other parts of Europe, and South Korea prepared to pump billions into relief efforts Tuesday as the epidemic firmed its hold around the globe.

Mushrooming outbreaks in the Mideast, Europe and South Korea contrasted with optimism in China, where thousands of recovered patients were going home. A growing outbreak in the United States led schools and subways to sanitize, quickened a search for a vaccine, and spread fears of vulnerability for nursing home residents.

"We are in uncharted territory," World Health Organization leader Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

Iran's supreme leader put the Islamic Republic on war footing by ordering its armed forces to assist health officials in combating the outbreak, which authorities say has killed 77 people — the deadliest outbreak outside China. The virus has killed a confidant of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's former ambassador to the Vatican, as well as a recently elected member of parliament.

State television quoted a lawmaker saying 23 members of parliament were infected.

Iran's judiciary chief, Ebrahim Raisi, said some people were stockpiling medical supplies for profit, and urged prosecutors to show no mercy.

"Hoarding sanitizing items is playing with people's lives and it is not ignorable," Raisi said.

South Korea saw its largest daily increase in new cases Tuesday, with 851 new infections reported, largely in and around the southeastern city of Daegu. In all, 5,186 in South Korea have tested positive for the virus.

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In the capital of Seoul, drive-through virus testing centers began operating, with workers dressed head-to-toe in white protective suits leaning into cars with mouth swabs, a move meant to limit contact with possible carriers of the illness. Troops were also dispatched across the city to spray streets and alleys with disinfectants.

The country's death toll rose to 31 and President Moon Jae-in, calling the outbreak "a grave situation," said his government would push to inject more than 30 trillion won (\$25 billion) to fund clinics, aid for small businesses and other measures related to the virus. It requires parliamentary approval.

"The entire country has entered a war against an infectious disease," he said.

Most Asian and European stock indexes rose, following the Dow Jones Industrial Average surging nearly 1,300 points, or 5%. Finance ministers and central bank leaders from the Group of Seven major industrial countries were to convene by phone Tuesday to discuss their response to the virus outbreak.

"The fear factor is still very high," said Kirk Hartman, president of Wells Fargo Asset Management.

Worldwide, more than 90,000 people have been sickened and 3,100 have died from the virus. A constantly expanding list of at least 70 countries have been affected, with Ukraine the latest to report a first case.

In China, the count of new virus cases dropped again Tuesday, with just 125 new cases after a six-week low of 202 a day earlier. It's still by far the hardest-hit country, with 80,151 cases and 2,943 deaths.

China's ambassador to the United Nations said the country was winning its battle against COVID-19.

"We are not far from the coming of the victory," said Zhang Jun.

In Italy, the count of infected people continued rising to 2,036 and officials said it could take up to two weeks to know whether measures including quarantines in 11 northern towns were working.

The U.S. count of COVID-19 cases surpassed 100 in at least 11 states. There have been six deaths in Washington state.

On Capitol Hill, aides said negotiations were nearing completion on an emergency funding bill to fund a vaccine development and offer disaster loans to businesses hurt by the crisis.

Surgeon General Jerome Adams, a leading public health official in the U.S., urged calm.

"Caution, preparedness, but not panic," he said.

In Japan, questions continued to build about how the virus might affect the Olympics.

The country's Olympic minister, Seiko Hashimoto, said Tuesday the country was "making the utmost effort" to proceed with the games' planned opening on July 24 in Tokyo. But she told parliament the country's contract with the International Olympic Committee only specifies that the games be held during the year 2020, and that they could be delayed to later in the year if necessary.

An Irish bookmaker has been taking bets: 4/6 the opening ceremony will not go ahead in Tokyo or 11/10 that it will.

The games' CEO, Toshiro Muto, was planning a Wednesday teleconference with IOC's executive board.

Sedensky reported from Bangkok. Contributing to this report were Lori Hinnant in Paris; Chris Grygiel in Seattle; Kim Tong-Hyung and Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea; Stephen Wade in Tokyo; Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran; and Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak>

Trade show blues: Exhibitions go virtual as virus spreads

By DAVID McHUGH and ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Business Writers

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Fine wines and hipster gin. Hunting rifles and knives. Contemporary paintings and million-dollar sports cars. They're all marketed at trade events that are quickly going dark across the globe due to the new coronavirus - and taking with them sales opportunities that may be difficult to make up.

Some companies are taking their shows online with virtual events they stream from their headquarters to reach customers anyway.

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But marketing experts and executives warn that there is no substitute for face-to-face contact with potential clients, as exhibition companies try to total up the losses being suffered by an industry that also pumps billions into hotels, restaurants and cabdriver's wallets.

The Geneva International Motor Show resorted to putting automakers' product unveilings and news conferences online Tuesday after this year's show was cancelled. BMW presented its sleek i4 electric concept car at a digital news conference from Munich, while competitors Daimler and Volkswagen held their own online events.

The Geneva show was cancelled after local authorities barred gatherings of more than 1,000 people to halt the spread of the virus, which has sickened over 90,000 people globally and led to 3,100 deaths. While some car companies were already holding online presentations before the virus in an effort to expand their reach to social media, there is no real substitute to seeing a product in person or meeting people in the industry.

"It's not just about purchases. For many products it is also about reinforcing a kind of community building," said Gernot Gehrke, professor of management and event-industry marketing at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Hanover.

Trade shows, which can bring sales long after the initial contact, are "a point of contact in a customer journey, if you like, that aims at a stable relationship to customers, and also to people and organizations that might become customers."

They are also big business. Exhibitors pay in advance to book space and lose their money on such last-minute cancellations caused by health concerns. The Geneva auto show was expected to generate \$250 million for the wider city area. "This is a dramatic loss for everyone," said Oliver Rihs, managing director of the Geneva show, which plans to go ahead next year.

Trade fairs are a tradition in Germany, where some 160 to 180 are held every year, reaping 14.5 billion euros (\$16 billion) from visitors and exhibitors and pumping a total of 28 billion euros into the local economy as well as providing 230,000 jobs, 100,000 of them full-time positions.

Art Basel, the modern and contemporary art fair, moved up the debut of a new digital initiative after its Hong Kong fair was cancelled due the virus. The online viewing rooms will be live from March 20-25 after two VIP preview days. The digital initiative will be open for free to galleries that had been accepted to participate in the Hong Kong fair. The rooms allow collectors to browse through thousands of works and directly contact galleries.

But online showings would be a poor option for the luxury watch industry, which is reeling from the cancellation of two major industry events, Baselworld and Watches & Wonders Geneva.

"The watch industry is a touch-and-feel industry. The only way to get a feel for these incredible luxury products is to hold them in your hands and look at them and engage in the emotion of what goes into the making of these incredible masterpieces," said Roberta Naas, who has written several books on the watches and founded the website www.ATimelyPerspective.com.

Other big cancellations include the World Mobile Congress in Barcelona, Spain, the biggest industry show for wireless technology. A slew of others have been postponed that might be less known to the public but are a big deal in particular industries. This month, the Duesseldorf exhibition center alone has seen the postponement of fairs for: wine and spirits, metalworking and manufacturing technology, energy storage, and wire and cables. In Nuremberg, IWA OutdoorClassic, a hunting and outdoor gear show, was postponed until September.

Gamers Developers Conference, a major event for video game developers in San Francisco, was postponed last week after a growing number of companies dropped out, including Amazon, Sony, Facebook, Electronic Arts, Unity and Epic. Facebook is planning to go forward with GDC-related announcements via video, online Q&A sessions and other digital formats. But smaller game developers and software companies can't make up for the loss of exposure of the March 16-20 event.

Jacob Navok, CEO of Genvid, said his software development company had planned several announcements at GDC regarding games. He had planned a keynote address, a round table discussion and an

evening party with more than 120 guests. Unlike Facebook, his company does not have the capacity to hold virtual versions of those events.

"Nobody would watch because I have no way to market that. I'm not able to draw people to these things by myself," said Navok.

Instead, Navok said he plans to spend the week flying to San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle to meet with some of the major companies. He also will repackage his keynote address for interviews with industry journalists. But he will not be able to meet with many game publishers from other parts of the U.S. and Canada. And he will miss out on the impromptu interactions that happen when people stop by his booth.

"It will suffice, but it cannot replace that in-person presentation and the ability to meet the people that randomly happen across your product," said Navok. "It's a big week of announcements. We are still going to do it. We are going to have to — but that in person momentum is not going to be there."

For all of AP's coverage of the virus outbreak, visit <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak>

Olson reported from New York.

Thousands of migrants look for way around shut Greek border

By **COSTAS KANTOURIS** and **ELENA BECATOROS** Associated Press

KASTANIES, Greece (AP) — Thousands of migrants searched for ways to cross Greece's border with Turkey Tuesday, as Athens ramped up its diplomatic efforts to get help from the European Union to seal off its eastern land and sea frontiers.

Turkey has made good on a threat to open its borders for those seeking to cross illegally into Europe. Many of those hoping to enter Greece were trying their luck by wading or rowing across the Evros River that runs along most of the length of the Turkish frontier.

The action by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan triggered days of violent clashes and scenes of chaos at the border. Greece has struggled to push back the wave of migrants, with its armed forces now leading the effort.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis toured the troubled border area where he was to later receive top EU leaders including the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen later Tuesday.

"We will not be blackmailed and no one will cross the border illegally," Mitsotakis said after being greeted by residents in border areas who clapped and chanted his first name.

The government has accused Turkey of causing a risk to its national security and has imposed emergency measures to carry out summary deportations and deny migrants the right to apply for international protection for one month.

The Greek army and navy held live fire exercises across the eastern border areas for a second day Tuesday to reinforce its message of deterrence. Frontex, the EU border protection agency, said it was finalizing plans to send additional resources to Greece, while several individual EU members, including Austria, have also offered additional support.

Sebastian Kurz, the Austrian chancellor, leveled blunt criticism at Turkey for the crisis.

"The people are being used by President Erdogan as a political football, as weapons and as instruments of pressure on the European Union," Kurz said at a press conference in Vienna. "This is no coincidence, it is organized."

Human rights groups say the Greek response, while justified, has been heavy handed.

"Showing humanity and defending rights is the best way to defend the EU borders," said Lotte Leicht, EU director at Human Rights Watch.

At the border, Greek authorities said the main pressure Tuesday had moved from the official crossing to points farther south along the river. Authorities said they thwarted an attempt by about 1,000 people overnight to make their way across the Evros wetland area, at the southern end of the border.

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Turkey announced Thursday it was easing restrictions on those wishing to cross into Europe.

The resulting movement of migrants appeared well organized, with buses, minibuses and cars provided in Istanbul to ferry people to the border, a roughly three to four hour drive away. The vast majority appeared to be Afghans, along with people from a wide variety of countries, including Iran, Iraq, Bangladesh and Syria.

Turkey's announcement upended its previous policy of containing refugees and other migrants under an agreement with the European Union, in which the EU would provide billions in funding for the care of refugees within Turkey.

Turkey, which hosts more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees, has long maintained the EU has not lived up to its side of the deal, and has demanded more support from Europe.

Erdogan also says his country is facing an imminent and dramatic new influx of refugees from the war in Syria, where growing clashes between Turkish and Syrian troops has raised alarm. However, Turkey's border with Syria remains shut and there has been no indication he might open it.

Greek authorities said that in the 24 hours between Monday and Tuesday morning, they had prevented a total of 5,183 people from entering Greece, and arrested 45 people, mostly from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco and Bangladesh.

Greece has made clear its borders are shut. Authorities have also set up cordons of police and army checks on and near the border, arresting those who managed to make it through.

On Tuesday morning, two men — one from Mali and one from Afghanistan — were seen being arrested by Greek authorities shortly after crossing the border, and being loaded into a van with about 20 more people, from Somalia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Iraq.

Migrants have also been trying to reach Greece by making the short but often perilous sea crossing to islands from the nearby Turkish coast. A young boy died on Monday after the dinghy he was in capsized off the coast of the island of Lesbos. The other 47 people in the boat were rescued. Crossings to the islands slowed to a halt Tuesday due to high winds, authorities said.

On Monday night, Greek authorities said they had stopped more than 24,000 attempted illegal crossings at the land border with Turkey since early Saturday, and arrested 183 people — very few of whom were Syrians.

European countries have largely backed Greece. On Monday, Erdogan said Western leaders were calling him and urging him to reverse the border opening. "It's done, the gates are open now. You will have your share of this burden now," he said he told them.

Soon, he said, "the number of people going to the border will be expressed in millions." ____ Becatoros reported from Athens.

Follow Kantouris at <http://www.twitter.com/CostasKantouris> and Becatoros at <http://www.twitter.com/ElenaBec>

What's Happening: Olympics may be late, Twitter telecommutes

BERLIN (AP) — More countries are reporting cases of the new coronavirus while more governments issue travel warnings for their citizens and companies urge employees to work from home to prevent infections.

These are some of the latest developments Tuesday:

JAPAN INDICATES OLYMPICS COULD BE DELAYED

Japan's Olympic minister says the country's contract to hold the Tokyo Games only specifies the event has to be held during 2020. Seiko Hashimoto's response to a question in the upper house of parliament implies the Olympics could be held later in the year and would not have to start on July 24 as planned.

FIRST CASE IN UKRAINE

Eastern Europe has had comparatively few confirmed virus cases compared with other regions of the world, though it's unclear why. Now, Ukraine has reported its first. Ukrainian health officials say a man who recently arrived from Italy was diagnosed with COVID-19. The country's health system has been

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strained by a drawn-out conflict in the east between Russia-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces.

EUROPE TRAVEL WARNINGS

Saudi Arabia is advising citizens and residents to postpone travel to Germany and France due to the spread of the coronavirus in those countries. The kingdom has just one reported virus case. It said the infected person had been in Iran, where 66 people have died and more than 1,500 have the virus.

Meanwhile, Denmark's foreign minister urged citizens to avoid non-essential trips to Italy's regions of Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy, Piedmont and Veneto "as a precaution because there is a large increase in the number of coronavirus-infected."

WORK FROM HOME

Twitter is the latest company to advise its staff members to work from home, if possible, to keep themselves and colleagues healthy. The social networking site says it acted "out of an abundance of caution" to reduce the chances of the virus spreading among its workforce. Twitter said in a statement that "working from home will be mandatory for employees based in our Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea offices, due in part to government restrictions."

AS VIRUS SPREADS, POLLUTION EBBS

Measures to contain the new coronavirus are causing a drop in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in some countries. China has closed factories and curtailed travel, resulting in a noticeable reduction in emissions. Researchers at the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air in Helsinki, Finland, say China's carbon emissions were 25% lower in the four weeks following the end of the Lunar New Year holiday compared with the same time last year. But experts say the experience of the 2008-2009 financial crisis suggests the trend is unlikely to hold.

ANXIETY IN THE ARCTIC

Scientists taking part in a year-long expedition to the high Arctic are taking extra precautions to prevent the virus from reaching their camp during staff rotations.

Melinda Webster, a University of Alaska sea ice geophysicist who is preparing to join the international research mission aboard German icebreaker RV Polarstern next month, said incoming participants are getting tested to ensure they aren't infected before setting off for the Arctic.

"It's a big concern for a lot of folks right now," she said.

Daria Litvinova in Moscow contributed to this report.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak>

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. **BIDEN LOOKS TO BLUNT SANDERS' RISE ON SUPER TUESDAY** Backed by former Democratic rivals, Joe Biden rides a wave of momentum against front-runner Bernie Sanders into the biggest day on the primary calendar.

2. **SUPER TUESDAY MARKS FIRST MAJOR SECURITY TEST** Election officials say they are prepared to deal with everything from equipment problems to false information about the coronavirus to foreign interference.

3. **VIRUS ALARMS SOUND WORLDWIDE** Iranians hoard medical supplies, Italians urge doctors out of retirement and South Koreans prepare to pump billions into relief efforts as the coronavirus epidemic firms its hold around the globe.

4. **'IT'S GOING TO BE A DISASTER'** Experts caution that nursing homes would be vulnerable to the coronavirus after the deaths of four residents in suburban Seattle.

5. **MARKET WATCHERS LOOK FOR SIGNS** Traders are awaiting talks between central bankers and other financial leaders of the Group of Seven industrial nations on how to tackle the slowdown brought on by

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the viral outbreak.

6. **STAKES HIGH AFTER AFGHAN PEACE DEAL** The big question for many is whether the religiously repressive Taliban have changed their ideology, especially as it pertains to women.

7. **NASHVILLE RAKED BY TORNADO** Police officers and fire crews are responding to about 40 building collapses around the Tennessee city and multiple injuries were reported.

8. **NETANYAHU AHEAD, BUT SHORT OF MAJORITY** Israel's embattled prime minister faces an uncertain path to staying in office, even as preliminary results show his Likud party pulling ahead in the country's third election in less than a year.

9. **CHRIS MATTHEWS STUNS WITH ON-AIR RETIREMENT** The longtime MSNBC host abruptly exits his "Hardball" show, apologizing for making inappropriate comments about women on the heels of criticism from supporters of Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

10. **HOW THE NBA IS ADVISING PLAYERS ON VIRUS** The league tells players to avoid high-fiving fans and strangers and avoid taking any item for autographs.

What to watch as 14 states vote in Super Tuesday primaries

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — The Democratic presidential candidates are racing toward the biggest day on the primary calendar, when 14 states vote on Super Tuesday. It's the day when the primary moves from retail to wholesale. Instead of one state voting at a time, candidates have to focus on contests in every region of the country with all types of voters.

While Super Tuesday won't necessarily determine who wins the nomination, it has historically been difficult for a candidate who performs poorly on the day to recover. Here's a look at Tuesday's contests: **THE STATES** Fourteen states hold primaries on Super Tuesday, including California and Texas, the two biggest delegate hauls of the entire primary season. California offers 415 delegates and Texas 228. In total, more than 1,300 delegates will be up for grabs, about a third of the total available in the race to the Democratic presidential nomination.

Although Super Tuesday was originally created as a regional primary featuring Southern states, it has morphed over the years. This year, it includes states from every region of the country.

The other states are Arkansas, Alabama, Colorado, Maine, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Vermont, Utah, North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Oklahoma. Most of the Southern states are Republican strongholds in the general election, while others like California are solidly Democratic. North Carolina is likely to be a battleground state in the general election.

Polls close between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. local time, depending on the state.

THE VOTERS

The Super Tuesday states are home to diverse electorates, both when it comes to demographics and political ideology. In California and Texas, white voters make up less than half the population. Latinos count for nearly 40% of the populations in both states. California, meanwhile, has the nation's highest Asian population, at roughly 15%. North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Alabama and Arkansas have large populations of black voters, one of the Democratic Party's core voting blocs. The states blend a mix of urban and rural voters, as well as Democrats from all sides of the political spectrum. As candidates focus on wooing Southern Democrats in states like Texas and Arkansas, they must also be thinking about a message that can resonate in progressive San Francisco.

Most of the Super Tuesday states have some form of widespread early voting. Voters in Minnesota, for example, could start casting ballots in January. Millions of mail-in ballots went out to California voters on Feb. 3, the day of the Iowa caucuses.

THE CANDIDATES

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg have had the widest and most aggressive footprint across the Super Tuesday states, largely because they've got the money to spend. Bloomberg is advertising in all 14 states, while Sanders is on the airwaves in 12. It's the first time Bloomberg will be on ballots after he skipped the first four voting states, making the day a critical test of

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his theory that he's the best candidate to stand against Sanders and, later, Republican President Donald Trump.

Sanders spent Sunday in California, holding rallies in the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles, the state's major liberal strongholds. He's hoping his monthslong focus on the state and resonance with Latino voters will help him win a large chunk of the state's 415 delegates. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren will be in California on Monday, and Joe Biden plans to return on primary day.

Biden, for his part, hopes his strong showing in Saturday's South Carolina primary is a harbinger of coming success with black voters, who dominate the Democratic electorate in a handful of Super Tuesday states. Warren hoped to win her home-state primary, though Sanders is making a play for it. Bloomberg has also campaigned across the South in recent days as he tries to prove he can build a winning Democratic coalition.

Democrats opposed to Sanders are hoping to see voters coalesce behind a moderate alternative. Any of the candidates could face pressure to drop out if they don't perform well on Tuesday.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

Schools close in French, German virus cluster zones

By LORI HINNANT Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Tens of thousands of students in virus cluster zones are home from school in France on Tuesday, with a smaller number in Germany and Poland facing quarantines or days without class.

France's education minister, Jean-Michel Blanquer, said around 120 schools have been ordered to close, most in Brittany and the Oise region north of Paris, which have been hit hard by COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. He told LCI television it was probable that more schools could close and confirmed that he had ordered a freeze on all school trips. But he cautioned against rushing to a general shutdown of the education system.

"It wouldn't make sense to confine everyone at home, to paralyze the country," he said.

A handful of schools are closed or under quarantine in Germany and even in Poland, which has no confirmed cases of the disease so far.

Meanwhile, Ukraine on Tuesday reported its first confirmed case of the new virus in a man who had recently arrived from Italy.

As the new coronavirus takes hold in Europe, the continent is facing the same complications seen in Asia weeks ago, including a cruise ship with hundreds of passengers now trapped in Norway.

In Haugesund, southern Norway, a German cruise ship with 1,200 passengers was waiting for the test results of two passengers who had been on land to be tested for the virus, Norwegian broadcaster NRK said. The Aida Aura was supposed to have left harbor Monday but was still in Haugesund Tuesday and passengers were being kept on board.

Travelers from northern Italy, along with South Korea and Iran, now face a ban in Singapore and will not be allowed entry or even to transit in the country. And Saudi Arabia advised citizens and residents to postpone travel to Germany and France due to the spread of the coronavirus in those countries.

Israeli exit polls: Netanyahu ahead, but short of majority

By ARON HELLER Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's embattled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced an uncertain path to staying in office on Tuesday, even as preliminary results showed his Likud party pulling ahead of its opponents in the country's third election in less than a year.

Exit polls on Israeli TV stations showed Likud and its allies capturing 59 seats out of the 120 in parliament. That would still put Likud and its ultra-religious and nationalist bloc short of the parliamentary majority required to form a government.

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With roughly 90% of votes already counted, Netanyahu's bloc looked to be maintaining its lead. Final results are expected to be announced later Tuesday and could swing Netanyahu over the top — two weeks before he goes on trial to face corruption charges.

But if the official results match the exit polls, and Netanyahu's camp is unable to draw in defectors from the opposing camp, Israel's prolonged political gridlock could continue with the prospect of a fourth election.

The uncertainty didn't stop Netanyahu from declaring victory early Tuesday in front of a raucous crowd of supporters.

"This is a victory against all the odds, because we stood against powerful forces," he said. "They already eulogized us. Our opponents said the Netanyahu era is over."

He vowed to immediately begin work to form a new coalition and press forward with a hard-line agenda that includes annexing large parts of the West Bank — a step that would undermine any remaining hopes of establishing a Palestinian state. Netanyahu aide Jonathan Urich said efforts were already underway to recruit defecting lawmakers from the other bloc.

"I expect that fairly shortly we'll have the missing votes," he told Israel's Army Radio.

Regardless of the final outcome, the election seemed to mark a devastating setback for Benny Gantz's Blue and White party and its allies on the center-left, who had grand ambitions to topple Netanyahu after more than a decade in power. But with Blue and White party trailing Likud by several seats that option appears off the table. Infighting has already begun among the fragmented opposition, with various figures pointing the blame at Gantz for running a lackluster campaign.

Even with his path to the premiership seemingly blocked, Gantz refused to concede defeat.

"We won't let anyone destroy the country. We won't let anyone separate between us. We won't let anyone dismantle Israeli society and crush democracy," he told supporters. "Even if it is difficult, we will win at its end."

Netanyahu's Likud looked set already to secure 36 seats to Gantz's Blue and White's 32, with Netanyahu's camp holding an overall edge of 59-54 to Gantz's center-left bloc.

Maverick politician Avigdor Lieberman, whose party is projected to win seven seats, once again looms as a key player. Speaking Tuesday, he repeated his campaign pledge that there will not be a fourth election but wouldn't indicate how he would act in case of further deadlock.

After the last election in September, both Netanyahu and Gantz, a former military chief, were given opportunities to form coalitions and failed. With Likud projected to be the largest party, Netanyahu looked to get a first crack at assembling a coalition this time around.

"It's clear that Gantz and his bloc lost, but it is not clear that Netanyahu has a clear victory," explained Gideon Rahat, a Hebrew University professor and senior fellow at the non-partisan Israel Democracy Institute. "It's either a unity government or he will find some defectors from the center-left that will go with him."

The easiest way out of the impasse would be a unity government between Likud and Blue and White, which together command a solid parliamentary majority. They don't have major ideological differences, though Blue and White has staked its claim as the moral alternative to Netanyahu amid his corruption charges.

Gantz has ruled out a partnership as long as Netanyahu remains in charge. After an ugly campaign marked by vicious and unfounded smears against him, Gantz doesn't appear likely to fold now.

Anti-Netanyahu forces in Israel could still eke out a narrow "blocking majority" and force yet another vote. But a weary public is largely against that option. Legal analysts also warn of a constitutional crisis amid a string of inconclusive elections, meaning that the option of a unity government may again be on the cards.

"After such a debased, lowdown, divisive campaign, replete with accusations and mud-slinging, we must mend our fences, heal the wounds, unify Israeli society," former Likud minister and Netanyahu critic Limor Livnat wrote in the Yediot Ahronot daily. "This is the only answer."

Netanyahu was indicted in November on charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes, making him the first sitting prime minister to be charged with a crime. He denies any wrongdoing and says he is

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the victim of a witch hunt by police, prosecutors and a hostile media.

During the campaign, Netanyahu failed in a bid to secure immunity from prosecution. As prime minister, he could still rally public opposition against prosecutors and judges in the case. He also could seek other avenues to delay or derail the proceedings against him.

A unity government between Likud and Blue and White would likely force Netanyahu to drop these plans. It would also make Ayman Odeh, leader of the Joint List, the formal leader of the opposition. His umbrella group of Arab-led parties scored its most impressive showing ever, becoming the third largest faction in parliament.

Follow Heller at www.twitter.com/aronhellerap

Super Tuesday test: Biden looks to blunt Bernie's rise

By **STEVE PEOPLES** and **BILL BARROW** Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The dizzying fight for the Democratic presidential nomination reaches a critical juncture on Tuesday as millions of voters from Maine to California head to the polls. Sen. Bernie Sanders, who has energized liberals and young voters, is seeking to pull away from the rest of the field, while Joe Biden hopes to ride a wave of momentum and establish himself as the standard-bearer for the party's moderate wing.

The Super Tuesday contests in 14 states are also the first test of billionaire Mike Bloomberg's massive spending in the Democratic race. He skipped the first four states, banking on more than half a billion dollars in advertising and ground operations to establish him as a front-runner for the nomination.

The Democratic race has shifted dramatically over the past three days as Biden capitalized on his commanding South Carolina victory to persuade anxious establishment allies to rally behind his campaign. Amy Klobuchar and Pete Buttigieg abruptly ended their campaigns and endorsed Biden. Another former competitor, former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke, publicly backed Biden while a new wave of mayors, lawmakers and donors said they would support the former vice president.

Sanders and his closest advisers pushed back against the shift of party establishment and donor class toward Biden. Campaigning in Minnesota, Sanders sought to beat back Biden's momentum with a welcoming message to Klobuchar and Buttigieg supporters.

"To all of Amy and Pete's millions of supporters, the door is open. Come on in," Sanders said. "We all share the understanding that together we are going to beat Donald Trump."

The dramatic developments came at a key crossroads in Democrats' turbulent primary season as the party struggles to unify behind a clear message or messenger in its urgent quest to defeat the president. Yet as a field that once featured more than two dozen candidates shrinks to just five, the choice for primary voters is becoming clearer.

On one side stands Biden, a 77-year-old lifelong politician who was relishing his newfound momentum in a campaign that has struggled at times to excite voters with a message emphasizing a pragmatic approach to governing and modest change. On the other stands Sanders, a 78-year-old democratic socialist who has scored four consecutive first- or second-place finishes relying on an energized coalition drawn to his promise to transform the nation's political and economic systems.

Yet the primary isn't just a two-man race.

Bloomberg, in particular, could create problems for Biden's establishment appeal. The former New York mayor, who will appear on a 2020 ballot for the first time on Tuesday, has invested an unprecedented amount in his presidential bid and wracked up many high-profile endorsements of his own.

And Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who has struggled for delegates and momentum over the last month, has vowed to stay in the race until the party's national convention in July.

During an outdoor rally Monday night in East Los Angeles, Warren criticized Biden as she told supporters that nominating a "Washington insider will not meet this moment," nor will nominating a man "who says we do not need any fundamental change in this country."

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For Biden, the wave of new support could not have come at a better time.

Just two days earlier, a loss in South Carolina would have effectively killed his candidacy. But 48 hours after a blowout victory, the former vice president stood on stage in the heart of one of Super Tuesday's crown jewels backed by three former rivals and a growing collection of donors, activists and elected officials.

Biden enters Super Tuesday confident in his ability to win states that resemble South Carolina's demographic makeup: those with large African-American and white moderate populations. That makes Alabama, North Carolina, Arkansas, Tennessee and Virginia potential Biden victories, even in a splintered field.

Yet some of Super Tuesday's more valuable terrain is less forgiving.

Sanders has predicted victory in California, the day's largest delegate prize. The state, like delegate-rich Texas, plays to his strengths given their significant factions of liberal whites, large urban areas with younger voters and strong Latino populations. Sanders also enjoys obvious advantages in his home state of Vermont, and in neighboring Massachusetts, where he's eyeing a knockout blow against progressive rival Warren in her home state.

Bloomberg's stock is at risk of fading as Biden gains ground. But the billionaire will still be a major factor on Tuesday.

He spent much of last week campaigning in a handful of Southern and Western states where his aides say they believe he could notch a win, largely because he's the only candidate who's visited multiple times and pounded the local airwaves with ads. He focused on Alabama, Arkansas, North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Texas.

Bloomberg's campaign believes he has particular appeal among suburban Democrats — those well-educated, upper middle-class voters who may be more moderate on financial issues and may be aware of his advocacy on gun control and climate change.

And Biden's strategy for the coming days, which relies on media coverage and dispatching his new collection of surrogates, reflects a stark reality: Compared to Sanders and Bloomberg, he is understaffed, underfunded and almost out of time as he fights to transform his sole South Carolina victory into a national movement.

Biden raised \$18 million in February, compared to an eye-popping \$46.5 million for Sanders and \$29 million for Warren.

Sanders has struggled to win over his colleagues in Congress but earned a high-profile endorsement of his own on the eve of Super Tuesday from Democracy for America, a national grassroots organization that boasts thousands of members across the country.

"The overwhelming support for Bernie we saw in our member vote should be a wake-up call to the broken, visionless, corporate Democratic establishment," said the organization's chair, Charles Chamberlain. "Americans want fundamental change in Washington, not a return to the status quo."

While Tuesday's outcome is uncertain, Biden's team was confident that the fast-moving trajectory of the race was moving their way.

"The vice president has momentum," said Cedric Richmond, a Louisiana congressman and Biden's national co-chairman. "You'll see that in the Super Tuesday states that look more like South Carolina." And, he added in a stroke of confidence, "We're going to win Texas."

One complication: A significant number of votes were cast in the days and weeks leading up to Tuesday's elections when Buttigieg, Klobuchar and Tom Steyer were still in the race.

At least 1.4 million people have already voted in California's Democratic primary, for example, according to data collected by The Associated Press. In Texas, more than 1 million early Democratic votes have been cast. And in Virginia, nearly 28,000 people voted early, twice as many as in 2016.

Through four primary contests, the AP allocated 60 delegates to Sanders, 54 to Biden and eight to Warren.

The first four states were always more about momentum than math. Super Tuesday states offer a trove of 1,344 new delegates based on how candidates finish. Just 155 delegates have been awarded so far.

Peoples reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Kathleen Ronayne in Los Angeles contrib-

uted to this report.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

North Korean swagger may conceal brewing virus disaster

By FOSTER KLUG Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — In these days of infection and fear, a recent propaganda photo sums up the image North Korea wants to show the world, as well as its people: Soldiers with black surgical masks surround leader Kim Jong Un, ensconced in a leather overcoat and sans mask as he oversees a defiant military drill.

As a new and frightening virus closes in around it, North Korea presents itself as a fortress, tightening its borders as cadres of health officials stage a monumental disinfection and monitoring program.

That image of world-defying impregnability, however, may belie a brewing disaster.

North Korea, which has what experts call a horrendous medical infrastructure in the best of times, shares a porous, nearly 1,450-kilometer (900-mile) border with China, where the disease originated and has since rapidly spread around the world. The North's government has also long considered public reports on infectious disease — or, for that matter, anything that could hurt the ruling elite — matters of state secrecy.

This has raised fears that North Korea, which claims zero infections, may be vastly unprepared for a virus that is testing much more developed countries across the globe — and even that infections could already be exploding within its borders.

"Unfortunately, the international community has no idea if the coronavirus is spreading inside North Korea," said a recent report by Jessica Lee, an East Asia expert at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, a think tank in Washington. "The fact that we know nothing about the level of infection or deaths within North Korea is extremely problematic and, left unchanged, could have serious public health implications."

North Korean media, meanwhile, are filled with self-described examples of ultra-vigilance — as well as a sense of urgency.

Calling its anti-virus campaign a matter of "national existence," the North has banned foreign tourists, delayed the school year, quarantined hundreds of foreigners and thousands of locals who've traveled abroad, shut down nearly all cross-border traffic with China, intensified screening at entry points, and mobilized tens of thousands of health workers to monitor residents and isolate those with symptoms.

A parade of media photographs show North Korean doctors, scientists and health workers in masks, paper hats and protective clothing, discussing matters of science, or disinfecting public transportation, or planning ways to further protect citizens.

"No special cases must be allowed within the state anti-epidemic system," Kim, emerging recently from a prolonged period out of the public spotlight to oversee a politburo meeting on the virus, said, according to state media. Officials must "seal off all the channels and space through which the infectious disease may find its way."

On Monday, Kim's military fired unidentified projectiles into the sea, weapons tests apparently aimed, in part, at showing that all's well amid outside worries about an outbreak in the North.

Despite the bravado, there are rising doubts that North Korea has dodged the virus.

Some North Korea monitoring groups, which claim to have a network of sources inside the nation, recently said that there are virus patients and deaths in North Korea, a claim the South Korean government couldn't confirm.

"I'm 100% sure that North Korea already has infected patients," said Nam Sung-wook, a North Korea expert at South Korea's Korea University who served as president of the Institute for National Security Strategy, a think tank affiliated with South Korea's main spy agency.

If North Korea had an outbreak similar to what's happening in South Korea, the world's hardest-hit

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country aside from China, it would cause serious turmoil because of a chronic lack of medical supplies and medicine, Nam said.

"North Korea would be helpless," he said.

Some analysts believe that North Korea's strong moves to shut down border areas with China, its only major ally and aid benefactor, signal that the virus has already spread into the nation from China, which has had more than 80,000 cases.

There is usually heavy border traffic between the two countries, and tens of thousands of North Koreans were believed to be working in China before a U.N. order for Beijing to send them back home expired in December. It's unknown how many of them have returned home.

There have been growing outside calls for North Korea to open up about what's going on inside its borders.

The U.N. Special Rapporteur on human rights in North Korea, Tomás Ojea Quintana, urged North Korea to "allow full and unimpeded access to medical experts and humanitarian actors, and relax restrictions on access to information. Further isolation of the country is not the answer."

Ojea Quintana said that many North Koreans, especially in the countryside, lack proper access to health services, water and sanitation, and that more than 43% of the population is undernourished.

The United States also expressed worry about North Korea's vulnerability to the viral outbreak and said it was ready to support efforts by aid organizations to contain the spread of the illness in the impoverished nation.

An epidemic in North Korea, which experts say has a chronic lack of medical supplies, could further shake an economy battered by U.S.-led sanctions over its nuclear weapons and missile program. That, in turn, could quicken the depletion of the North's foreign currency reserves by choking off income from tourism and smuggling.

Decreased trade with China could also dry up the goods going to North Korea's informal private markets, which have emerged as a big part of the national economy following the collapse of the state rationing system during a devastating famine in the 1990s, experts say.

And the country's intensified anti-virus efforts could potentially hamper Kim's ability to mobilize his people for labor on major development and tourist projects, said Lim Soo-ho, an analyst from South Korea's Institute for National Security Strategy think tank.

Despite a big economic hit to many North Koreans, however, the elite may survive a serious outbreak.

"North Korea has a powerful control over its people, and that was how it maintained its leadership when 2 to 3 million people died during 'the arduous march period,'" Oh Gyeong-seob, an analyst at Seoul's Korea Institute for National Unification, said, referring to the North Korean euphemism for the 1990s famine.

"Public dissatisfaction with Kim Jong Un will grow, but not at a level that will deal him a critical blow," Oh predicted.

Associated Press writers Hyung-jin Kim and Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul, South Korea, contributed to this report.

Foster Klug, AP's news director for the Korea, Japan, Australia and the South Pacific, has covered North Korea since 2005. Follow him at www.twitter.com/apklug

Most global shares up, tracking Wall St gains; Nikkei falls

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares tracked overnight gains on Wall Street, although Tokyo's benchmark fell back Tuesday as concerns over the virus outbreak gnawed at buying sentiment.

France's CAC 40 gained 1.4% in early trading to 5,408.15, while Germany's DAX rose 1.6% at 12,045.32. Britain's FTSE 100 jumped 2.1% to 6,792.48.

U.S. shares were set for further gains after a huge rally on Monday, with Dow futures adding 1.1% to

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26,761.00. S&P 500 futures rose 1% to 3,096.10.

Traders were awaiting talks between central bankers and other financial leaders of the Group of Seven industrial nations on how to tackle the slowdown brought on by the outbreak that began in China and has spread to dozens of countries, killing about 3,100 people and sickening more than 90,000.

"Calibrating the likelihood of coordinated monetary and fiscal policy stimulus remains the central theme for financial markets," Stephen Innes of AxiCorp. said in a commentary.

Japan's Nikkei 225 lost 1.2% to finish at 21,082.73 after gaining in the morning. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.7% to 6,435.70 after the Reserve Bank of Australia cut its key interest rate to a record-low 0.5%.

South Korea's Kospi rose 0.6% to 2,014.15. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell less than 0.1% to 26,284.82, while the Shanghai Composite advanced 0.7% to 2,992.90.

The mood shifted in Tokyo by midday, as thoughts turned to what the Bank of Japan might be able to do to help counter the slowdown worsened by the outbreak of the new virus that causes a disease called COVID-19. The BOJ's policy rate has stood at minus 0.1% for several years and the central bank has been purchasing tens of billions of yen (billions of dollars) worth of government bonds and other assets to help keep credit cheap and stave off deflation as the population in the world's No. 3 economy ages and shrinks.

But elsewhere in the region the mood was upbeat after the Dow Jones Industrial Average soared, marking its biggest-ever point gain and the biggest percentage increase since March 2009. The huge gains clawed back some of the ground lost last week in a massive sell-off that gave stocks their worst stretch since the financial crisis of 2008.

"So why are markets so pumped by prospects of monetary response; arguably not the most apt tool to address the direct fallout from coronavirus related disruptions?" said Vishnu Varathan at Mizuho Bank in Singapore.

"One reason may be that more nuanced measures to ease cash-flow will offer a reprieve for businesses and households affected by seizures in activity and disruptions in supply chains," he said.

Malaysia's central bank also moved to boost its economy, as expected, cutting its key overnight policy rate by 0.25 percentage point to 2.5%.

The virus epidemic that began in central China has been shutting down industrial centers, emptying shops and severely crimping travel all over the world. More companies are warning investors that their finances will take a hit because of disruptions to supply chains and sales.

Amid the worsening outlook, investors are increasingly anticipating that the Federal Reserve and other major central banks around the world will lower interest rates or take other steps to shield the global economy from the effects of the outbreak.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank announced simultaneously Monday that they are ready to help countries affected by the coronavirus through their emergency lending programs and other tools.

And Christine Lagarde, the head of the European Central Bank, said Monday that Europe's top monetary authority is ready to take "appropriate and targeted measures" if necessary to support the economy against the headwinds from the new coronavirus.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell will lead the call Tuesday. The group includes Japan, Germany, Britain and France, among others. The G-7 often issues statements pledging cooperation amid global economic turbulence.

The Organization for Economic Development, a research organization made up of mostly advanced economies, said Monday that the viral outbreak "presents the global economy with its greatest danger since the financial crisis" in 2008.

The OECD cut its world growth forecast and said that even if there are only limited outbreaks outside China, the global economy will grow just 2.4% this year, the weakest since the crisis. That forecast matches several private estimates.

If other countries are hit with outbreaks similar to China's, growth could fall as low as 1.5%, the OECD said.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. crude rose \$1.05 to \$47.80 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It jumped \$1.99, or 4.4%, to \$46.75 per barrel on Monday. Brent crude, the inter-

national standard, gained 96 cents to \$52.86.

CURRENCIES: The dollar was trading at 108.03 Japanese yen, down from 108.27 yen on Monday. The euro slipped to \$1.1112 from \$1.1133.

NBA to players: Avoid high-fives as virus concern grows

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI (AP) — The NBA has told players to avoid high-fiving fans and strangers and avoid taking any item for autographs, the league's latest response in its ongoing monitoring of the coronavirus crisis that has spread to most corners of the planet.

The league, in a memo sent to teams on Sunday and obtained Monday by The Associated Press, offered 10 recommendations to players with hopes of decreasing risks of getting the virus — among them, not taking items such as pens, markers, balls and jerseys from autograph seekers.

The NBA also told teams that it is consulting "with infectious disease experts, including the Centers for Disease Control" and infectious disease researchers at Columbia University in New York.

"We are also in regular communication with each other, NBA teams including team physicians and athletic trainers, other professional sports leagues, and of course, many of you," the league wrote in its memo to teams, their physicians and athletic training staffs. ESPN first reported on the contents of the memo.

Some players are already heeding the advice.

"Corona," Bobby Portis of the New York Knicks said as he offered some fist-bump greetings on Monday night before his team faced the Houston Rockets.

Jimmy Butler of the Miami Heat said he wasn't necessarily worried or thinking about avoiding high-fives.

"I don't think about any of that," Butler said. "I'm still going to be who I am. We're still going to be who we are."

Portland guard CJ McCollum said in a tweet on Saturday that he is taking the matter seriously, saying he is "officially taking a break from signing autographs until further notice."

"You just have to be careful," McCollum said Monday night in Orlando. "Obviously it's affecting people, especially people who are displaying weaker immune systems and people over 60. You've got to check yourself and wash your hands, try to reduce contact with outsiders and outside germs."

McCollum has tweeted or retweeted several virus-related posts in the last couple days.

"The coronavirus remains a situation with the potential to change rapidly — the NBA and the Players Association will continue to work with leading experts and team physicians to provide up-to-date information and recommended practices that should be followed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus," the league said in the memo.

Many of the tips offered by the NBA fell under common-sense level of best practices when it comes to illness prevention: avoiding contact with people who are sick, staying home when feeling ill, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces. The league also suggested players make sure they "are up to date with all routine vaccinations, including the flu vaccine."

The worldwide death toll topped 3,000 on Monday, and the number of those infected rose to about 89,000 in 70 countries on every continent but Antarctica. In the U.S., the virus has been blamed for six deaths, all in Washington state.

"Containment is feasible and must remain the top priority for all countries," World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

AP Basketball Writer Brian Mahoney in New York and AP freelance writer Dick Scanlon in Orlando, Florida contributed to this report.

More AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/NBA> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Kushner sells stake in firm criticized for possible conflict

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner has sold his stake in a company investing in Opportunity Zone projects offering tax breaks he had pushed for in Washington, sparking criticism that he was benefiting from his White House role.

A filing at the Office of Government Ethics released Monday shows that Kushner received permission to defer capital gains taxes on the sale of his stake in Cadre, a digital platform for smaller investors in commercial properties. Kushner's holding in the private Cadre was worth between \$25 million and \$50 million, according to a financial disclosure report he filed with federal ethics officials last year.

A person familiar with the sale said Cadre asked Kushner last summer to consider selling because of worries that some potential new investors in the firm might raise conflict-of-interest issues. The person was not authorized to speak of Kushner's personal finances and spoke only on a condition of anonymity.

Kushner and his wife, Ivanka Trump, pushed for the Opportunity Zone tax breaks to be included in Trump's 2017 tax overhaul. The breaks offer investors big cuts in capital gains taxes if they put money into businesses and buildings in 8,700 poor, struggling neighborhoods across the country that otherwise might not attract the money.

Cadre has said it plans to invest heavily in those neighborhoods, though it is unclear just how much it has done so. Kushner also has stakes in more than a dozen properties in Opportunity Zones owned by his family firm, Kushner Cos. It is not clear if the company has taken advantage of the breaks.

Kushner stepped down as CEO of Kushner Cos. and gave up management positions at Cadre when he joined the White House three years ago.

Asked for comment, Kushner ethics lawyer Abbe Lowell referred to an earlier statement he gave to Bloomberg News saying that Kushner has complied with all ethics rules and that the sale is "the latest example of how seriously he takes this responsibility."

Cadre declined to comment.

Kushner co-founded Cadre with his brother, Joshua, and current CEO, Ryan Williams.

A Forbes magazine cover story last year said investors were shying away from the company given the links to Kushner and the Trump administration. It quoted CEO Williams saying, "I would be lying if I said the political angle wasn't frustrating or concerning. There are people who won't work with us, and we get that."

Still, Kushner's financial filings filed with federal ethics officials suggest the company isn't doing so badly. The \$25 million minimum value of Kushner's stake at the end of last year is up sharply from three years ago when it was valued at at least \$5 million.

Exit polls: Netanyahu short of majority in Israel vote

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party emerged as the largest party in the country's third election in under a year, exit polls indicated, but it was unclear whether the embattled Israeli leader could secure a parliamentary majority as he prepares to go on trial for corruption charges later this month.

Exit polls on Israeli TV stations appeared to show Likud and its smaller ultra-religious and nationalist allies had captured 59 seats in Monday's vote, two short of the majority required to declare victory.

His opponents were projected to get a majority of 61 seats. But with his main challenger, the centrist Blue and White party, trailing Likud by several seats and the rest of the opposition fragmented, polls were pointing to a continued paralysis of Israel's political system.

Official results slowly trickled in overnight and by early Tuesday morning about 14% of the ballots had been counted.

Addressing a raucous crowd of thousands of ecstatic supporters at 2:30 a.m., Netanyahu claimed a "giant victory."

"This is a victory against all the odds, because we stood against powerful forces," he said. "They already

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eulogized us. Our opponents said the Netanyahu era is over.”

He vowed to immediately begin work to form a new coalition and press forward with a hardline agenda that includes annexing large parts of the West Bank — a step that would destroy any remaining hopes of establishing a Palestinian state.

Despite the wild celebrations, Netanyahu could have difficulties forming a new government. After initially predicting that the prime minister was on the cusp of victory, exit polls projected a tight race that appeared to leave him short of the parliamentary majority he covets.

If official results match the exit polls, Netanyahu could go on trial March 17 weakened and stuck in political gridlock.

Netanyahu was indicted in November on charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes, making him the first sitting prime minister to be charged with a crime. He denies any wrongdoing and says he is the victim of a witch hunt by police, prosecutors and a hostile media.

During the campaign, Netanyahu failed in a bid to secure immunity from prosecution. As prime minister, he could still rally public opposition against prosecutors and judges in the case. He also could seek other avenues to delay or derail the proceedings against him.

Aviad Glickman, the legal affairs correspondent for Channel 13 TV, said that if Likud emerges victorious, Netanyahu’s lawyers will likely seek to delay the trial. He also said there are serious concerns in the legal system that if Netanyahu secures another term, he will try to fire his attorney general, who filed the indictment against him, and push for legislation that would allow parliament to strike down Supreme Court rulings it opposes.

A Likud victory could also force the court to rule on Netanyahu’s future. An advocacy group, seeking to oust Netanyahu, earlier this year asked the court to rule whether an indicted parliament member can be designated prime minister and asked to form a new government.

The Supreme Court in January declined to rule on the request, saying it was premature. But the issue could come up again if President Reuven Rivlin formally taps Netanyahu to form a new government.

After elections, the president is responsible for picking a prime minister and forming a majority coalition. He usually chooses the leader of the largest party, but it’s not required, and the decision has been complicated by Netanyahu’s trial.

After September’s election, both Netanyahu and Gantz, a former military chief, were given opportunities to form coalitions. Both failed. With Likud projected to be the largest party, Netanyahu could again get first crack at assembling a coalition this time around.

According to the exit polls, Netanyahu’s Likud was projected to win 36 to 37 seats, up from 32 seats in September’s vote. Gantz’s centrist Blue and White party, which ran on a message that the prime minister is unfit to lead because of the serious charges against him, was projected to win 32-34 seats, roughly the same as in September.

If the final results hold up, the easiest way out of the impasse would be a unity government between Likud and Blue and White, which together command a solid parliamentary majority. Gantz, however, has ruled out a partnership as long as Netanyahu remains in charge. Netanyahu insists on remaining prime minister in any unity deal.

Addressing a crowd of enthusiastic supporters early Tuesday, Gantz did not concede defeat.

“This wasn’t the outcome that perhaps we would have wanted,” he said. Nonetheless, he said the party would not compromise its principles and would wait for final results.

Avigdor Lieberman, a former Netanyahu ally turned rival, appeared to once again emerge as the key player in coalition talks.

Lieberman has refused to endorse either major candidate, potentially giving him the final say in who controls a parliamentary majority. Lieberman, who opposes Netanyahu’s alliance with ultra-Orthodox religious parties, has said he will not allow a fourth straight election.

A weary-looking Lieberman vowed to stick to his principles and said he would take stock once the final results are in. “We won’t move a millimeter from what we promised our voters,” he said.

The election marked another setback for the once mighty Labor party, which governed the country for

its first three decades. The party's alliance was projected to get just six or seven seats, making it one of the smallest factions in parliament.

Addressing his supporters, party chairman Amir Peretz accused Gantz of cannibalizing Labor in a hopeless bid to emerge as the largest party.

Ayman Odeh, leader of the predominantly Arab Joint List, criticized Gantz for ruling out a partnership with his party.

"The problem was Blue and White's racist attitude," Odeh said, accusing Gantz of turning Blue and White into a "pale imitation" of the right wing. Noting that the Joint List was projected to capture an impressive 14 seats, Odeh said: "We did our part. They failed."

Continued deadlock could potentially force the country into another election.

Netanyahu, the longest-serving leader in Israeli history, has been a caretaker prime minister for more than a year as a divided country has weathered inconclusive votes in April and September and prolonged political paralysis.

After opinion polls repeatedly showed the two rivals deadlocked, or with Gantz holding a slight lead, Likud began to edge ahead over the last two weeks or so.

Netanyahu sought to portray himself as a statesman who is uniquely qualified to lead the country through challenging times and boasts important relationships with world leaders, most critically, President Donald Trump. During the campaign, Trump unveiled a Mideast plan that is strongly favorable to Israel in a step that was seen as an election gift to Netanyahu.

With his career on the line, Netanyahu campaigned furiously. He took a hard turn to the right in hopes of rallying his nationalist base, promising to expand and annex West Bank settlements.

In a campaign marked by ugly smears, Netanyahu's surrogates spread unfounded allegations that Gantz is corrupt, unstable and susceptible to blackmail by Iran.

But the candidates seemed to agree on one thing: The country cannot hold another election.

"The time has come to end the rounds of elections and form a government in Israel," Netanyahu said. "The time has come to mend the rifts, the time for reconciliation has come."

Associated Press writers Aron Heller, Joseph Krauss, Ilan Ben Zion and Tia Goldenberg contributed to this report.

On Super Tuesday eve, Biden gets boost from former rivals

By **STEVE PEOPLES, BRIAN SLODYSKO and JAKE BLEIBERG** Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — Rivals no more, Amy Klobuchar and Pete Buttigieg united behind Joe Biden's presidential bid on Monday as the Democratic Party's moderate wing scrambled to boost the former vice president just hours before voting began across a series of high-stakes Super Tuesday states.

The urgency of the moment reflected deep concerns from the Democratic establishment that Bernie Sanders, a polarizing progressive, was positioned to seize a significant delegate lead when 14 states, one U.S. territory vote on Tuesday.

Klobuchar suspended her campaign and endorsed Biden Monday, a day after Buttigieg announced his exit. Both Klobuchar and Buttigieg, who had been Biden's chief competition for their party's pool of more moderate voters over the last year, declared their public support for Biden at evening events in Dallas. They were joined by another former competitor, former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke, who also backed Biden on Monday.

"I'm looking for a leader, I'm looking for a president, who will draw out what's best in each of us," Buttigieg said alongside Biden. "We have found that leader in vice president, soon-to-be president, Joe Biden."

Speaking at a Biden rally later in the night, Klobuchar called for unity: "If we spend the next four months dividing our party and going at each other we will spend the next four year watching Donald Trump tear apart our country," she said. "We need to unite our party and our country."

The dramatic developments came at a key crossroads in Democrats' turbulent primary season as the

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party struggles to unify behind a clear message or messenger in its urgent quest to defeat President Donald Trump. Yet as a field that once featured more than two dozen candidates shrinks to just five, the choice for primary voters is becoming clearer.

On one side stands Biden, a 77-year-old lifelong politician who represents a pragmatic approach to governing that emphasizes bipartisanship and more modest change. He's clearly relishing the swift improvement of his political fortunes in recent days. On the other stands Sanders, a 78-year-old democratic socialist who has for decades demanded aggressive liberal shifts that seek to transform the nation's political and economic systems. He is working to maintain the momentum he built coming out of the earliest voting states.

Yet the primary isn't currently a two-man race.

New York billionaire Mike Bloomberg, in particular, could create problems for Biden's establishment appeal. The former New York City mayor, who will appear on a 2020 ballot for the first time on Tuesday, has invested more than a half billion dollars into his presidential bid and wracked up many high-profile endorsements of his own.

And Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who has struggled for delegates and momentum over the last month, has vowed to stay in the race until the party's national convention in July.

On the eve of Super Tuesday, however, Biden received a significant boost following his resounding victory over the weekend in South Carolina.

He posted his best two-day fundraising haul in more than a year, raising roughly \$10 million over the last 48 hours. And the former vice president added to his considerable endorsement lead in recent days as elected officials began to coalesce more meaningfully behind him. He has long been the favorite of many elected officials even as he struggled through the first three primary contests of the year.

Biden's new backers feature a who's who of current and former Democratic officials across the nation: former Nevada Sen. Harry Reid; Obama national security adviser Susan Rice; Arizona Senate candidate Mark Kelly; former Colorado Sen. Mark Udall; former California Sen. Barbara Boxer; Rep. Jennifer Wexton, D-Va.; and Rep. Gil Cisneros, D-Calif.

Virginia Rep. Don Beyer, the first member of Congress to endorse Buttigieg, said he planned to endorse Biden and expected Buttigieg to do as well.

"I do think it's the most logical," Beyer said of a Biden endorsement, given his echo of the former vice president's call for civility, a mantra of the Buttigieg campaign. "I think Joe is the next best possibility."

Perhaps the most powerful endorsement would come from former President Barack Obama, who has a relationship with most of the candidates and has talked with several in recent weeks as primary voting has begun. He spoke with Biden to congratulate him after his South Carolina victory, but still has no plans to endorse in the primary at this point.

Campaigning in Klobuchar's home state of Minnesota on Monday night, Sanders discouraged the crowd from booing Biden and welcomed his rivals' supporters to join his campaign.

"To all of Amy and Pete's millions of supporters, the door is open. Come on in," Sanders said. "We all share the understanding that together we are going to beat Donald Trump."

Sanders' senior adviser Jeff Weaver was less polite earlier Monday.

"It's becoming increasingly clear that the candidates funded by big money and super PACs are coalescing behind Joe Biden, and that's not a surprise," he said.

And while Biden's momentum is undeniable, not everyone in his party's moneyed establishment is convinced.

Some major donors preferred to wait until after Super Tuesday to decide whether to join the Biden movement. And even some of his more loyal fundraisers remain frustrated by disorganization within the campaign.

For example, the former vice president has struggled to raise money in Silicon Valley, where many wealthy donors prioritize organization and a data-driven plan. The inability of Biden's team to demonstrate such competence pushed many donors toward his rivals, and others are taking a wait-and-see approach.

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"We need to see what happens tomorrow, which is going to be very telling," said Alex Sink, a Democratic donor and former Florida gubernatorial candidate who endorsed Bloomberg.

And the former vice president's strategy for the coming days, which relies on media coverage and dispatching his new collection of surrogates, reflects a stark reality: Compared to Sanders and Bloomberg, Biden is understaffed, underfunded and almost out of time as he fights to transform his sole South Carolina victory into a national movement.

Biden announced he raised \$18 million in February, compared to an eye-popping \$46.5 million for Sanders and \$29 million for Warren.

Sanders has struggled to win over his colleagues in Congress but earned a high-profile endorsement of his own on Monday from Democracy for America, a national grassroots organization originally led by former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean that boasts thousands of members across the county.

"The overwhelming support for Bernie we saw in our member vote should be a wake-up call to the broken, visionless, corporate Democratic establishment," said the organization's chair Charles Chamberlain. "Americans want fundamental change in Washington, not a return to the status quo."

Some Democrats also bemoaned the distinct lack of diversity in the shrinking field.

The National Organization for Women's political action committee endorsed Warren on Monday. The group's president, Toni Van Pelt, said she's alarmed about the lack of attention paid to the female candidates, who have often had to defend their "electability."

"It's time to support a woman," she said. "We want to make sure we're not looking at all these old white men again."

Through four primary contests, the AP allocated 60 delegates to Sanders, 54 to Biden and eight to Warren.

The first four states were always more about momentum more than math. Super Tuesday states offer a trove of 1,344 new delegates based on how candidates finish. Just 155 delegates have been awarded so far.

Peoples and Slodysko reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Bill Barrow in Atlanta, Will Weissert, Julie Pace and Seth Borenstein in Washington and Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this report.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

China's crisis wanes as epidemic takes hold in US, elsewhere

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's coronavirus caseload continued to wane Tuesday even as the epidemic took a firmer hold beyond Asia, with three countries now exceeding 1,000 cases and the U.S. reporting its sixth death.

The health ministry announced just 125 new cases detected over the past 24 hours, China's lowest number since Jan. 20. Another 31 deaths were reported, all of them in the hardest-hit province of Hubei. The figures bring China's total number of cases to 80,151 with 2,943 deaths.

The global shift in the COVID-19 epidemic was apparent with 2,410 recovered patients being released from Hubei's hospitals and treatment centers, many of them hastily built over recent weeks to cope with the thousands of people sickened by the virus. But new infections outside China were far surpassing its totals.

Clusters of disease grew in South Korea, Italy and Iran, and the virus has turned up for the first time in New York, Moscow and Berlin, as well as Latvia, Indonesia, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal, Jordan and Portugal. The worldwide death toll topped 3,000, and the number of cases tops 89,000 in about 70 countries.

Global health officials sought to reassure the public that the virus remains a manageable threat.

"Containment is feasible and must remain the top priority for all countries," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom

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Ghebreyesus said.

Around the world, the crisis reshaped the daily routines of millions of people.

School children in Japan stayed home with schools closed until April. Israelis in quarantine used special booths to vote in national elections. Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel was rebuffed by her interior minister when she extended her hand to greet him. And the United Nations postponed a major conference on women that had been expected to bring up to 12,000 people from its 193 member countries to New York next week.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development warned that the world economy could contract this quarter for the first time since the international financial crisis more than a decade ago. "Global economic prospects remain subdued and very uncertain," it said.

Nevertheless, the Dow Jones Industrial Average soared nearly 1,300 points, or 5%, as stocks roared back from a seven-day rout on hopes that central banks will take action to shield the global economy from the effects of the outbreak. Finance ministers and bank leaders from the Group of Seven major industrial countries said they will confer by phone Tuesday to discuss an economic response.

Health officials in Washington state, where a particularly troubling cluster of cases surfaced at a nursing home outside Seattle, said four more people had died from the coronavirus, bringing the number of deaths in the U.S. to six, all in Washington. New cases were also reported in New Hampshire and New York.

In Seattle, King County Executive Dow Constantine declared an emergency and said the county is buying a hotel to be used as a hospital for patients who need to be isolated.

"We have moved to a new stage in the fight," he said.

Over 100 cases have been confirmed in the U.S. More are likely with thousands of test kits going to state and local labs and new guidelines to expand screening.

"In this situation, the facts defeat fear. Because the reality is reassuring. It is deep-breath time," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

The message was echoed by global health officials, who said they were encouraged that even in some countries that had taken far less aggressive measures than China's to contain the spread, the virus remains largely in check.

Because the virus is not transmitted as easily as the flu, "it offers us a glimmer ... that this virus can be suppressed and contained," said Dr. Mike Ryan, the WHO's emergencies chief.

China in January imposed a virtual lockdown around Hubei's capital, Wuhan, where the illness was first detected in December and which has been the epicenter of the outbreak. Many countries have canceled or curbed public events and discouraged travel to virus hotspots, but quarantines and similar restrictions have been on smaller scales, focused on those directly exposed.

The worst-hit places outside China were South Korea, Iran and Italy. South Korea on Tuesday reported 477 new cases, bringing its totals to 4,812 with 29 deaths. Most are in the southeastern city of Daegu and neighboring towns.

In Iran, a confidant of Iran's supreme leader died from the virus. The Islamic Republic confirmed 1,501 cases and 66 deaths, but many believe the true number is larger. Its reported caseload surged more than 250% in just 24 hours.

Italy's caseload rose to 2,036, including 52 deaths. Officials said it could take up to two weeks before they know whether measures including quarantining 11 towns in northern Italy are slowing the spread of the virus.

Contributing to this report were Josh Funk in Omaha, Nebraska; Chris Grygiel in Seattle, Carley Petesch in Dakar, Senegal; Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations; Matt Sedensky in Bangkok, Dake Kang in Beijing; Aniruddha Ghosal in New Delhi; Kim Tong-Hyung in Seoul, South Korea; Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran; Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Thomas Adamson and Lori Hinnant in Paris; Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo; Nicole Winfield and Frances D'Emilio in Rome; Colleen Barry in Milan; and Aron Heller in Jerusalem.

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This story has been revised to correct that Indonesia reported its first case Monday, not Malaysia.

Kim watches N Korea military drill alongside masked officers

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised an earlier live-fire rocket artillery exercise to confirm his military's combat readiness and "further kindle the flames of training revolution," state media said Tuesday.

The report by the Korean Central News Agency came a day after South Korea's military detected what appeared to be two short-range ballistic launches of projectiles that landed in the North's eastern sea.

Pyongyang's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper published photos of rockets soaring out of multiple rocket launchers and an island target buried in smoke.

Kim smiled widely while watching from an observation post. He wore a black fur hat and leather coat but was not wearing a face mask, though other military officials had black masks in an apparent reflection of the country's campaign against the coronavirus.

Analysts have speculated North Korea reduced training and other activities with large troop gatherings to reduce the chance of the virus spreading in its military. North Korea has not revealed if it has any cases of the illness, though state media has hinted at some people being quarantined while showing symptoms.

KCNA said of the drill that North Korean troops "proudly demonstrated" accurate marksmanship with their long-range artillery pieces, but it didn't further specify the weapons involved.

"(Kim) expressed great satisfaction with the fact that the artillerymen are prepared to make rapid reaction to any circumstances and perfectly carry out their firepower combat duties," the agency said.

"Saying that the victory of the socialist cause is guaranteed by the powerful military force and a war deterrence, he said that the People's Army should keep full combat-readiness to protect the sky, land and sea of the country from any encroachment."

The report did not mention any direct comments by Kim toward the United States or South Korea.

Kim Dong-yub, an analyst from Seoul's Institute for Far Eastern Studies, said the weapons involved would have included a "super large" multiple rocket launcher the North first revealed last year, judging by the flight data announced by Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Since the collapse of a second summit last year between Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump, North Korea resumed ballistic activity and weapons launches to expand its military capabilities. Kim had entered the new year vowing to bolster his nuclear deterrent in the face of "gangster-like" U.S. sanctions and pressure.

Chris Matthews retires from MSNBC, cites comments to women

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Longtime MSNBC host Chris Matthews abruptly retired from his "Hardball" show on Monday, apologizing for making inappropriate comments about women and following a brutal week where he also took heat from supporters of Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

His exit came after a weekend of discussions with his bosses, three days after GQ ran a column by a freelance journalist about her "own sexist run-in" with Matthews in the makeup room before appearing on his show.

Matthews opened his program Monday with the announcement, talking in his familiar staccato style, that he was ending his run on the political talk show he started in 1997. After a commercial break, he was replaced in the anchor chair by a shaken Steve Kornacki.

"This is the last 'Hardball' on MSNBC, and obviously this isn't for lack of interest in politics," Matthews said.

He said that "compliments on a woman's appearance that some men, including me, might have incorrectly thought were OK were never OK. Not then, and certainly not today, and for making such comments in the past, I'm sorry."

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The 74-year-old Matthews, who underwent prostate surgery last year, worked as a speechwriter for President Jimmy Carter and was top aide to House Speaker Thomas "Tip" O'Neill before turning to journalism as Washington bureau chief for the San Francisco Examiner. He had been talking to MSNBC management about retiring after the election, but he didn't survive until Super Tuesday.

He apologized last Monday for likening Sanders' win in the Nevada caucus two nights earlier to the Nazi takeover of France. On Friday's show, he confused the identities of South Carolina Senate candidate Jaime Harrison and Sen. Tim Scott, both black men.

And he was criticized for an uncomfortable interview with Warren following the presidential debate, asking if she believed Mike Bloomberg was lying when he denied telling a pregnant female employee of his news company to terminate the pregnancy.

"Why would she lie?" Warren said.

In her first-person story GQ story released Friday, journalist Laura Bassett said Matthews behaved inappropriately toward her when she was a guest on his show in 2016.

In the makeup room prior to the show, Matthews looked at her and said "why haven't I fallen in love with you yet?" she wrote.

"When I laughed nervously and said nothing, he followed up to the makeup artist. 'Keep putting makeup on her, I'll fall in love with her,'" Bassett wrote. "Another time, he stood between me and the mirror and complimented the red dress I was wearing for the segment. 'You going out tonight?' he asked."

Bassett said she wrote about the encounter in a 2017 essay but didn't name Matthews because she was afraid of network retaliation, adding, "I'm not anymore."

It was noticed by outsiders when Matthews didn't appear on MSNBC's coverage of the South Carolina primary on Saturday night.

Crew members backstage at "Hardball" on Monday learned of their boss' exit about an hour and a half before Matthews' statement. There were audible gasps in the green room from guests waiting to go on for the first segment when they listened to the announcement the same time as viewers. Shortly after he made his statement, Matthews left the studio with his wife and family.

MSNBC said there will be rotating subs in the time slot before a permanent replacement is named for the host who has been a mainstay of the network's lineup since two years after MSNBC launched.

Even before his last week, there was some discontent among Sanders supporters about Matthews' lack of enthusiasm for their candidate, putting the news network that appeals to a liberal audience at odds with a potential liberal presidential nominee.

Kornacki, at the end of Monday's show, said he watched the show as a teenager.

"Chris has plenty of intellect but he also was willing to wear his heart on his sleeve," he said. "That's what made him compelling viewing."

Washington Post columnist Kathleen Parker tweeted that she's writing an angry column about his exit.

"Chris Matthews is a friend of mine," she wrote. "He and I have flirted unabashedly for 20 years. This is an atrocious end to a noble, happy-warrior career. I will continue to be his friend."

Associated Press writers Lynn Elber in Los Angeles and Jonathan Lemire in New York contributed to this story.

Trump lobbs fresh barbs at Dems, rallies GOP faithful in NC

BY AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — President Donald Trump gloated about the stock market roaring back Monday, while throwing sharp barbs at the thinning Democratic presidential field on the eve of Super Tuesday's big round of primaries.

Trump's spirits were high after the Dow Jones Industrial Average soared nearly 1,300 points, or 5%, clawing back from a seven-day rout in which it dropped more than 3,500 points. Stocks rose Monday on hopes that central banks will take action to shield the global economy from the effects of the coronavirus

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outbreak.

"Do you think our opponents were thrilled when they saw the stock market today?" asked Trump, who has taken credit for a bull market throughout his three years in office.

The president threw some of his hardest punches at former Vice President Joe Biden, who is coming off a decisive win in Saturday's South Carolina primary. Trump picked at Biden's propensity for rhetorical stumbles on the stump, suggesting it was a sign of senility.

"I honestly don't think he knows what office he's running for," Trump said. He speculated that if Biden wins the White House, "he's not going to be running it. Other people are going to. They're going to put him into a home and other people are going to be running the country and they're going to be super left radical crazies."

Trump allowed that Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who won finished at or near the top in three of the first four nominating contests, "does have some enthusiasm, but much less than we have."

It's a crucial moment in the nomination battle: Biden is making the case that moderates need to consolidate behind him to stop Sanders, a Democratic socialist, and give Democrats a shot at beating Trump in November.

Two moderates have exited the race: former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar. Former New York City Mayor Bloomberg, who skipped the first four contests, will appear on the ballot for the first time Tuesday.

Trump speculated there may have been a "quid pro quo" for Buttigieg — the offer of a job in the next Democratic administration for dropping out and endorsing Biden.

"Impeach them. They should be impeached," Trump said.

Trump has offered daily commentary on the Democratic race, alternately boasting that no Democrat has a chance against him, ridiculing the top tier of candidates with derisive nicknames, and arguing that the party's establishment is trying to steal the nomination from Sanders.

Sanders shot back at Trump on CNN Monday night, saying: "President Trump, stay out of the Democratic primary. Why don't you do your job for a change as president?"

Earlier Monday, Trump said he had no qualms about attending a large stadium rally despite the coronavirus threat.

"I think it's very safe," Trump said of campaign rallies, adding that the Democratic candidates are having plenty of rallies themselves.

The threat of the virus didn't deter fans of Trump from attending Monday's rally in Charlotte, where people in the stands shared buckets of chicken fingers and dunked their hands into shared vats of popcorn while they awaited the president's arrival.

The coronavirus outbreak has killed more than 3,000 globally and upended life for many around the globe. In the U.S., the number of infections has surpassed 100, with six dead. Federal officials have not advised against large gatherings in the U.S., leaving that to local officials to address.

North Carolina, a perennial swing state, is among the 14 states, one territory and voters abroad that will cast their ballots Tuesday, races that represent about a third of all delegates.

Trump's rally in Charlotte follows his campaign's pattern of churning out robust counter-programming throughout the Democratic nominating process. In recent weeks, the president has held rallies in each of the four early voting states for the presidential nomination.

The president and the GOP are giving North Carolina, which has been decided by close margins over the last three presidential election cycles, plenty of attention.

Republicans have picked Charlotte to host the Republican National Convention. Trump also visited Charlotte last month as part of a series of revitalization and "opportunity now" summits, programs he and administration officials have highlighted as he tries to chip away at the Democrats' electoral advantage in minority communities.

AP writers Noreen Gillespie in Charlotte and Kevin Freking in Washington contributed to this report.

More testing sheds light on how virus is spreading in US

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — An increase in testing for the coronavirus began shedding light Monday on how the illness has spread in the United States, including in Washington state, where four people died at a nursing home and some schools were closed for disinfection.

New diagnoses in several states pushed the tally of COVID-19 cases past 100, and New Hampshire reported its first case, raising the total of affected states to 11. Seattle officials announced four more deaths, bringing the total in the U.S. to six.

In Seattle, King County Executive Dow Constantine declared an emergency and said the county was buying a hotel to be used as a hospital for patients who need to be isolated. He said the facility should be available by the end of the week.

"We have moved to a new stage in the fight," he said.

Vice President Mike Pence met with the nation's governors and pledged to continue updating them weekly by teleconference. President Donald Trump met with pharmaceutical companies to talk about progress toward a vaccine.

The deaths at a nursing home in suburban Kirkland, Washington, were especially troubling to health care experts because of the vulnerability of sick and elderly people to the illness and existing problems in nursing facilities.

"It's going to be a disaster," said Charlene Harrington, who studies nursing homes at the University of California, San Francisco. Infection is already a huge problem in U.S. nursing homes because of a lack of nurses and training.

In Texas, tension between U.S. and local officials brewed over the planned release Monday of more than 120 ex-passengers of the Diamond Princess cruise ship in quarantine in San Antonio. Mayor Ron Nirenberg declared a public safety emergency in an attempt to continue the quarantine. He and other officials in San Antonio called for more lab testing of the passengers after one woman tested positive after release.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said its case count includes 45 infections among people who were on the cruise ship, one more than previously reported. The count includes people who tested positive after returning from travel to outbreak areas in other parts of the world, their close contacts and infections that appear to be from community spread — people who did not travel or have known contact with other infected people.

The CDC recently broadened its guidelines for who should be tested for the new virus to include people with symptoms but without a travel history to virus hot zones.

More testing will bring more confirmed cases, experts said, but they cautioned that does not mean the virus is gaining speed. Instead, the testing is likely to reveal a picture of the virus' spread that was previously invisible.

In Seattle, schools and one skyscraper closed, but health experts cautioned that closures can have downsides.

On Monday, the F5 technology company said it was closing its 44-story tower in downtown Seattle after learning an employee had been in contact with someone who tested positive for coronavirus. The employee tested negative, but company spokesman Rob Gruening said the tower was closed as a precaution.

More than 10 schools in the Seattle area were closed for deep cleaning over virus concerns, although the city-county public health department said it was not yet recommending longer-term school closures or cancellation of activities.

Closing schools and canceling large gatherings are what's called social distancing, the idea that distancing people will reduce the spread of the illness.

The evidence for those steps is "not as strong as we would like it to be," Jennifer Nuzzo of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security cautioned Monday during a webinar.

Measures such as school closures have been used during flu outbreaks, but the new coronavirus isn't

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acting exactly like flu. And such steps are not guaranteed to protect.

"Maybe it makes people more likely to stay at home. Maybe it doesn't if people re-congregate elsewhere," Nuzzo said.

Closing schools also leaves health care workers, first responders and others without child care, making it difficult for them to come to work.

Trump and members of his Cabinet met at the White House with executives of 10 pharmaceutical companies to discuss ways to speed the development of a vaccine for the coronavirus.

There are no proven treatments for COVID-19. In China, scientists have been testing a combination of HIV drugs against the new virus, as well as an experimental drug named remdesivir that was in development to fight Ebola. In the U.S., the University of Nebraska Medical Center also began testing remdesivir in some Americans who were found to have COVID-19 after being evacuated from a cruise ship in Japan.

It's not clear how quickly such studies will answer whether any of the drugs help. Many patients recover without needing any treatment. The biggest concern is how to help the fraction who become severely ill.

Pence, who also attended the Monday meeting, said other meetings are being arranged with leaders of airlines and cruise ship operations.

On Capitol Hill, negotiations on a bipartisan, emergency \$7 billion to \$8 billion measure to battle the virus are almost complete, according to both Democratic and GOP aides. The measure appears on track to be unveiled as early as Tuesday, and the hope is to speed it quickly through both House and Senate by the end of the week.

The measure would finance both federal and state response efforts, fund the federal government's drive to develop and produce a vaccine, and offer Small Business Administration disaster loans to help businesses directly affected by the virus crisis.

At the Pentagon, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, told reporters that the COVID-19 outbreak has had little impact on the U.S. military. "Right now the overall broad impact to the U.S. uniformed military is very, very minimal. That's not to say it's zero," he said.

U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams discussed the virus Monday during a stop in Connecticut, where he was touring the state public health laboratory.

"Caution, preparedness, but not panic," Adams said. "That's how we're going to successfully navigate this coronavirus situation."

Adams and state Public Health Commissioner Renee Coleman-Mitchell urged the public to take precautions such as washing hands, elbow "bumping" instead of hand shaking and getting flu shots. They said flu shots would decrease the number of people hospitalized because of flu and free up space, if needed, to treat patients sickened by the coronavirus.

Associated Press writers Kevin Freking and Lauran Neergaard in Washington, Terry Wallace in Dallas and Dave Collins in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, contributed to this report.

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'Inside the Actors Studio' host James Lipton dies at 93

By ANDREW DALTON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — James Lipton, an actor-turned-drama-school-dean who got hundreds of Hollywood luminaries to open up about their life and art and became an unlikely celebrity himself as the longtime host of "Inside the Actors Studio," died Monday.

Lipton died of bladder cancer at his New York home, his wife, Kedakai Lipton, told The Associated Press. He was 93.

The Detroit-born Lipton began the Bravo show in 1994 that also served as a class for his students at the Actors Studio Drama School, where he was then dean.

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He often said his only requirement for a guest was whether they had something to teach his students. His first guest, Paul Newman, set a standard of stardom for those that would follow, including Meryl Streep, Robert De Niro, Glenn Close, Steven Spielberg and Barbra Streisand.

"Rest in peace, James Lipton. He was interested in the actor's process, which was so refreshing," Streisand said in a Twitter post.

Lipton was known, and often parodied, for his highbrow and sometimes worshipful tone with his subjects, and for his intensive preparation, represented by a stack of blue note cards that held his meticulously researched questions. When Will Ferrell played Lipton on "Saturday Night Live," the stack of cards was nearly a foot thick.

Many otherwise media-shy actors were willing to appear on "Inside the Actors Studio" because Lipton focused on their craft and not the usual celebrity chatter or project promotion.

"People do not come on to sell a movie and you never hear the words, 'I'm opening in Vegas in two weeks,'" Lipton told the AP in a 1996 interview. "That's what most talk shows depend upon, and that's fine, but with us we're getting together to dig as deep as we can."

He was not afraid to get personal, however, and his stunned interviewees often asked "How did you know that?" when he asked about something from their childhood or private life.

Julia Roberts asked Lipton if he had talked to her mother after one set of questions, and Sally Field in her first-season appearance asked, "Have you been reading my diary? Talking to my shrink?"

"Obviously we deal in lots of anecdotes, and even some gossip and secrets," Lipton told the AP, "but they're tied together by a concern for and devotion to craft."

He ended every interview with a set of soul-searching questions he derived from French television host Bernard Pivot, including, "What is your favorite curse word?" and "If God exists, what would you like to hear him say after your death?"

Lipton's own childhood was made financially perilous by the divorce of his parents, poet and journalist Lawrence Lipton and teacher Betty Weinberg.

"I always had to work, from the age of 13. When my father left, we had nothing," he told Parade magazine in 2013. While he dabbled in acting as a youngster, he intended to pursue law to avoid the instability he'd experienced as a youngster.

He ultimately turned back to his original passion, the arts, but with an unusual detour. He worked as a pimp for a year in Paris after World War II, Lipton told Parade. He was broke and planning to leave the city when a prostitute he knew suggested he represent her and others.

"It was only a few years after the war. Paris was different then, still poor. Men couldn't get jobs and, in the male chauvinist Paris of that time, the women couldn't get work at all. It was perfectly respectable for them" to work at one of city's bordellos, Lipton said.

Back home in the U.S., he studied acting with famed teacher Stella Adler as well as production and directing at New York University and the New School. His 1950s stage and screen credits included "The Autumn Garden" on Broadway and a stint as actor and then writer on the TV soap opera "The Guiding Light." Lipton wrote the book and the lyrics for two Broadway musicals, "Nowhere to Go but Up" (1962) and "Sherry!" (1967).

In the 1990s, as a vice president of the Actors Studio, Lipton helped create the Actors Studio Drama School that brought together the resources of the studio and the New School. He was the founding dean of the graduate-level school, which in 2005 relocated to Pace University, where Lipton remained its dean emeritus.

Despite his TV show's guest list of nearly every A-list actor of recent decades, Lipton never got the guest he wanted most, Marlon Brando.

"He was reclusive in the last years of his life," Lipton told Parade. "He said, 'I'm never going to do your show. The studio's always taking credit for me. I was trained by Stella Adler.' I said, 'So was I. Come on. We'll talk about Stella.' I've had a pretty good roster of guests without Marlon."

Lipton said his favorite guest on the show was Bradley Cooper, because he was a former student.

"The night that one of my students has achieved so much that he or she comes back and sits down in that chair would be the night that I have waited for since we started this thing," Lipton told Larry King in 2016. "It turned out to be Bradley Cooper."

Lipton and Cooper, who can be seen asking Sean Penn a question in a 1999 episode of the show, both teared up when he returned as a guest in 2011. Lipton retired as host in 2018.

Other than Brando and Jack Nicholson, another favorite of his who he never had as a guest, Lipton spent little time trying to land big names, who often came to him as appearing on the show became a sought-after sign of career achievement for actors.

Lipton told the AP that that response from actors made him think that "maybe, just maybe, we were creating an archive that would be more valuable 100 years from now."

AP Television Writer Lynn Elber contributed to this report.

Opera union board member alleges cover-up in Domingo scandal

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A senior member of the main U.S. union that represents opera performers resigned Monday, accusing the leadership of a cover-up in its investigation into accusations of sexual harassment against superstar Plácido Domingo.

Samuel Schultz, a baritone and vice president of the American Guild of Musical Artists, had provided the full findings of the union's investigation to The Associated Press, which he said AGMA's leadership had planned to keep secret as part of an agreement with Domingo. Schultz said the deal involved the legendary tenor paying the union a \$500,000 fine and issuing a negotiated public apology in exchange for the full details not being disclosed.

The union has said that money would have covered the cost of its 4-month investigation, which involved hiring outside counsel, and funding sexual harassment training. But Schultz called it hush money that did a disservice to the women who stepped forward.

"This is a quid pro quo — silence in exchange for money," Schultz said in a resignation letter sent Monday to AGMA President Raymond Menard and National Executive Director Len Egert. "I found AGMA's willingness to bury the details of the investigative report deeply betraying of the women who were sexually harassed by Domingo," he wrote.

Schultz, who wrote that he was acting "as a sexual assault survivor myself," provided a copy of his letter to the AP.

In a statement to the AP, Egert denied any cover-up, saying the investigation's details were kept confidential to protect the identities of people who requested anonymity and that the union's leaders also felt the settlement could avoid formal disciplinary charges against Domingo that would require an internal hearing.

"Regrettably, due to Mr. Schultz's admitted breach of confidentiality, the witnesses will now need to determine whether or not they will testify at a disciplinary hearing to prove the charges against Mr. Domingo," Egert said. The union filed disciplinary charges against Domingo on Friday, initiating a potentially lengthy process that could result in a fine, suspension, censure or expulsion.

The union's investigation into the sexual misconduct allegations was one of two independent inquiries launched after multiple women accused Domingo of harassment and abusing his power in AP stories published last year. The second inquiry, still ongoing, was launched by Los Angeles Opera, where Domingo had been general director since 2003 before resigning in October.

Last week, AGMA said only that its investigators found Domingo had "engaged in inappropriate activity, ranging from flirtation to sexual advances, in and outside of the workplace." Based on its findings, the union said, Domingo would "pay fines," be suspended from the union for 18 months and undergo sexual harassment training.

According to people who spoke to AP on condition of anonymity, the investigation found that 27 people

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were sexually harassed or witnessed inappropriate behavior by Domingo in the 1990s and 2000s, when he held senior management positions at Washington National Opera and Los Angeles Opera. They said another 12 people told investigators they were aware of the star's reputation and that it was common knowledge at the two companies.

Schultz' resignation came after the union launched an inquiry into who leaked the investigation's findings. In an internal email seen by the AP, Egert and Maynard said the deal fell apart because it "was expressly premised on AGMA's promise to maintain confidentiality over the details of the investigatory report."

Last week, Domingo apologized to the women who accused him of misconduct, after denying the allegations for months. "I want them to know that I am truly sorry," he said. "I accept full responsibility for my actions."

But two days later, as several Spanish concert halls moved to cancel his appearances, he issued a new statement saying his "apology was sincere and wholehearted," but had generated a false impression. "I have never behaved aggressively toward anybody, nor have I ever done anything to obstruct or hurt the career of anybody," he said.

Schultz said in his letter to Egert and Maynard that he felt they had "duped the board into believing Domingo was truly sorry," adding, "'As Domingo made clear when he retracted his apology, he is unrepentant and continues to believe that he did nothing wrong.'"

In 2018, Schultz accused opera star David Daniels and Daniels' husband, William Walters, of having drugged and raped him in May 2010 after a closing-night party at the Houston Grand Opera. Daniels, who denies the accusation, has since been indicted in Texas on a felony charge of sexual assault.

Public Enemy kicks out Flavor Flav after campaign dispute

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Public Enemy has abruptly fired founding member Flavor Flav following a public spat over a decision by members of the rap pioneers to perform at a Bernie Sanders campaign event.

Public Enemy "will be moving forward without Flavor Flav," the band said in a brief statement Sunday. "We thank him for his years of service and wish him well."

Flavor Flav responded on Twitter on Monday with incredulity, writing to band leader Chuck D: "You wanna destroy something we've built over 35 years OVER POLITICS?" He scolded the rap pioneer: "I'm very disappointed in you and your decisions right now."

The dispute kicked off when Flavor Flav and his attorney sent a cease-and-desist letter to Sanders' campaign on Friday, arguing that Sunday's concert and campaign rally in Los Angeles by Public Enemy Radio had used Flavor Flav's "unauthorized likeness, image, and trademarked clock."

"While Chuck is certainly free to express his political view as he sees fit — his voice alone does not speak for Public Enemy," the letter states. "There is no Public Enemy without Flavor Flav." In Monday tweets, he called it "misleading marketing" and said he did not want to endorse a candidate.

In the band's statement, the group said Public Enemy Radio — a Chuck D-led offshoot featuring DJ Lord, Jahi, and the S1Ws — would continue to perform and will release an album in April.

Chuck D over the weekend wrote on Twitter that his dispute with Flavor Flav stretched deep into the past and "my last straw was long ago."

Flavor Flav recently sued Chuck D, alleging he hasn't received a royalty check for their music, live shows or merchandise in several years.

Supreme Court will decide the fate of Obama health care law

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court agreed Monday to decide a lawsuit that threatens the Obama-era health care law, a case that will keep health care squarely in front of voters even though a decision won't come until after the 2020 election.

The court said it would hear an appeal by 20 mainly Democratic states of a lower-court ruling that

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declared part of the statute unconstitutional and cast a cloud over the rest.

For the more than 20 million people covered under "Obamacare," nothing changes while the Supreme Court deliberates. The law's subsidized private insurance coverage and Medicaid expansion remain in place while the issues are litigated again.

Defenders of the Affordable Care Act argued that the questions raised by the case are too important to let it drag on for months or years in lower courts and that the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans erred when it struck down the health law's now toothless requirement that Americans have health insurance.

The case will be the third major Supreme Court battle over the law since President Barack Obama signed it nearly 10 years ago, on March 23, 2010. The court has twice upheld the heart of the law, with Chief Justice John Roberts memorably siding with the court's liberals in 2012, amid Obama's reelection campaign. The majority that upheld the law twice remains on the court, Roberts and the four liberal justices.

The Trump administration's views on the law have shifted over time, but it has always supported getting rid of provisions that prohibit insurance companies from discriminating against people with existing health ailments. Even as the administration seeks to overturn "Obamacare" in court, President Donald Trump has claimed people with preexisting conditions would still be protected. Neither the White House nor congressional Republicans have specified how.

Congressional repeal narrowly failed in 2017, when the Republicans controlled the House and the Senate. Any repeal effort now would be blocked by the Democratic-led House under Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The Supreme Court's review of the case guarantees that the fate of the health care law will be in the public's eye as the election approaches, even if the decision doesn't come until 2021.

The timing means written briefs from both sides will likely be due in the summer, and arguments could take place in early fall before the election, if the court follows its usual practice of scheduling cases. If that happens, audio snippets from the oral arguments would be available for campaign commercials, said Timothy Jost, a retired law professor for Washington and Lee University in Virginia and a supporter of the ACA.

"I think the Democrats will hammer away at the fact that the Trump administration is not defending the law, and basically arguing the whole thing should be invalidated," said Jost. "They'll focus on issues like pre-existing conditions and 20 million people losing health insurance."

Democratic presidential candidates agree on expanding coverage to the 28 million people who remain uninsured, even as they sharply debate how to do that. Former Vice President Joe Biden and other moderates would build on the ACA, while Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders wants to institute a new government health plan to cover all U.S. residents, including those who now have private insurance.

"This case is a stark, life-and-death reminder how much is at stake this fall," Biden said in a statement.

The Democratic states had asked for a fast-track review with a decision by late June, before the 2020 elections in November. Instead, the justices probably will hear arguments in the fall, with a decision likely in the spring of 2021.

Still, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra welcomed the court's decision to take up the appeal.

"As Texas and the Trump Administration fight to disrupt our healthcare system and the coverage that millions rely upon, we look forward to making our case in defense of the ACA. American lives depend upon it," Becerra said in a statement.

The high court action takes the case out of the hands of a federal district judge in Texas who had previously struck down the entire law.

The new case stems from the 2017 passage of tax legislation that left in place the law's requirement that Americans carry health insurance but eliminated the financial penalty for not buying coverage. Congress made no other changes to the law.

Texas and other Republican-led states sued, arguing that the elimination of the penalty rendered the law's so-called individual mandate unconstitutional. U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor agreed, adding that the mandate was so central to the law that without it the rest of the law must fall, too.

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While finding the health law's insurance requirement to be unconstitutional, the appeals court made no decision on such popular provisions as protections for people with preexisting conditions, Medicaid expansion and coverage for young adults up to age 26 on their parents' policies.

The 5th Circuit sent the case back to O'Connor to determine whether other parts of the law can be separated from the insurance requirement and thus remain in place.

University of Notre Dame law professor Richard Garnett said the high court's decision to "intervene now, and not -- as it could have -- to wait for the case to develop more below, suggests that the justices are skeptical about the challengers' sweeping argument that the entire Act is unconstitutional."

Besides expanding insurance coverage, the 900-page law also made many changes to other programs, including Medicare, community health centers and fraud-fighting. Sorting out whether some provisions could remain while others go with the insurance mandate would be a colossal effort.

The justices on Monday granted two different appeals, one from the Democratic states and the other from the Republican side, that essentially put all the issues in front of the court, from the insurance mandate to the validity of the entire law if the mandate does not survive. The court took no action on a separate appeal filed by the Democratic-led House of Representatives.

Associated Press writer Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar contributed to this report.

Long-rumored Woody Allen memoir coming in April

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A memoir by Woody Allen, rumored for years and once thought unpublishable in the #MeToo era, is coming out next month.

Grand Central Publishing, a division of Hachette Book Group, announced Monday that the book is called "Apropos of Nothing" and will be released April 7.

"The book is a comprehensive account of his life, both personal and professional, and describes his work in films, theater, television, nightclubs, and print," according to Grand Central. "Allen also writes of his relationships with family, friends, and the loves of his life."

Financial terms were not disclosed for the book, which Grand Central quietly acquired a year ago, and a spokesman declined to provide further details about the book's contents. In addition to the U.S., "Apropos of Nothing" will be released in Canada, Italy, France, Germany and Spain, followed by releases in "countries around the world." Allen will do "several interviews" for the book, Grand Central announced.

The 84-year-old Allen is an Oscar-winning filmmaker, known for such works as "Annie Hall" and "The Purple Rose of Cairo," and is among the most influential comedians of his time. But allegations by daughter Dylan Farrow that he molested her as a child in the early 1990s have effectively idled his movie career in the U.S. Amazon Studios backed out of a production and distribution deal with Allen, and numerous actors have said they won't work with him anymore. His "A Rainy Day In New York" was released in Europe last year but not in this country. His current production, "Rifkin's Festival," starring Christoph Waltz and Gina Gershon, was shot last summer and is seeking distribution.

Allen has denied any wrongdoing, and he was never charged after two separate investigations in the 1990s. But Dylan's allegations have received new attention in the #MeToo era.

An Allen memoir nearly came out more than a decade ago. He had reportedly reached a multimillion-dollar deal with Penguin in 2003, but changed his mind. In 2018-2019, several publishers, citing #MeToo concerns, reportedly rebuffed an Allen representative who was seeking a deal for his memoir. But according to a Grand Central spokesman, a deal was reached in March 2019 after Publisher and Senior Vice President Ben Sevier read a completed draft of the book.

An Allen memoir once seemed the most obvious of publications. He has had a celebrated career as a performer and director, and is known for wordplay and one-liners. He has won three Academy awards for his screenplays and has been a published writer for decades, his comic essays appearing in The New Yorker and elsewhere. His previous books include the essay collections "Without Feathers" and "Getting Even."

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Allen's agreement with Hachette means he shares a publisher with one of his literary heroes, J.D. Salinger, and one of his biggest detractors, his son Ronan Farrow, whose "Catch and Kill" was released last year by the Hachette division Little, Brown and Company. Farrow won a Pulitzer Prize for his #MeToo reporting on producer Harvey Weinstein, and for years has been estranged from his father, as is Ronan's mother, Mia Farrow, who starred in "The Purple Rose of Cairo," "Hannah and Her Sisters" and other Allen movies.

This fall, a division of Macmillan will publish Dylan Farrow's debut novel, "Hush," billed as a "powerful feminist fantasy full of surprising insights."

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, March 3, the 63rd day of 2020. There are 303 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 3, "The Star-Spangled Banner" became the national anthem of the United States as President Herbert Hoover signed a congressional resolution.

On this date:

In 1791, Congress passed a measure taxing distilled spirits; it was the first internal revenue act in U.S. history.

In 1845, Florida became the 27th state.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed a measure creating the National Academy of Sciences.

In 1894, British Prime Minister William Gladstone submitted his resignation to Queen Victoria, ending his fourth and final premiership.

In 1934, bank robber John Dillinger escaped from the Lake County Jail in Crown Point, Indiana, along with another prisoner, Herbert Youngblood.

In 1943, in London's East End, 173 people died in a crush of bodies at the Bethnal Green tube station, which was being used as a wartime air raid shelter.

In 1974, a Turkish Airlines DC-10 crashed shortly after takeoff from Orly Airport in Paris, killing all 346 people on board.

In 1985, coal miners in Britain voted to end a year-long strike that proved to be the longest and most violent walkout in British history.

In 1991, motorist Rodney King was severely beaten by Los Angeles police officers in a scene captured on amateur video. Twenty-five people were killed when a United Airlines Boeing 737-200 crashed while approaching the Colorado Springs airport.

In 1996, Israel declared "total war" against the militant group Hamas after a bus bomb in Jerusalem killed 19 people, including the bomber, the third such suicide attack in eight days.

In 2001, a plane carrying members of a National Guard engineering crew crashed in heavy rain near Macon, Ga., killing all 21 people on board.

In 2002, voters in Switzerland approved joining the United Nations, abandoning almost 200 years of formal neutrality.

Ten years ago: Appearing before a White House audience of invited guests, many wearing white medical coats, President Barack Obama firmly rejected calls from Republicans to draft new health care legislation from scratch. Greece announced painful new austerity measures, cutting salaries for government workers and raising sales taxes as it tried to snuff out a financial crisis threatening Europe's economy. British politician Michael Foot died in north London at age 96.

Five years ago: In a direct challenge to the White House, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood before Congress and bluntly warned the U.S. that an emerging nuclear agreement with Iran would pave "Iran's path to the bomb." President Barack Obama pushed back sternly, saying the U.S. would never sign such a deal and that Netanyahu was offering no useful alternative.

One year ago: A tornado roared into the small community of Beauregard, Alabama, killing 23 people;