



A heifer jumps over revellers in the bullring after the second bull run at the San Fermin festival in Pamplona, northern Spain on Monday. On each day of the festival, six bulls are released at 8:00 am (0600 GMT) to run from their corral through the narrow, cobbled streets of the old town over an 850-m course. Ahead of them are the runners, who try to stay close to the bulls without falling over or being gored. — AFP

Firm microchips bed sheets after cleaning scandals

BEIJING: Bugs in the bed might be the last thing guests want from a hotel stay, but a new microchipping service in China that tracks every sheet and towel has proved popular online. A laundry service catering to hotels in the central Chinese city of Wuhan has started installing wafer-thin microchips on bed sheets, pillow covers and towels - allowing travellers to scan a QR code on each item and check precisely when it was last washed. The service, which also allows management to track each individual item, has become an online hit following a series of recent scandals over poor hygiene at high-end hotels.

The Ritz-Carlton in Shanghai and other five-star establishments in China - including The Peninsula in Beijing and the Waldorf Astoria Shanghai - were forced to apologize last November after a video exposing unhygienic cleaning practices viral online. The clip, which quickly racked up tens of millions of

views, showed cleaning staff wiping down in-room cups with the same towels and sponges used to clean showers and toilets.

On social media, people broadly welcomed the Wuhan laundry's move with many calling for the system to be rolled out nationwide. "This system needs to be implemented throughout the country," wrote one user on China's Twitter-like microblogging site Weibo. "I take my own bed sheets every time I travel. Once I got a bad rash after a hotel stay and was covered in red spots."

But some were more skeptical, saying the QR code could be easily damaged or data in the chip could be tampered with. "What's the point in knowing how many times a bed sheet has been washed or the time when it was last in a washing machine without knowing whether the sheet was actually changed after the previous customer checked out?" wrote another.

Last year 79 of Wuhan's 110 commercial laundries were shut down after being deemed substandard by government inspections, state-run Xinhua news agency reported, citing an unnamed official from the city's economic planning body. The chips can withstand temperatures of up to 180 degrees Celsius and be washed 200 times, according to Bluesky TRS, the Beijing-based company that developed the technology. — AFP

Perot, billionaire who sought US...

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Disenchanted that his bosses did not like his ideas, Perot started his own company, Electronic Data Systems Inc in Dallas, a move that would make him a billionaire by age 38 by handling data processing for customers such as the Medicare system, NASA and other government entities. When General Motors bought controlling interest in EDS in 1984, Perot became the largest single shareholder of the world's largest corporation. But he quickly clashed with top GM officials and two years later was paid \$900 million to quit the GM board and relinquish control of EDS.

In 1988 Perot started another data company, Perot Systems Corp. He took time off from the company for his political forays but when he returned to it in 1998 he saw the company's profits nearly quadruple and long-term debt slashed by about half. He turned the company over to son Ross Jr and Dell bought it in

2009 for \$3.9 billion.

Perot said he liked to hire military veterans, especially those with combat experience, because of their leadership ability and ability to deal with pressure. American prisoners of war and those listed as missing in action in the Vietnam War became a key issue for Perot and he made several trips to Vietnam on their behalf. At the Perot Systems headquarters he kept mementoes, including his childhood bicycle and a walking stick believed to have belonged to Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

One section of the building was dedicated to the rescue of two EDS workers imprisoned in Tehran on suspicion of bribery before the shah of Iran was overthrown in 1978. According to the non-fiction book "On Wings of Eagles" by Ken Follett, an Iranian EDS employee helped lead a revolutionary mob's attack on the prison, allowing the EDS employees to escape. They were then sneaked out of the country, along with other EDS employees.

In 1984, Perot's foundation purchased a copy of the Magna Carta dating to 1297 for \$1.5 million. It was sold in 2007 for \$21.3 million. Perot's survivors include his wife, Margot, who he married in 1956. They had five children. — Agencies

cialists including Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri have predicted a promising summer for tourism this year.

"The numbers of people travelling to Lebanon in first six months of 2019 are very encouraging," Guidanian said yesterday. More people were arriving from Europe and Gulf states including Saudi Arabia, which lifted its travel warning against citizens going to Lebanon this year, the minister said. Guidanian said the expected rise in tourists would bring in big revenues which Lebanon direly needed. "Imagine if we stopped shooting ourselves in the foot - the politicians I mean." — Agencies

US puts Hezbollah lawmakers on...

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added to the sector's woes. The slump in tourism has played a part in years of weak economic growth and a hike in the huge public debt, which the government now pledges tough reforms to bring under control. As relations with Gulf Arab states and security improved, offi-

Instagram rolls out new AI features to...

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The other new feature - "Restrict" - is aimed at limiting abusive comments on a user's feed. "We've heard from young people in our community that they're reluctant to block, unfollow, or report their bully because it could escalate the situation, especially if they interact with their bully in real life," Mosseri said. Now they will be able to make posts from an offending person visible only to that person. "Restricted people won't be able to see when you're active on Instagram or when you've

read their direct messages," Mosseri added.

Instagram's move is the latest in a series of steps taken by social networks to protect users, especially from younger segments of society. According to a survey published by the Pew Research Center last year, 72 percent of US teenagers said they used Instagram. Bullying is just one of the many fronts on which social media titans have faced scrutiny in recent years.

There have been growing calls for regulation of such platforms over the spread of hate speech and fake news - including allegations of states using social media to try and influence elections in rival countries - as well as more oversight of how they collect and use customer data. Firms like Facebook, in response, have rolled out policy changes and features aimed at increasing transparency and safety. — AFP

Ransomware hits hard; cyber attacks...

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This so-called "business email compromise" resulted in some \$1.3 billion in losses last year, according to the report.

The annual report aggregates data from security firms such as Symantec and Trend Micro, law enforce-

ment agencies including the FBI, and international organizations. Among the high-profile data breaches were the 1.1 billion records of Aadhaar, India's national ID database, and the attack on the Marriott/Starwood hotel chain which impacted 383 million people.

Wilbur said that while some incidents show growing skills of attackers, the methods have been consistent over the years - generally inducing someone to respond or click on false pretenses. "The way they get in continues to be relatively constant," he said. "You hear about super-sophisticated attacks and for the most part they are not that sophisticated. For the most part they could have been prevented." — AFP

Trump slams May's 'foolish policies,' ...

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Kim Darroch - and by default his prime minister - in Trump's crosshairs.

If the US president initially reacted with restraint over the cables' weekend publication, the tone has changed and heated passions do not seem about to subside. "The wacky Ambassador that the U.K. foisted upon the United States is not someone we are thrilled with, a very stupid guy," Trump tweeted Tuesday, mirroring a furious barrage of insults the day before. The US president's early morning wrath was not solely reserved for Darroch, however. Trump doubled down in attacking May and her fraught Brexit negotiations, saying he told her "how to do that deal, but she went her own foolish way - was unable to get it done. A disaster!"

London has been scrambling to stem the damage caused by the leaked documents, in which Darroch described the US leader as "inept" and his White House as "uniquely dysfunctional". Visibly angered by May's continuing support for her ambassador - which Downing Street reiterated on Monday - Trump welcomed the prime minister's impending departure from office. "The good news for the wonderful United Kingdom is that they will soon have a new Prime Minister," he wrote Monday, declaring that he would have no further contact with Darroch.

By yesterday, Trump was demanding that Darroch "speak to his country, and Prime Minister May, about their

failed Brexit negotiation, and not be upset with my criticism of how badly it was handled". The cables' publication in the Mail on Sunday newspaper came just a month after Trump enjoyed a state visit to Britain punctuated by a 41-gun salute at Buckingham Palace and a banquet dinner with the queen. The incident threatens to complicate London's efforts to strike a new trade agreement with the United States, seen as key to mitigating potential damage from Britain's withdrawal from the European Union. It also comes as British politics are in for a major revamp once May ends her three-year spell in power later this month.

British officials defended Darroch as carrying out his duties by providing "frank" accounts of developments in Washington. "We have made clear to the US how unfortunate this leak is. The selective extracts leaked do not reflect the closeness of, and the esteem in which we hold, the relationship," the government spokesperson said. Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said the culprit, if identified, would face "very serious consequences".

The immediate suspicion of the London papers fell on Brexit-backing players in a power struggle within the governing Conservative Party. Former foreign minister Boris Johnson, a hardliner on Brexit, is the favorite to replace May in a leadership contest against Hunt. During a stop at the Manchester airport, Johnson told reporters he had "no embarrassment" in saying he had a good relationship with the White House.

"I think it's very important that we have a strong relationship with our most important ally," he said, adding that he himself had been critical of the Brexit negotiations. "That's one of the reasons I am standing tonight and one of the reasons I am putting myself forward," he said. "I think there is a chance to do things differently, a chance to break away from the failed old can-kicking approaching." — AFP