

Amid a Slump, A Crackdown For Venezuela

Leader Blames the U.S. for Economic Chaos

By SIMON ROMERO
and GIRISH GUPTA

CARACAS, Venezuela — For a glimpse into Venezuela's economic disarray, slip into a travel agency here and book a round-trip flight to Maracaibo, on the other side of the country, for just \$16. Need a book to read on the plane? For those with hard currency, a new copy of "50 Shades of Grey" goes for \$2.50. Forget your toothpaste? A tube of Colgate costs 7 cents.

Quite the bargain, right? But for the majority of Venezuelans who lack easy access to dollars, such surreal prices reflect a tremendous currency devaluation and a crumbling economy expected to contract 7 percent this year as oil income plunges and price controls produce acute shortages of items including milk, detergent and condoms.

"I've seen people die on the operating table because we didn't have the basic tools for surgeries," said Valentina Herrera, 35, a pediatrician at a public hospital in Maracay, a city near Caracas. She said she planned to look for other work because making ends meet on her salary of 5,622 bolivars a month — \$33 at a new exchange rate unveiled recently — was impossible.

Faced with tumbling approval ratings as Venezuelans reel from the economic shock, President Nicolás Maduro is intensifying a crackdown on his opponents, reflected in last week's arrest of Antonio Ledezma, the mayor of Caracas, and his indictment on charges of conspiracy and plotting an American-backed coup.

Mr. Maduro, a protégé of President Hugo Chávez, who died in

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NICOLE BENVIGNO/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Tabitha Waugh, left, preparing to administer a chemo treatment at St. Mary's Medical Center in Huntington, W.Va., last October.

In Pre-Primary Pivot to Right, Walker Shifts Tone on Abortion

By TRIP GABRIEL

DES MOINES — It was a memorable political ad: Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin spoke directly into the camera in a 30-second spot last fall and called abortion an "agonizing" decision. He described himself as pro-life but, borrowing the language of the abortion rights movement, pointed to legislation he signed that leaves "the final decision to a woman and her doctor."

That language was gone when Mr. Walker met privately with Iowa Republicans in a hotel con-

ference room last month, according to a person who attended the meeting. There, he highlighted his early support for a "personhood amendment," which defines life as beginning at conception and would effectively prohibit all abortions and some methods of birth control.

Mr. Walker has quickly vaulted into the top tier of likely Republican candidates in the presidential race, surging on the reputation he earned by taking on labor unions and surviving a bitter recall election in a swing state.

But the governor is also making an aggressive effort to win the hearts of the party's Christian conservatives. In doing so, he is stressing a much harder line on social issues than he did just a few months ago, when he faced a robust challenge from a well-funded Democratic woman in his run for re-election as governor.

The shift in emphasis and tone is noticeable not only on abortion, but also on same-sex marriage, another issue of intense interest to social conservatives.

A few weeks before the November election, in an interview with The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the governor sidestepped questions about his earlier opposition to abortion, and declined four times to answer directly when asked if abortion should be prohibited after 20 weeks — a position he had previously em-

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As Market Evolves, Health Care Opens Paths, Often for Women

This article is by Dionne Searcey, Eduardo Porter and Robert Gebeloff.

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. — For Tabitha Waugh, it was another typical day of chaos on the sixth-floor cancer ward.

The fire alarm was blaring for the second time that afternoon, prompting patients to stumble out of their rooms. One confused elderly man approached Ms. Waugh, a registered nurse at St. Mary's Medical Center here, but she had no time to console him. An aide was shouting from another room, where a patient sat dazed on the edge of his bed, blood pooling on the floor from the IV he had yanked from his vein.

"Hey, big guy, can you lay back in bed?" she asked, as she cleaned the patient before inserting a new line. He winced. "Hold my hand, O.K.?" she said.

Ms. Waugh, who is 30 and the main breadwinner in her family of four, still had three hours to go before the end of a 12-hour shift. But despite the stresses and constant demands, all the hard work

was paying off.

Her wage of nearly \$27 an hour provides for a comfortable life that includes a three-bedroom home, a pickup truck and a new sport utility vehicle, tumbling classes for her 3-year-old, Piper, and dozens of brightly colored Thomas the Tank Engine cars heaped under the double bed of her 6-year-old, Collin.

A SHIFTING MIDDLE

From Coveralls to Scrubs

The daughter of a teacher's aide and a gas station manager, Ms. Waugh, like many other hard-working and often overlooked Americans, has secured a spot in a profoundly transformed middle class. While the group continues to include large numbers of people sitting at desks, far fewer middle-income workers of the 21st century are donning overalls. Instead, reflecting the biggest change in recent years, millions more are in scrubs.

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PATRICK FALLON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Top Honors for 'Birdman'

At the Oscars, "Birdman" won four awards, including best picture and best director for Alejandro G. Iñárritu, center. Page C1.

Lawsuits' Lurid Details Draw an Online Crowd

By JODI KANTOR

Intimate, often painful allegations in lawsuits — intended for the scrutiny of judges and juries — are increasingly drawing in mass online audiences far from the courthouses where they are filed.

When a former saleswoman at Zillow sued the real estate website in December, describing

X-rated messages from male colleagues, her court filing drew hundreds of thousands of readers, causing an instant public relations crisis for the company.

The papers in a sexual harassment suit filed last summer against Tinder, the dating app, circulated in a popular BuzzFeed post. And a lawyer for a fired University of Minnesota-Duluth women's hockey coach who is planning a lawsuit knows what

the initial complaint will need: a clear narrative and damning details.

More and more, the first court filings in gender-related suits, often allegations that inspire indignation, are winning wide readerships online before anyone steps foot in a courtroom.

As a result, plaintiffs are finding themselves with unexpected support — and greater-than-ever

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Street Image Helps Young Rapper, Till It Doesn't

By JOE COSCARELLI

In the two months that Ackquille Pollard, better known as the Brooklyn rapper Bobby Shmurda, has sat in jail on gang conspiracy and gun charges, his mother has visited twice a week. His hip-hop idols have offered words of support.

But Mr. Pollard says that he hasn't heard what he wants from his label, Epic Records — namely a firm reassurance of its backing and help making his \$2 million bail: "When I got locked up, I thought they were going to come for me," he said in an interview from the Manhattan Detention Complex, "but they never came."

Barely six months ago, Epic, a subsidiary of Sony, wooed Mr. Pollard, 20, with a seven-figure, multi-album deal, largely on the



KRISTA SCHLUETER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The rapper Bobby Shmurda is held in jail on several charges.

strength of one viral hit, known in its censored version as "Hot Boy." With the label's support, that song went on to reach No. 6 on the Billboard Hot 100.

But now, after Mr. Pollard's electric performance on "The Tonight Show" and almost 1 million

downloads sold — more than 800,000 for "Hot Boy" alone, according to Nielsen Music — Epic has distanced itself, declining, despite pleas from music industry figures like 50 Cent, to help the rapper get out.

Mr. Pollard, who was raised in East Flatbush, is not the first artist to use his hard-knock stories to try to leave behind a bad neighborhood, only to find himself stuck in the world he was rapping about. But his rise and fall at light-speed illustrates the clash that can occur when a music business seeking street credibility signs a rapper hoping to escape the street. Labels may believe that by offering money and celebrity, they are giving troubled youths a path out. But some rappers like Mr. Pollard think, perhaps naively, they are receiving

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New Details on Cyberwarfare

A newly disclosed National Security Agency document shows the drastic acceleration of the use of cyberweapons by the United States and Iran against each other. PAGE A5

Turkish Forces' Foray Into Syria

Turkey sent troops into Syria to recover remains from a 13th-century figure's tomb and evacuate its guards. PAGE A4

Scattered Attacks in Ukraine

Ukrainian forces, below, continued to face attack despite a cease-fire deal, and bombs appeared to target pro-government ceremonies and parades. PAGE A8



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Sanctions on Iran Roil Campus

After an outcry, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has revised an attempt to follow a federal law barring Iranians from certain courses. PAGE A9

Terror Threat Against Mall

A foreign extremist group mentioned the Mall of America in a video. PAGE A12

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Race and an Officer's Charges

Chinese-Americans are divided over the indictment of Officer Peter Liang in an unarmed black man's death. PAGE A14

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Clark Terry Is Dead

The jazz trumpeter, who played with the Basie, Ellington and "Tonight Show" bands, among others, was also a devoted educator. He was 94. PAGE B8

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Pandora's Olive Branch

The Internet radio giant, which angered musicians by pushing for lower royalties on the songs it streams, now wants to work with them. PAGE B1

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Paul Krugman PAGE A19

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An Underdog Wins at Daytona

Joey Logano held off some of Nascar's top drivers to win the season-opening Daytona 500 after a pileup on the backstretch during the last lap. PAGE D6



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