

# US sees its longest-ever shutdown as Trump postpones call for emergency

## Prez Invites Dems For Talks As Americans Reel Under Pressure Of No Paycheques

Washington: A partial US government shutdown over President Donald Trump's demand for \$5.7 billion to build a wall along the US-Mexico border entered its 22nd day on Saturday, making it the longest shutting of federal agencies in US history, with no end in sight.

The closure broke a decades-old record set by a 1995-1996 shutdown under former President Bill Clinton that lasted 21 days.

Trump said on Friday he would not declare a national emergency "right now" to end a standoff over border security that has idled about a quarter of the US government. He spoke after lawmakers had adjourned for the weekend, precluding any possible action until next week.

In a tweet on Saturday, Trump took aim again at the Democrats. "Democrats should come back to Washington and work to end the Shutdown, while at the same time ending the horrible humanitarian crisis at our Southern Border. I am in the



**AIR TRAVEL HIT:** The partial shutdown has affected air travel as a growing number of security agents are refusing to work without pay. The Miami International Airport (above) was forced to shut down one of its terminals early for three days due to a shortage of security agents



**8L GO UNPAID:** A man at a rally in Washington, DC. An estimated 800,000 federal workers missed their paychecks on Friday

White House waiting for you!" he tweeted. He also urged his 57.2 million Twitter followers to contact Democratic lawmakers and "Tell them to get it done!"

Democrats in Congress, who call a wall an ineffective, outdated answer to a complex problem, have passed several bills to reopen the government without funding for Trump's barrier. But the legislation has been ignored by

the Republican-controlled Senate. Trump originally pledged Mexico would pay for the wall, which he says is needed to stem the flow of illegal immigrants and drugs. But Mexico has refused.

US government departments including the Treasury, Energy, Commerce and State departments, shut down when funding lapsed on December 22. Funding for other portions of the government, including

the Department of Defense and Congress, was approved, allowing them to continue regular operations.

The dispute has disrupted everything from air travel to tax collection and suspended pay for many government workers. Roughly 800,000 federal workers did not receive paychecks that would have gone out on Friday. Some have resorted to selling their possessions or posting ap-

peals on online fundraising sites to help pay their bills.

Miami International Airport said it will close one of its terminals early over the next several days due to a possible shortage of security screeners, who have been calling in sick at twice the normal rate.

A union that represents thousands of air traffic controllers sued the Federal Aviation Administration on Friday, saying it had violated federal wage law by failing to pay workers. It is at least the third lawsuit filed by unions on behalf of unpaid workers.

The head of the US Secret Service, which is responsible for protecting Trump, has warned employees that financial stress can lead to depression and anxiety.

A national emergency would allow Trump to divert money from other projects to pay for the wall, which was a central promise of his 2016 campaign. That, in turn, could prompt him to sign bills that restore funding to agencies that have been affected by the shutdown. REUTERS

# FBI probed whether Trump was working for Russia: Report

Adam Goldman, Michael S Schmidt and Nicholas Fandos



Following Trump's firing of James Comey as FBI director, the agency grew concerned about whether the president's actions constituted anti-American activity

Washington: In the days after President Trump fired James Comey as FBI director, law enforcement officials became so concerned by the president's behaviour that they began investigating whether he had been working on behalf of Russia against American interests, according to former law enforcement officials and others familiar with the investigation.

Counterintelligence investigators had to consider whether the president's own actions constituted a possible threat to national security. Agents also sought to determine whether Trump was knowingly working for Russia or had unwittingly fallen under Moscow's influence.

The probe the FBI opened into Trump also had a criminal aspect, which has long been publicly known: whether his firing of Comey constituted obstruction of justice. Agents and senior FBI officials had grown suspicious of Trump's ties to Russia during the 2016 campaign but held off on opening an investigation into him, the people said, in part because they were uncertain how to proceed with an inquiry of such sensitivity and magnitude. But the president's activities before and after Comey's firing in May 2017, particularly two instances in which Trump tied the Comey dismissal to the Russia probe, helped prompt the counterintelligence aspect of the inquiry, the people said. Special counsel Robert Mueller took over the inquiry

into Trump when he was appointed, days after FBI officials opened it. That inquiry is part of Mueller's broader examination of how Russian operatives interfered in the 2016 election and whether any Trump associates conspired with them. It is unclear whether Mueller is still pursuing the counterintelligence matter.

The criminal and counterintelligence elements were coupled together into one investigation, former law enforcement officials said in interviews in recent weeks, because Trump had ousted the head of the FBI to impede or even end the Russia investigation, that was both a possible crime and a national security concern. Trump blasted the FBI on Saturday, insisting it acted "for no reason & with no proof". "Wow, just learned in the Failing NYT that the corrupt former leaders of the FBI, almost all fired or forced to leave the agency for some very bad reasons, opened up an investigation on me, for no reason & with no proof, after I fired Lyin' James Comey, a total sleaze!" the US President tweeted. NYT & AGENCIES

# 'China to ease curbs on foreign investment'

Shanghai: China will reduce restrictions on foreign investment and address difficulties facing foreign companies investing in the country, the commerce minister said, according to a report by the official Xinhua news agency on Saturday.

Commerce Minister Zhong Shan said China would allow full foreign ownership of companies in more areas of the economy and would reduce the number of industries in which foreign investment was restricted or barred, Xinhua reported. He said the Commerce Ministry would push for a foreign investment law, improve the handling of complaints from foreign firms, and encourage foreign investment in manufacturing and high tech. The ministry would also encourage foreigners to invest in central and western China, he said.

China has been pushing to broaden opportunities for private firms and foreign investors to stimulate an economy that is slowing on the back of weakening domestic demand and a trade war with the US.

## China seeks to resolve trade spat with US in 2019

China will work to tackle trade friction with US this year, commerce minister Zhong Shan said in an interview with top Chinese state media. The ministry of commerce will push talks forward and boost cooperation with US cities, business communities and non-governmental groups in order to promote a stable bilateral trade relationship. AGENCIES

# Tulsi Gabbard announces White House run in 2020

Chidanand Rajhata @timesgroup.com



Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu elected to the US Congress, said she will formally announce her candidacy within the next week

Washington: Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard pipped Senator Kamala Harris in announcing she will run for the White House in 2020 in what is expected to be an expansive Democratic field of up to a dozen aspirants who will compete for the party nomination to take on Republican incumbent Donald Trump.

"I have decided to run and will be making a formal announcement within the next week," Gabbard said in her interview on CNN's Van Jones Show over the weekend. She will be the first Hindu-American to run for the White House, and should she win the party nomination and eventually emerge victorious in the tortuous race to the White House — a long shot by most accounts — she could become the first non-Christian, and indeed first Hindu President of the United States.

Gabbard, 37, is the first significant candidate to plunge into a field that has two other prominent women casing the ground. California senator Kamala Harris, who is of Indian-African-American heritage, is weighing a run with a memoir and travels in primary territory. Also in the hunt is Massachusetts senator Elizabeth Warren, who has been scouting the ground in Iowa, which typically is the first state to hold primaries.

A dozen other aspirants have expressed interest in running.

Among them, former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, former vice-president Joe Biden, Congressman Beto O'Rourke and Eric Swalwell, Senators Cory Booker, Sherrod Brown, Kirsten Gillibrand, Amy Klobuchar, Bob Casey, and governors Steve Bullock and Terry McAuliffe.

A fourth-term lawmaker from Hawaii, Gabbard, along with newer first-time Representatives such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib, is among the new set of Democrat insurgents who are challenging the tradition power structure in the Party with their radical leftist approach. Gabbard, who served in the US military herself and is an Iraq War veteran, stunned her party and the Washington establishment in 2017 when she made an independent trip to Syria and met the country's leader Bashar al-Assad, who the US regards as a sworn enemy.

"There are a lot of reasons for me to make this decision. There are a lot of challenges

that are facing the American people that I'm concerned about and that I want to help solve," she said about her White House bid. "There is one main issue that is central to the rest, and that is the issue of war and peace."

Her views are already attracting an army of trolls on social media who regard her as an outlier. "Assad's favourite Democrat is Running for President", read a headline in a far-right publication. Such attacks have never bothered the Hawaii representative who hasn't been afraid to take on her own party establishment — including former President Obama and Hillary Clinton.

Born in American Samoa in 1981 to Carol and Mike Gabbard, she is the fourth of five children, all brought up in the Brahma Madhwa Gaudiya Sampradaya that her mother embraced following her introduction to the Krishna movement. She named her five children Bhakti, Jai, Aryan, Tulsi, and Vrindavan.

Full report on [www.toi.in](#)

# Ivanka, Haley in race for the post of World Bank chief?

Washington: Former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley and US President Trump's daughter and adviser Ivanka are among possible US candidates to replace outgoing World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, the Financial Times reported on Friday.

Kim abruptly announced Monday he was cutting short his tenure as the bank's president more than three years before his second term was due to end. In addition to Trump and Haley, who stepped down as US ambassador to the UN last month, other names being floated include treasury undersecretary David Malpass and Mark Green, head of the US Agency for International Development, the newspaper reported.

Ivanka in 2017 was the driving force behind a \$1 billion, Saudi-supported World Bank fund to promote entrepreneurship by women. The treasury department said on Friday that it had no comment in potential candidates. The department has received a "significant number of recommendations", a spokesperson said. "We are beginning the internal review process for a US nominee. We look forward to working with the governors to select a new leader."

Under an unwritten agreement, the US, which is the bank's largest shareholder, has always chosen its leader since the institution was founded following World War 2. But the



According to a media report, Ivanka Trump and Nikki Haley are among possible US candidates to replace outgoing World Bank president Jim Yong Kim

success of a US candidate no longer appears completely assured. Kim was the first American nominee to face a contested election for the World Bank presidency in 2012 and the bank's board has said its selection process will be "open, merit-based and transparent," implying non-US candidates wouldn't be ruled out.

The World Bank Board said it would start accepting nominations for a new leader next month and name a replacement for Kim by April. It said the next president should have a "proven track record of leadership" and "experience in managing large organisations with international exposure". AFP

# Bill in US seeks to strip Pak's status as major non-Nato ally

Washington: An influential US lawmaker has introduced a legislation in Congress to terminate the designation of Pakistan as a major non-Nato ally.

Introduced by Republican Congressman Andy Briggs, the resolution 73, introduced in the House of Representatives, seeks termination of Pakistan as a major non-Nato ally and also sets conditions for its redesignation if any. The resolution has been sent to the House foreign affairs committee for necessary action.

It states, for future redesignation, the US president need to certify to the Congress that Pakistan continues to conduct military operations that are contributing to significantly disrupting the safe haven and freedom of movement of the Haqqani Network in that country. The resolution asks the President to certify that Pakistan has shown progress in arresting and prosecuting the network's senior leaders and mid-level operatives. PTI

# No plans to grant further waivers on Iran oil sale: US

Abudhabi: The US is not looking to grant more waivers for Iranian oil imports after the reimposition of US sanctions, the US special representative for Iran said on Saturday, underlining Washington's push to choke off Tehran's income.

"We are not looking to grant any waivers or exemptions to the import of Iranian crude," Brian Hook said while on a trip to UAE.

US granted waivers to eight major buyers of Iranian oil — including China, India, Japan and South Korea — after restoring energy sanctions in November. Hook declined to say what US would do when the waivers end in May.

"Iran is now increasingly feeling the economic isolation that our sanctions are imposing... We do want to deny the regime revenues... 80% of Iran's revenues come from oil exports and this is (the) number

# US granted waivers to eight major buyers of Iranian oil, including India, China, Japan and South Korea, after restoring energy sanctions in November. They will end in May

one state sponsor of terrorism... We want to deny this regime the money it needs," he added.

Tensions between Iran and the US have increased since May, when United States President Donald Trump abandoned a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and major powers, saying the accord was flawed in Tehran's favour, and re-introduced sanctions on Iran that had been lifted under the pact. REUTERS

# Saudi teenager fleeing abuse reaches Canada

Toronto: A young Saudi woman who caused a sensation by defying her family and seeking asylum abroad was welcomed with open arms in Toronto on Saturday at the end of an exhausting international odyssey.

Foreign minister Chrystia Freeland greeted Rahaf Mohammed al-Qununi, 18, after she landed in Toronto, wearing a blue ball cap and a gray hoodie emblazoned in red with the word "CANADA."

Smiling broadly, she posed for photographers with Freeland at her side, but made no statement. Qununi captured the world's attention with a trail of Twitter posts that ignited a #SaveRahaf movement as she fled what she said was an abusive family in ultra-conservative Saudi Arabia. AFP

# Shifting north magnetic pole forces urgent navigation fix

Oslo: Rapid shifts in the Earth's north magnetic pole are forcing researchers to make an unprecedented early update to a model that helps navigation by ships, planes and submarines in the Arctic, scientists said. The wandering pole is driven by unpredictable changes in liquid iron deep inside the Earth.

"It's moving at about 50 km (30 miles) a year. It didn't move much between 1900 and 1980 but it's really accelerated in the past 40 years," Ciaran Beggan, of the British Geological Survey in Edinburgh, said on Friday.

Beggan said the recent shifts in the north magnetic pole would be unnoticed by most people outside the Arctic, for instance using smartphones in New York,

**The magnetic field has been changing so quickly and erratically that researchers feel drastic steps are needed. The shift is so large that it is on the verge of exceeding the acceptable limit for navigation errors**

Beijing or London.

Scientists must periodically update the World Magnetic Model to map this process, and the most recent version — produced in 2015 — was intended to last until 2020. However, the magnetic field has been changing so

quickly and erratically that while conducting a routine check in early 2018, British and US researchers realised drastic steps were needed. The shift they observed was so large it was on the verge of exceeding the acceptable limit for navigation errors.

To account for this, scientists at the British Geological Survey and the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are issuing an unprecedented emergency update to the model. An update will be released on January 30, the journal Nature said, delayed from January 15 because of the US government shutdown. The changes are essential as the system is used by aircraft, ships and even smartphones. THE INDEPENDANT & AGENCIES

# Huawei sacks staff held for spying in Poland

Hongkong/ Warsaw: Chinese telecommunications equipment maker Huawei said on Saturday it had sacked an employee arrested in Poland on spying charges in a case that could intensify Western security concerns about the company.

Poland's internal affairs minister, Joachim Brudziński, called for the European Union and Nato to work on a joint position over whether to exclude Huawei from their markets following the arrest of the Chinese employee and a former Polish security official on Friday.

Huawei faces intense scrutiny in the West over its relationship with China's government and US-led allegations that its devices could be used by Beijing for spying. The firm has repeatedly denied the accusations. REUTERS

## AROUND THE WORLD

### Customer gifts car to friendly worker at eatery in US

A friendly worker at a Hutchinson McDonald's is riding high after one of her regular customers surprised her with a major gift. Wichita businessman Chris Ellis says he always looked forward to being waited on by Vicki Anderson when he visited the restaurant. On Monday, Anderson asked Ellis if he knew anyone who was selling a car. The Wichita Eagle reports Ellis' son was trying to sell his 2009 Pontiac. So Ellis bought it and drove it to Hutchinson Wednesday.

### Rare bronze penny sells for over \$200K at auction

A rare 1943 bronze Lincoln penny has sold for more than \$200,000 at a Florida auction. Heritage Auctions says more than 30 people bid on the rare coin Thursday night. Only 10 to 15 of these pennies, mistakenly minted in bronze instead of steel, are believed to exist. They were made at a time when bronze and copper were being saved to fill metal shortages during World War II.

### Teen attempts 'Bird Box challenge', crashes car

A woman, 17, driver crashed a car following a "Bird Box challenge" in Utah. She crashed her car while attempting to drive with her eyes covered on January 7. She veered into oncoming traffic and struck a passenger car.



**THREE DEAD IN PARIS GAS BLAST:** Two French firefighters and a Spanish citizen died and nearly 50 were injured in a gas explosion that gutted the ground floor of a building in a Paris shopping district on Saturday. The accident occurred with central Paris under security lockdown for a ninth consecutive Saturday of 'yellow vest' protests. As firemen were looking for a gas leak in the building, a dramatic explosion took place, interior minister said. Spanish foreign minister Josep Borrell tweeted that a Spanish woman had also died in the blast

### Half-brother of Meghan held on DUI charge

The half-brother of Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, is facing a drunken-driving charge after an arrest in Oregon. State police said Thomas Wayne Markle Jr. was visibly intoxicated when he was pulled over on Friday in Josephine County, in southwestern Oregon.

### 'Yellow vest' protesters rally in central London

Hundreds of demonstrators wearing yellow vests took to the streets of London on Saturday, in the largest protest yet in UK copying the "yellow vest" protests rocking France. Protesters opposed to the government's austerity programme and demanding a general election marched through the centre of the capital before rallying in Trafalgar Square.

# Facebook considered selling users' data to cos in 2012

San Francisco: Facebook considered selling users' data to companies some years ago but later decided to act against it, the media reported. According to Arstechnica.com that viewed an unredacted court document, Facebook staff in 2012 considered charging companies at least \$250,000 for "access to one of its primary troves of user data — the Graph API."

"In April 2014, Facebook changed the way the previous

permissive Graph API works. "The social media giant restricted some data access and eliminated all access to the earlier version by June 2015," the report said on Friday. A failure on Facebook's part to adequately redact a public court document revealed this information.

According to Arstechnica.com, Facebook gave "extended access to the v1.0 of Graph API to numerous com-



**NEW CONTROVERSY?**

panies not only including Nissan and Royal Bank of Canada but now also to Chrysler/Fiat, Lyft, Airbnb, and Netflix, among others".

A Facebook spokesperson, however, was quoted as saying that Chrysler/Fiat and the other companies, besides Nissan and Royal Bank of Canada, were listed erroneously in the court document.

The news comes on the heels of the British Parliament obtaining a set of internal Facebook documents from US software company Six4Three

that has sued the social media giant over what it claims are fraudulent breaches of contract. Facebook, however, defended itself, saying that Six4Three's "claims have no merit, and we will continue to defend ourselves vigorously". Now defunct, Six4Three in a new filing to a California lawsuit in May 2018 alleged that Facebook collected information on users and their friends through its apps. IANS