



ACTOR CHRIS HEMSWORTH TO LAUNCH FITNESS APP TO CONNECT USERS WITH HEALTH EXPERTS

KATE WINSLET STAYED BREATHLESS UNDER WATER FOR 7 MINS WHILE FILMING 'AVATAR' SEQUEL, SAYS DIRECTOR



Another shutdown looms in US as Congress talks break down again

Disagreement Over Detention Beds At Border Derails Parleys

Talks to avert another government shutdown over border security funding broke down on Saturday, and Republicans and Democrats have stopped communicating for now, according to two people familiar with the talks. The sticking point is over detention beds, both people said, an issue that would typically be regarded as a side-note to the broader talks on the level of funding for border security. Talks could still get back on track, but the prospect of a longer-lasting deal breaking down seem to have increased. Without a funding deal, nine federal departments and related agencies would shut down again after Friday. Negotiators had hoped to unveil a deal Monday to set up votes in the House

and Senate before the shutdown deadline. "I'll say 50/50 we'll get a deal," Senate Appropriations Chairman Richard Shelby said on "Fox News Sunday." "We've got some problems with the Democrats" over funding for US Immigration and Customs Enforcement operations. Senator Jon Tester, Democrat of Montana, said on the same broadcast that he was "not positive we'll get to a deal". Earlier, Mick Mulvaney, the acting White House chief of staff, said on Sunday that a shutdown isn't the most likely option but that he "absolutely cannot" rule it out. "He's going to do whatever he legally can to secure the border," Mulvaney said of President Donald Trump on



DARK CLOUDS GATHERING AGAIN

NBC's "Meet the Press". "You cannot take a shutdown off the table, and you cannot take \$5.7 (billion) off the table," he said, referring to the level of funds Trump has been demanding for a wall on the US-Mexican border. Mulvaney spoke as Cong-

ressional negotiators continue talks on a security plan that includes some sort of barrier on the border, hoping to complete a deal to avert another government shutdown. It wasn't fair to say that Trump would sign whatever Congress comes up with, Mulvaney said,

termining the level of proposed border wall funding "all over the map."

As of Saturday it seemed that negotiators were homing in on a proposal with border barrier funding of between \$1.3 billion and \$2 billion, said a person familiar with the talks. Trump was back in the fray on Saturday, indicating in a tweet that if Democrats didn't give him all the wall money he's demanded, he may use executive action to build it.

There are currently 40,520 ICE immigration detention beds funded by Congress. Heading into the talks the White House sought to increase the number to 52,000 while Democrats wanted a cut to 35,520. Democrats have proposed a 16,500 cap on beds to be used for interior enforcement with the rest to be used for those captured at the border, according to people familiar with the talks. **BLOOMBERG**

Abu Dhabi adopts Hindi as 3rd official court language

Dubai: In a landmark decision, Abu Dhabi has included Hindi as the third official language used in its courts, alongside Arabic and English, as part of a move designed to improve access to justice.

The Abu Dhabi judicial department (ADJD) on Saturday said it has extended the adoption of interactive forms of statement of claims filed before courts by including the Hindi language alongside Arabic and English in labour cases. This is aimed at helping Hindi speakers to learn about litigation procedures, their rights and duties without a language barrier, in addition to facilitating registration procedures via unified forms available through the ADJD website, the judicial body said.

According to official figures, the UAE population is estimated to be around nine million of which 2/3rd are immigrants from foreign countries. The Indian community in the UAE, numbering 2.6 million, constitutes 30% of the total population and is the largest expatriate community in the country.

Yousef Saeed Al Abri, undersecretary of the ADJD, said the adoption of multilingual interactive forms for claim sheets, grievances and requests, aims to promote judicial services in line with



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the plan Tomorrow 2021, and increase the transparency of litigation procedures.

"This is in addition to facilitating registration procedures to the public through simplified and easy forms and raising litigants' legal awareness via interactive forms of the statements of claims, to ensure access to the legal materials related to the subject of the dispute," Al Abri was quoted as saying by the Khaleej Times.

He indicated that the extension of the adoption of interactive forms in several languages comes under the directives of Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, deputy Prime Minister and mi-

nister of presidential affairs and ADJD Chairman.

Al Abri explained that the adoption of new languages comes as part of the bilingual litigation system, the first phase of which was launched in November 2018, through the adoption of procedures requiring the plaintiffs to translate the case documents in civil and commercial lawsuits into English, if the defendant is a foreigner. "The foreign investor receives the case files translated, thus contributing to the provision of a global judicial service that meets the requirements of residents in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi," he added. **PTI**

Saudi named in Khashoggi case is new UAE Envoy

A top aide who reportedly heard Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman threaten to use "a bullet" on Jamal Khashoggi was sworn in on Sunday as the kingdom's new ambassador to the United Arab Emirates.

Turki Aldakhlil, a former general manager of Al Arabiya television, was sworn in by King Salman along with other new ambassadors, state-run SPA news agency reported.

A year before Khashoggi was murdered October 2 in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Prince Mohammed told Aldakhlil that he'd use that bullet if Khashoggi didn't return to the kingdom and stop criticising the government from his perch in the US, the New York Times reported on Thursday.

The Times, citing unidentified current and former US intelligence officials, said the 2017 conversation was intercepted by US spy agencies. Aldakhlil denied the allegation in a statement to the newspaper.

Khashoggi, an insider-turned-critic of the Saudi ruling regime, was killed and dismembered by people



Nothing to do with Bezos report: Riyadh

Saudi Arabia had "absolutely nothing to do" with the National Enquirer's reporting on an extramarital relationship involving Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, the kingdom's minister of state for foreign affairs said. Bezos had alluded to Saudi Arabia's displeasure at the Washington Post's coverage of the murder of Khashoggi. **REUTERS**

close to crown prince after entering to pick up documents for his wedding. Saudi Arabia has said the crown prince, who is the kingdom's 33-year-old de facto ruler, was not aware of any plan to kill him. **BLOOMBERG**

Taliban say no to Afghan prez offer to set up office in Kabul

Kabul: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Sunday offered the Taliban the possibility of opening an office in Afghanistan but the proposal was swiftly spurned by the group that is determined to keep his government out of accelerating peace talks.

Ghani has expressed alarm at the Taliban shutting his administration out of negotiations with the US as well as recent Moscow talks with Afghan opposition politicians, and repeated earlier offers to give the group a secure official address to aid any future diplomacy between the two sides.

"If the Taliban want an office, I will give it to them in Kabul, Nangarhar or Kandahar by tomorrow," Ghani said while visiting the province of Nangarhar. "We will bring a lasting and honourable peace to the country," he said.

Taliban officials in Moscow last week stressed the importance of a formal office among a string of demands that included the removal of Western sanctions and travel bans on Taliban members, prisoner releases and an end to "propaganda" against the group. Taliban spokesman Sohaib Shahin said that the focus was international recognition of their existing site in Doha, Qatar. **REUTERS**

Imran warns of 'painful' reforms after IMF talks

Dubai: Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Sunday his nation needed "painful" economic reforms to cut back on its massive debt, just after meeting the head of the International Monetary Fund, signalling the former cricketer may be willing to slash government spending for a bailout.

Khan made the comments at the World Government Summit in Dubai, which also saw Lebanese PM Saad Hariri make his own investment pitch for his small country, now struggling through a major economic crisis as one of the world's most indebted nations. Khan made a point in an address to repeatedly hit on the need for economic reforms as IMF chief Christine Lagarde looked on from the audience.

"I repeat the reforms are painful. It's like a surgery. When you conduct surgery for a while the patient suffers but that improves," the prime minister said. "The worst thing that can happen for society is that you keep postponing reforms because of the fear that you would have opposition, the vested interests stand up and you don't do reforms." **AP**



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IMRAN KHAN
PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER

That Khan is in the Gulf is not surprising, as he's gone to Saudi Arabia and the UAE for financial support.

Before taking the stage, Khan met with Lagarde. Pakistan has been seeking an \$8 billion bailout from the IMF. Pakistan has around \$100 billion in external debts and liabilities, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

A statement from Lagarde called the meeting "good and constructive". **AP**

PIO docs slam UK's 'unfair' surcharge

London: UK-based Indian doctors and healthcare professionals are campaigning against what they describe as an "unfair" doubling of a health surcharge imposed on professionals from outside EU living and working in Britain.

The "Immigration Health Surcharge" was introduced in April 2015 and from December last year it was hiked from £200 to £400 per year. It is imposed on anyone in the UK on a work, study or family visa for longer than six months in order to raise additional funds for the state-funded National Health Service. The British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, the UK's largest representative body for Indian-origin doctors, is lobbying the UK home office for a rethink over the charge.

The UK government says expects to raise an estimated £220 million in extra funding with the doubling of the surcharge with the funds aimed at "sustaining... the country's healthcare system". **PTI**

May set to promise new Brexit debate

London: British Prime Minister Theresa May will pledge this week to give parliament another chance to voice their opinions on Brexit by February 27 as she tries to buy more time to negotiate a new deal with the European Union.

As the clock ticks down to Britain's scheduled exit on March 29, May is trying to persuade the EU to change a deal that was agreed between London and Brussels last year but rejected by parliament in January. May wants to win over lawmakers in her Conservative Party with changes relating to the Northern Irish border, but the EU has refused to reopen that part of the deal and instead wants May to pursue a compromise with the opposition Labour Party by agreeing closer UK-EU ties.

The impasse has left the UK facing an uncertain future, rattling financial markets and businesses about



PM May is due to update parliament on her progress towards a deal on Wednesday

the prospect of a disorderly exit from the bloc that could damage the economy. Housing minister James Brokenshire said on Sunday May would commit to giving parliament another debate on Brexit with the chance to vote on alternative options, if a deal had not yet been agreed and voted upon by then.

May is due to update parliament on her progress towards a deal on Wednesday and then on Thursday to give parliament a chance to express their opinion. The new pledge would be for a repeat of this process by February 27. **REUTERS**

Geneva to ban religious symbols on public staffers

Geneva: Residents of Geneva on Sunday voted for a controversial new "secularism law", which will among other things ban elected officials and public employees from wearing visible religious symbols.

More than 55% of voters in the Swiss canton backed the law, final results showed, despite warnings that it could lead to discrimination, particularly against Muslim women. Some critics think it might violate the constitution. Geneva Canton, which for centuries has been a centre of religious freedom and tolerance, has been striving to replace a law on the books since 1907.

The new law's stated ambition is to expand the dialogue between religious groups



A burqa ban in Denmark recently saw Danish women defying it by wearing full-face veils

and the state, and to better define the limits to religious expression in the public sphere.

Supporters say it will help clarify existing principles in the Geneva Constitution to protect the religious freedom of believers and non-believers alike. **AFP**

Prince Philip gives up licence after car crash

London: Queen Elizabeth's 97-year-old husband Prince Philip has voluntarily given up his driving licence after a crash last month, Buckingham Palace said on Saturday.

Philip escaped without injury on January 17 when the Land Rover he was driving flipped in a collision with a car. "After careful consideration The Duke of Edinburgh has taken the decision to voluntarily surrender his driving licence," the royal palace said. The other driver, a 28-year-old woman, suffered cuts to her knee and a 45-year-old woman passenger in the car, which also had a nine-month-old baby on board, sustained a broken wrist. **REUTERS**

Finn report admits troops helped kill Jews in WWII

Helsinki: An Israeli Holocaust historian on Sunday praised Finnish authorities for publishing a report concluding that the country's volunteer battalion, which served with Nazi Germany's Waffen-SS, took part in atrocities during World War II, including participating in the mass murder of Jews.

Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center lauded the determination of the National Archives of Finland to release its findings, even if it was "painful and uncomfortable" for Finland.

He called it an "example of exemplary civic courage". The independent 248-page report in English — commissioned by the Finnish government and released on Friday — said 1,408

Finnish volunteers served within the SS Panzer Division Wiking during 1941-43, most of them aged between 17 and 20 years old.

"It is very likely that they (Finnish volunteers) participated in the killing of Jews, other civilians and prisoners of war as part of the German SS troops," said Jussi Nuorteva, director-general of the National Archives. A significant part of the study's material is based on diaries kept by 76 of the Finnish SS volunteers. The majority of them had no ideological sympathies with the Nazi regime, the report said. Historians wrote the troops likely witnessed shootings and other atrocities against Jews and other civilians by advancing Nazi troops. **AP**

AROUND THE WORLD



NEPAL CELEBRATES BASANT PANCHAMI: A girl writes on the wall of a Saraswati temple in Kathmandu as Nepal celebrated Shreepanchami festival dedicated to Goddess Saraswati on Sunday

Chimps use branch to make ladder, escape Belfast zoo

Zookeepers say a group of chimpanzees used branches weakened by a storm to make a ladder and escape from their enclosure at the Belfast Zoo. Video filmed on Saturday by visitors to the Northern Ireland zoo showed several primates scaling a wall and perching atop it, with one walking down a path outside the enclosure. Zookeeper Alyn Cairns said trees in the chimps' enclosure had been weakened by recent storms, allowing the animals to break them and fashion a ladder to escape. He told the BBC "they're intelligent primates

and know they're not supposed to be out of their enclosure, so got back in themselves".

No landing nod, NZ flight to China returns midway

An Air New Zealand flight to Shanghai turned back several hours into its journey on Sunday after discovering it did not have permission to land in China, the airline said. Flight NZ289 carrying about 270 passengers left Auckland shortly before midnight on Saturday only to return about 10am on Sunday (2100 GMT Saturday). It turned around several hours into the flight. "A technicality meant the particular aircraft operating this service did not have Chinese regulatory authority to land in China," the airline said. China's foreign ministry

did not make any immediate comment when contacted.

'Hitler' paintings fail to sell at Germany auction

Five paintings attributed to Adolf Hitler failed to find buyers at an auction on Saturday held amid anger at the sale of Nazi memorabilia. High starting prices of between €19,000 and €45,000 (\$21,000 and \$50,000) and lingering suspicions about the authenticity of the artworks were thought to have scared off potential buyers. The Weideler auction house did not comment on the reasons for the failure but said the paintings could yet be sold at a later date. Nuremberg's mayor Ulrich Maly had earlier condemned the sale as being "in bad taste".

A comedian leads the race as Ukraine heads to polls

Oliver Carroll
Ukraine's democracy might be lacking in many important regards — but on the participative principle, it excels to the extreme.

On Friday, Kiev's Central Elections Commission kicked off the presidential campaign by announcing it had registered a record 44 candidates for the 31 March vote. This was over twice the number that took part in the last elections in 2014.

Following the long-time favourites — ex-PM Yulia Ty-

moshenko and current President Petro Poroshenko — came the name of a comedian — Vladimir Zelensky. With two months to go before election day, polls fail to show a clear leader: No candidate has passed 20% of decided voters, let alone the 50% required to avoid a second round run-off. But the one man who has grown in popularity is Zelensky.

A number of polls now suggest Zelensky has overtaken Tymoshenko to pole position. Depending on the poll, 14-16% of the active electorate suggesting they will now vote



A still from the sitcom 'Servant Of The People', which features Zelensky as a teacher whose tirade against kleptocracy is filmed by a student and goes viral, catapulting him to presidency

for him. That rating has shot up by 5% in the last month. Zelensky's clever campaign is based on engaging disaffected voters and looks to take advantage of the kinds of swings that brought Donald Trump and Brexit home.

His advantage is that people already know him. He's well remembered for a role in a serial called "Servants of the People", where, he plays a teacher whose battle against government corruption propels him to run for the presidency.

And the image of an outsider, breaking in politics is fu-

elling his popularity. Despite his lack of political experience, Zelensky has shown solid political intuition, focusing on positive themes of "dreams" and "national renewal". This plays in contrast with the aggressive patriotic positions of Poroshenko, and equally aggressive populist positions of Tymoshenko.

Independent expert Vladimir Fesenko suggests Zelensky's chances of winning may be as high as 25%. "This myth that he can come from the people to become president is very strong," he says. **THE INDEPENDENT**