



MIKE ESTATE SUES HBO FOR \$100 MILLION OVER 'POSTHUMOUS CHARACTER ASSASSINATION' IN DOCU ON ABUSE CLAIMS

BEAR GRYLLS FACES FINE AFTER KILLING AND COOKING A FROG WHILE FILMING IN A PROTECTED PARK IN BULGARIA



Dems launch bid to block Trump's emergency

226 Lawmakers, One From GOP, Back Resolution; House Vote On Tuesday

Washington: The US House of Representatives will vote on Tuesday on a resolution aimed at stopping President Donald Trump's declaration of a national emergency to build a wall on the border with Mexico, Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Friday. House Democrats introduced the resolution early on Friday, taking the first step to challenge Republican Trump's assertion that he could take money Congress had appropriated for other activities and use it to build the wall.



TRUMP WANTS 6G, BUT IT DOESN'T EVEN EXIST: While the 5G technology is still trying to find its ground with tricky spectrum allocations, President Trump has already demanded that 6G be brought in the country. The only problem is — it doesn't exist. "I want 5G, and even 6G, technology in the US as soon as possible. American companies must step up their efforts, or get left behind..." he tweeted

porters. He called on all members of Congress — Democrats and Republicans — to support the resolution terminating Trump's emergency declaration, saying it tramples on congressional authority and would set a dangerous precedent. Under the US Constitution, Congress decides how taxpayer dollars are spent. The president can, however, veto spending bills.

Trump declared the national emergency last week after Congress declined to fulfill his request for \$5.7 billion this year to help build the wall.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer also plans to introduce such a resolution. The measure needs only a simple majority in both chambers. It will need the votes of at least four Republicans to pass the Senate, assuming all the Democrats and the two independents there back it. If both

chambers pass the resolution it would then go to Trump, who would likely veto it. Overriding the veto would require a two-thirds vote of support in both chambers.

Pelosi rejected Trump's argument that there is an emergency at the US-Mexico border. "The president of the United States is declaring a national emergency to honor an applause line in a rally," she said. "If the Congress rolls over on this, the president is likely to do it again," Castro said.

The issue is also in the courts. A coalition of 16 US states led by California sued Trump and top members of his administration on Monday to block his decision to declare the emergency. The lawsuit said Trump's declaration was a misuse of presidential power.

Congress this month appropriated \$1.37 billion for building border barriers following a long battle with Trump, which included a 35-day partial government shutdown — the longest in US history — when agency funding lapsed on December 22. REUTERS

Manafort to face charges even if prez pardons him

William K Rashbaum

The Manhattan district attorney's office is preparing state criminal charges against Paul Manafort, President Trump's former campaign chairman, in an effort to ensure he will still face prison time even if the president pardons him for his federal crimes, according to several people with knowledge of the matter.



Manafort is scheduled to be sentenced next month for convictions in two federal cases brought by special counsel Robert Mueller. He faces up to 25 years in prison for tax and bank fraud and additional time for conspiracy counts in a related case. It could effectively be a life sentence for Manafort, who turns 70 in April.

The president has broad power to issue pardons for federal crimes, but no such authority in state cases. And while there has been no clear indication that Trump intends to par-

don Manafort, the president has spoken repeatedly of his pardon power and defended his former campaign chairman on a number of occasions, calling him a "brave man."

The office of the Manhattan district attorney, Cyrus Vance Jr, first began investigating Manafort in 2017 in connection with loans he received from two banks. Those loans were also the subject of some of the counts in the federal indictment that led to his conviction last year. But the state prosecutors deferred their inquiry in order not to interfere with Mueller's case. They resumed their investigation in recent months, and a state grand jury began hearing evidence in the case, several people with knowledge of the matter said.

Vance's office is expected to seek charges whether or not the president pardons Manafort. Jason Maloni, a spokesman for Manafort, said his legal team had no comment. NVR

Proposal to end work visa for H-1B spouses reaches White House

Washington: The White House has formally received the proposed changes in the existing regulations to end the work authorization for spouses of the holders of H-1B visas, the most sought-after among Indian IT professionals. The move that would impact over 90,000 spouses of H-1B visa holders, an overwhelming number of whom are Indians, was sent by the department of homeland security to the White House Office of management for Budget on Wednesday, officials said.



If White House approves the proposed changes, it would impact over 90,000 spouses of H-1B visa holders, a number of them Indians

The H-1B visa, most sought-after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

It's now for the White House to take a final call on it, before a formal regulation could be issued and the department of homeland security can inform a federal court, where a lawsuit on this issue is pending. Now White House would carry out its review of the proposed regulation, take inputs from various agencies, before taking a final call. The entire process could take from a few weeks to several months.

US Citizenship and Immigration Services which manages the programme said the proposed regulation was not final until the review and comment process was complete. As per the process, once White House gives its nod, the regulation would be published in federal register with a 30-day comment period. It is only after that the new changes can come into effect.

The Trump administration is moving ahead with its proposed regulation, despite strong resistance from a group of US lawmakers and Silicon Valley firms who argue that this is not only anti-women, but also prevents talented spouses of H-1B visa holders from working in the US. Meanwhile, the US Court of Appeals in Columbia has extended the time for various stakeholders to submit its responses on the lawsuit against it filed by the organisation Save Jobs USA. The Trump administration is reviewing the H-1B visa policy that it thinks is being misused by companies to replace American workers. The administration has said publicly and also in its court filing that it wants to revoke work permits to H4 visa holders, a significant majority of whom are Indian-Americans and women. PTI

China uses DNA to track its people

Sui-Lee Woe



Beijing: The authorities called it a free health check. Tahir Imin had his doubts. They drew blood from the 38-year-old, scanned his face, recorded his voice and took his fingerprints. They didn't bother to check his heart or kidneys, and they rebuffed his request to see the results. Imin was one of millions of people caught up in a vast Chinese campaign of surveillance and oppression. To give it teeth, Chinese officials are collecting DNA — and they got unlikely corporate and academic help from the US to do it.

China wants to make the country's Uighurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group, more subservient to the Communist Party. It has detained up to 1 million people in what China calls "re-education" camps. Human rights groups and Uighur activists say a comprehensive DNA database could be used to chase down any Uighurs who resist conforming to the campaign.

To bolster their DNA capabilities, scientists affiliated with China's police used equipment made by Thermo Fisher, a US-based company. For com-

China has maintained an iron grip in Xinjiang, where it is trying to make Uighur Muslims more subservient to Communist Party paragon with Uighur DNA, they also relied on genetic material from people around the world that was provided by Kenneth Kidd, a prominent Yale University geneticist. On Wednesday, Thermo Fisher said it would no longer sell its equipment in Xinjiang, the part of China where the campaign to track Uighurs is mostly taking place. Kidd said he had been unaware of how his know-how was being used.

In Xinjiang, the program was known as "Physicals for All." From 2016-17, nearly 36 million people took part in it. The Xinjiang government denied it collects DNA samples as part of the free medical checkups. It said the DNA machines bought by Xinjiang officials were for "internal use." NVR

Dhaka blaze: PM orders chemical warehouses to be relocated

Dhaka: Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina on Friday ordered authorities to relocate and remove all the chemical factories and warehouses in Old Dhaka after a massive fire took place in Chawkbazar — a historic congested part of the city. The fire was triggered when a gas cylinder of a parked pickup truck exploded, which razed surrounding vehicles and the flames then quickly spread to five buildings, including a community centre where a wedding was on.

A four-storey building that suffered most damage had a dozen stores for perfumes and plastic goods. Large amount of canisters stored inside several buildings "became like bombs" amid the massive spreading fire, according to the investigators of a panel formed after the incident. Earlier, industries minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun said storage of chemicals had nothing to do with the fire started by a cylinder explosion. But the probe team disagreed. "All these inflammable materials catalysed the spreading of the fire," Lt Col SM Zulfikar Rahman, a director of the Fire Service, said. Meanwhile, a victim's family has filed a case of death by negligence. PTI

Clashes over aid at Venezuela border



A child holds a Venezuelan flag during the Venezuela Aid Live concert in Cucuta on Colombia-Venezuela border on Friday

Cucuta (Colombia): Heightened tensions in Venezuela left a woman dead and a dozen injured near the border with Brazil on Friday, in the first deadly clash over the opposition's attempts to bring in emergency food and medicine that President Nicolas Maduro says isn't needed.

Emilio Gonzalez, mayor of the Venezuela border town of Gran Sabana, identified the shooting victim as Zoraida Rodriguez, who was a part of an indigenous group that clashed with the Venezuela National Guard and army a day after Maduro ordered the border with Brazil closed. Gonzalez said soldiers fired rubber bullets and tear gas.

The violence came just hours before duelling concerts were to begin on the country's border with Colombia, where much of the US-supplied aid is being stored in a warehouse. British billionaire Richard Branson is sponsoring a Live Aid-style concert on one side of a crossing that Colombian officials have renamed the "Unity Bridge", while Maduro's government is promising a three-day fest deemed "Hands Off Venezuela" on the other.

Maduro denies any humanitarian crisis exists, and the plan to bring in aid is one of the most dangerous that opposition leader Juan Guaido has attempted since declaring himself interim president. AP

200 American peacekeepers to stay back in Syria: US

Washington: The US will leave a "small peacekeeping group" of 200 American troops in Syria for a period of time after a US pullout, the White House said on Thursday, as President Trump pulled back from a complete withdrawal.

Trump in December ordered a withdrawal of the 2,000 American troops in Syria on the defeat of the last remnants of the Islamic State militants there. But Trump has been under pressure from multiple advisers to adjust his policy to ensure the protection of Kurdish forces, who supported the fight against IS and who might now be threatened by Turkey, and to serve as a bulwark against Iran's influence. "A small peacekeeping group of about 200 will remain in Syria for a period of time," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said in a statement. The decision was announced after Trump spoke by phone to Turkey President Erdogan. A White House statement said the two leaders agreed, regarding Syria, to "continue coordinating on the creation of a potential safe zone". AP

'Empire' drops actor over arrest for 'hoax attack'

Chicago: Actor Jussie Smollett's character on "Empire" will be removed from the final two episodes of this season in the wake of his arrest on charges that he staged a racist, anti-gay attack on himself last month in downtown Chicago, producers of the Fox TV show announced on Friday.



Jussie Smollett

The announcement came a day after Smollett turned himself in to police, appeared in court on a felony charge of disorderly conduct for allegedly filing a false police report. Police said Smollett planned the hoax because he was unhappy with his salary and wanted to promote his career. "While these allegations are very disturbing, we are

placing our trust in the legal system as the process plays," "Empire" executive producers said in a written statement. "We are also aware of the effects of this process on the cast and crew members who work on our show and to avoid further disruption on set, we have decided to remove the role of 'Jamal' from the final two episodes of the season."

"Empire" has nine episodes left to air in its fifth season; the last two episodes are still being worked on. Smollett, who is black and gay, plays a gay character on the show. Smollett is earning more than \$100,000 per episode, according to a person familiar with the situation. AP

Pak army: ISI ex-chief Durrani guilty of violating military code of conduct

Islamabad: The Pakistan army on Friday held spy agency ISI's former chief Lt Gen (ret) Asad Durrani guilty of violating military code of conduct by co-authoring a controversial book with India's former intelligence head and punished him by stopping his pension and other benefits.

Durrani, who headed the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency from August 1990 till March 1992, along with former RAW chief A S Dulat published the book titled "The Spy Chronicles: RAW, ISI and the Illusion of Peace" in India.

The powerful army had ordered a court of inquiry against Durrani over the book in which the two former spy chiefs touched upon some thorny issues including terrorism,

Asad Durrani was found guilty of violating military code of conduct by co-authoring a book with former RAW chief A S Dulat. His pension and related benefits have been stopped

particularly Mumbai attack, Kashmir and the influence of intelligence agencies.

Army spokesman Major General Asif Ghafoor during a media briefing, said Durrani was a former senior officer who held key positions and his conduct should have been different. "Asad Durrani has been found guilty of violating military code of conduct... His pension and related benefits have been stopped. He is no more entitled for the benefits which a retired officer is entitled." To a question,

Ghafoor said retired Lt General Durrani was allowed to retain his rank.

The spokesman said currently Durrani is not allowed to leave the country due to his name being on no-fly list and a decision about it will be taken. Separately, Ghafoor, without giving much details, also said that two senior officers were under arrest on the charges of espionage. "Their court martial had been ordered. Whenever the proceeding end, we will share results with you," he said. PTI

Google to end forced arbitration for staffers

San Francisco: Google said on Thursday it will no longer require that its workers settle disputes with the company through arbitration, responding to months of pressure from employees.

The change will take effect March 21 and will apply to current and future employees. Employees that have settled past disputes won't be able to re-open their cases. Google said last year it would end forced arbitration for sexual harassment and assault cases, and on Thursday expanded that practice to all worker disputes. Google's parent company, Alphabet Inc, has nearly 1,00,000 employees.

The updated practices only apply to Google employees, and employees of Google

le projects such as Deep Mind and Access. Other Alphabet subsidiaries, such as Waymo, are not included.

Mandatory arbitration requires employees to settle disputes with the company privately and outside of court. The practice, widespread in US employment contracts, can lend itself to secrecy and has faced criticism. Google workers have pressed the firm to drop forced arbitration requirements.

Google won't make all employees re-sign their work contracts, it said, but will post the policy change internally and update its contracts for new employees. The firm also said it would extend the change to its agreements with contract workers. AP

Teen climate activist brings school protests to Paris

Paris: Teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg brought her class-boycott campaign to Paris on Friday, hoping to encourage more French students to hit the streets with demands for bold efforts to combat global warming.

The Friday protests that the 16-year-old Swede launched in August have gained little traction so far in France, where the landmark COP21 international accord on cutting emissions was signed in 2015.

After urging the EU in Brussels to move more aggressively on greenhouse gas cuts

on Thursday, Thunberg then travelled to Paris where she met up with young activists from France, Belgium and Germany for a march which was also joined by French actress Juliette Binoche. "I never thought it would get so big and I think it's amazing," she said of her campaign, speaking to journalists ahead of the march. "We, children, we should not have to do this, adults should be taking responsibility".

A crowd of around 1,000 people took part in the protest in central Paris, one of dozens planned in cities across Euro-



Sixteen-year-old Greta Thunberg (C) takes part in a protest by students in Paris on Friday to demand urgent steps to combat climate change

pe as part of her "Fridays For Future" movement. But outside Paris, only two other class-cutting marches have been organised — one in Beauvais just north of Paris and one in the southwestern city of Dax. "I don't know why young people mobilise massively in some countries and not others. France, the country of COP21, needs to do what it says it will," Thunberg said. Under the 2015 Paris deal to limit global warming to well below 2° C, the 28-nation EU has pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030, compared to 1990.

AROUND THE WORLD



KIM AND TRUMP LOOKALIKES HELD IN HANOI: Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump impersonators were held for questioning by Vietnamese police on Friday after they appeared in Hanoi where the US and North Korean leaders will meet next week for a second summit. Kim impersonator Howard X and Trump lookalike Russell White staged a 'meeting' in downtown Hanoi. 'They (Vietnamese police) basically said stop doing the impersonation or we will kick you out of the country,' Howard told reporters after his release

Zoo offers people tug-of-war against big cats, sparks row

A British zoo offering visitors the chance to compete in a tug-of-war against a lion or tiger has been condemned by animal rights campaigners. The competition at Dartmoor Zoo allows teams of four people, including children as young as eight, to pull on a rope tied at the other end to a slab of meat, which one of the big cats attempts to keep within its jaws. More than 2,600 people have signed a petition calling for an end to the "cruel" attraction, which costs £15 a ticket to compete against 158kg male tiger Dragan, or Jasiri, a

146kg African male lion. The zoo's owner, Benjamin Mee, insists campaigners are "making a fuss about nothing" and that the animals "love" the experience.

Church of England: Sunday services not mandatory
The Church of England has acknowledged the reality of shrinking congregations and overworked priests and lifted a 400-year-old rule requiring that all churches hold services every Sunday. Canon law dating from 1603 required priests to hold morning and evening prayers and a communion service each Sunday in every church they oversaw. But after decades of declining attendance, many priests are now responsible for

multiple churches, especially in rural areas. Until now, they have needed permission from a bishop not to hold Sunday services in each church. The change was approved on Thursday at a meeting of the church's governing Synod.

Botswana mulls lifting ban on big game hunting
Botswana, home to almost a third of Africa's elephants, is considering lifting a ban on big game hunting, to combat what the government says is growing conflict between humans and wildlife. Conservationists estimate the country has around 130,000 elephants, but some lawmakers say it is much higher and causes problems for small-scale farmers.