VOA NEWS

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From Washington, this is VOA news. I'm Jonathan Jones reporting.

U.S. stocks were down at the close of Wednesday's trading after a day of fluctuating prices. The S&P 500 lost half a percent. The Dow was off nearly one-tenth of a percent. The NASDAQ fell more than one percent.

Wednesday's trading followed days of wild price swings in global markets.

One day before a threatened U.S. government shutdown, Senate leaders on Wednesday struck a bipartisan deal to keep the U.S. government funded for two years but without addressing immigration.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, a Democrat from New York: "This budget deal will be the best thing we've done for our economy, our military, our middle class for a long time."

The deal would increase spending on national defense and domestic programs ending years of budget limits that Republicans argued were hollowing out America's military and Democrats said were harming the needy.

Congressional leaders face a race against the clock, with federal funding expiring at midnight on Thursday.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said he is encouraged by Colombia's progress in the reduction of coca growth.

"We will continue to work with Colombia to support these efforts where we can be of assistance as well. This is a shared challenge for both of our nations as well to work together to undermine the transcriminal organizations that create the networks that are devastating for citizens in Colombia, and they're devastating to the American people as well."

Tillerson is now in Jamaica. It's the final stop on his Latin American and Caribbean tour.

He also said the United States is seriously considering imposing major restrictions on Venezuela's oil industry.

This is VOA news.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is sending his sister Kim Yo Jong as part of [North's] the North's delegation to the Winter Olympics in South Korea.

Reuters correspondent David Doyle reports.

Kim Yo Jong was blacklisted last year by the U.S. Treasury Department. Her visit also raises concerns over whether Pyongyang is using the Olympics to push its own agenda. That's something that U.S. officials are keen to block.

"We will not allow North Korean propaganda to hijack the message and imagery of the Olympic Games."

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence said on Wednesday that the U.S. will soon unveil its toughest ever economic sanctions on the reclusive country.

At least seven people are now confirmed dead from Tuesday's strong earthquake in Taiwan, which left at least two buildings partially collapsed and tilting.

The 6.4 magnitude quake struck just before midnight local time.

On Taiwan's eastern coast, more than 200 people have been injured in the quake. Eighty-eight are missing.

Reuters correspondent Rosanna Philpott reports on the damage.

Footage from Tuesday night showed people trying to escape leaning buildings, passing children down from balconies as aftershocks shook the city.

February is national cancer prevention month in the United States and as VOA's correspondent George Putic reports, results of a recent study firmly establish the association between a healthy lifestyle and several types of cancer.

Scientists say a healthy life requires five essential factors: not smoking, keeping body weight in check, a regular physical activity, a healthy diet and limited alcohol consumption.

Analyzing data collected over decades from about 340,000 people around the world, researchers in Britain found that those who met all five requirements were 32 percent less likely to develop lung, breast or colon cancer, the most common cancers.

George Putic, VOA news.

U.S. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi has conducted a rare filibuster, speaking for more than seven hours in the well of the U.S. House of Representatives to try to force Republicans to consider an immigration bill.

The California Democrat started talking shortly after 10 a.m. Wednesday. She said Democrats would oppose any funding bill unless House Speaker Paul Ryan, a Republican, agrees to bring a bipartisan immigration bill to the House floor for a vote.

A filibuster is a prolonged speech that obstructs progress in the legislative assembly on a technically contravening the required procedures.

You can find more on these and other late breaking and developing stories, from around the world, around the clock, at voanews.com and on the VOA news mobile app. I'm Jonathan Jones reporting from the world headquarters of the Voice of America in Washington.

That's the latest world news from VOA.