VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Marissa Melton.

The United States notified the United Nations Monday it will begin its withdrawal from a 2015 Paris climate agreement, which is commitment to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

The United States State Department said President Trump decided to withdraw because the agreement unfairly burdens American businesses, workers and taxpayers while giving a free pass to other countries.

The United States is second only to China as the top emitter of greenhouse gases globally.

President Trump promised in his campaign to withdraw from the Paris deal and Monday was the first day it could formally do so.

A battle in New York over President Trump's tax returns now appears headed for the Supreme Court. AP Washington correspondent Sagar Meghani has more.

A federal appeals panel has ruled the returns can be turned over to state criminal investigators.

Prosecutors in Manhattan want the president's tax records from 2011 on in a bigger probe that includes hush money payments during the 2016 race.

The appeals court has upheld a lower court ruling rejecting the president's bid to keep the records from being handed over. His lawyer argued last month the president's immune from criminal law even if he shoots somebody because he is the president.

Lead Judge Robert Katzmann ended that hearing by saying the case was likely bound for an appeal before the Supreme Court.

"We have the feeling that you may be seeing each other again in Washington."

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Pakistan has suspended consular operations in the Afghan capital until further notice following a diplomatic scramble. Pakistan complained that its members of its diplomatic staff in Kabul have been harassed by roadblocks and motorcycles on their way to work recently.

Afghanistan says it will investigate but complained in return that its ambassador in Islamabad was mistreated by the Pakistani spy agency. Pakistan has not responded to that accusation.

From the news center in Washington D.C., this is VOA news.

A new report finds sanctions imposed on North Korea are failing to advance denuclearization prospects on the Korean Peninsula while causing immense suffering to the civilian population. Lisa Schlein has more for VOA from Geneva.

The United Nations strengthened economic sanctions against North Korea in 2016 with the aim of bringing Pyongyang to the nuclear negotiating table with Washington. This tactic, however, has not worked. The talks remain deadlocked.

While targeted sanctions against North Korea's elite are ineffective, authors of the report say evidence shows they are having a devastating impact on the general population, especially women and children. They say sanctions are adversely affecting humanitarian aid and economic development in the country.

Lisa Schlein, for VOA news, Geneva.

Apple has become the latest tech giant to contribute to solving California's housing crisis. AP correspondent Mike Hempen has more.

Republican Governor Kevin Stitt has made reducing Oklahoma's highest-in-the-nation incarceration rate one of its top priorities.

"... 524 people were commuted across our state today. And given second chances ...."

The release applies to those with misdemeanor sentences for simple drug possession and low-level property crimes.

Voters approved the plan three years ago.

"The barriers to reentry in the society are difficult. There is a lot of slam doors."

First lady Sarah Stitt says officials have been working to prepare those being released.

"... so we came up with this idea of a reentry fair."

I'm Ben Thomas.

"Oklahomans are ready to surround you and help you have a successful life here in our state."

Iran is marking the 40th anniversary of the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran with an announcement that it's speeding up uranium processing by using new, faster centrifuges.

A U.S. official who called the announcement "nuclear blackmail" said it's an attempt by Tehran to get the worried European signatories of the nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Agreement to make concessions to Iran.

VOA asked President Donald Trump on Monday what should be done about the new centrifuges. He replied "We're looking into that."

The Treasury Department on Monday ruled out new sanctions against Tehran, adding to the more than 1,000 already imposed on Iran's oil exports, its banks, financial transactions and the military leadership of the Islamic Republic.

Anti-government protesters crossed a major bridge in central Baghdad on Monday, approaching the headquarters of state-run TV and coming to within 500 meters of the prime minister's office.

Security forces fired live ammunition and tear gas at the protesters, killing at least five people and wounding dozens.

Marissa Melton, VOA news.