VOA NEWS

December 16, 2019

This is VOA news. I'm Marissa Melton.

After the Democrat-dominated House of Representatives voted last week to impeach President Donald Trump, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said Sunday he is concerned about the conduct of the Senate impeachment trial.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told Fox news last week that he was working as one with the White House. He said there is zero chance the president will be removed from office.

Here is Chuck Schumer. "So far, McConnell has not come to me, and I'm worried that we won't get a fair trial where all the facts and all the truth comes out. I'm going to work very hard to get that done."

The United Nations longest climate talks ever ended in Madrid on Sunday, with countries agreeing to increase carbon cutting commitments next year but postponing clear cut decisions in key areas.

Critics accused several of the world's biggest polluters, including the United States, of blocking progress to address a growing climate crisis. Lisa Bryant has more for VOA from Paris.

There was some progress and compromise. The European Union, with the exception of Poland, pledged this past week to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Delegates agreed to enhance emissions cutting plans. But they failed to agree on clear targets, rules for carbon markets or financing for poorer nations to adapt and respond to climate change. That adds pressure for next year when the 2015 Paris climate agreement begins to be implemented.

Here is a reaction from Costa Rica's delegation: "We did not get there this time, but we have progressed."

The talks were backdropped by a series of alarming findings on the growing impact of climate change on our oceans, forests and glaciers.

Lisa Bryant, for VOA news, Paris.

Sixteen deaths are now confirmed and two bodies remain missing in New Zealand after [recover tains reco ] a recovery team returned to the volcanic White Island on Sunday.

VOA news.

Fighting in Libya continued over the weekend after Khalifa Hifter, Libya's de facto eastern leader, announced what he called a "final" assault on the western capital, Tripoli. VOA's Heather Murdock has this report from Tunis.

On Friday, Khalifa Hifter, the strongman who leads Libya's eastern military, announced a final assault on the western capital, Tripoli, after nearly nine months of battling to take over the city.

Tensions quickly escalated as both sides anticipated ratcheted-up international support for their enemy, with Russian troops believed to be supporting Hifter's army known as the Libyan National Army and Turkey promising to send forces to support the western Government of National Accord if requested.

Fighting continued throughout the weekend but by Sunday afternoon, neither side had gained a significant amount of ground.

I'm Heather Murdock, VOA news, Tunis.

Fighting in Libya continued over the weekend and analysts say Libya is stuck in a standoff, with neither side having a significant military advantage or recognizing each other as legitimate.

Hifter's supporters are saying Tripoli fighters are extremist militias while in Tripoli, locals and officials say Hifter aims to be a new Libyan dictator.

Mississippi's outgoing governor is vowing to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold Mississippi's abortion ban. AP correspondent Ben Thomas.

Mississippi's lone abortion clinic sued state after Governor Phil Bryant signed the law which bans abortion once a pregnancy reaches 15 weeks.

Friday, a federal appeals court ruled the ban unconstitutional.

In a tweet, Bryant promises the state will now take the case to the Supreme Court.

Bryant leaves office in January to be succeeded by Lieutenant Governor Tate Reeves, a fellow Republican and abortion opponent.

Supporters of the Mississippi ban and those like it in other states have been aiming for the Supreme Court all along, hoping its new conservative justices will take up cases that lead to the overturning of the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling that legalized abortion nationwide.

Ben Thomas, Washington.

The office of the U.N.'s top human rights official is urging India to scrap its new citizenship act which it says discriminates against Muslims.

A Muslim political party along with lawyers and rights groups have challenged the law in India's Supreme Court, arguing that it violates the country's secular constitution.

The U.N. human rights office says it hopes the justices will consider whether the law is compatible with India's international human rights obligations.

And China has suspended the planned additional tariffs on some U.S. goods that were meant to be implemented on December 15. That's according to China's State Council's Customs Tariff Commission.

The two countries agreed on a "phase one" trade deal on Friday. The statement was issued on government websites as well as state media outlets, such as Xinhua.

I'm Marissa Melton. This is VOA news.