VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Marissa Melton.

President Trump is angrily objecting to House Democrats' bid to remove him from office. AP Washington correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

A day before a historic House impeachment vote, the president's blasting Democrats have accused him of abusing his power.

Writing in a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, they're the ones guilty of abuse of power and perversion of justice.

"The whole impeachment thing is a hoax."

Now long after the letter was sent, the president told reporters he will take no responsibility for becoming just the third American chief executive to be impeached, saying he's done nothing wrong.

Democrats like Jamie Raskin disagree. "... overwhelming evidence that the President of the United States has committed high crimes and misdemeanors."

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Pakistan has sentenced former dictator General Pervez Musharraf to death in a treason case. But it's possible the punishment will never be carried out. AP correspondent Charles De Ledesma reports.

Pakistan has sentenced former dictator General Pervez Musharraf to death in a treason case. But it's most unlikely the punishment will be carried out.

The case relates to the state of emergency Musharraf had imposed in 2007 when he placed several key judges under house arrest. He came to power after ousting former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a 1999 bloodless coup.

Now this is the first time in the nation's history that the former army chief and ruler of the country has been sentenced to death. Sentenced in absentia, Musharraf has been out of the country since 2016 when he was allowed to leave on bail to seek medical treatment abroad and he is unlikely to return.

I'm Charles De Ledesma.

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar have agreed for form a transitional unity government by a February deadline even if they don't resolve key political disputes by that time. They signed a peace deal in September, 2018.

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Pope Francis on Tuesday announced sweeping changes to the way the Roman Catholic Church deals with cases of sexual abuse of minors, abolishing the rule of "pontifical secrecy" that [pro...] previously covered them. Reuters' Francesca Lynagh reports.

Pope Francis has abolished a set of Vatican rules for handling sensitive information, an attempt at added transparency in how the Roman Catholic Church handles cases of sexual abuse.

The measures were specifically called the right to "pontifical secrecy."

Proponents are calling it a sweeping move and codifies into global Church doctrine rules that have already been employed by branches in several countries, including the United States.

Two documents issued by the pope back practices such as reporting suspicion of sex abuse to civil authorities where required by law.

They also forbid imposing any obligation of silence on those who report sex abuse or allege they have been a victim.

That's Reuters' Francesca Lynagh reporting.

The U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday approved a $1.4 trillion spending package to avert a partial government shutdown but also raised U.S. tobacco purchasing age to 21 and permanently repeal several of the Affordable Care Act's taxes.

Yahaira Jacquez reports.

The bill would permanently repeal several taxes created to fund Obamacare and increase the legal age to buy tobacco products from 18 to 21. It also includes funding for the border but not the full $5 billion the president requested to build his signature wall. Nevertheless, the White House said Tuesday that Trump plans to sign the measure.

The largest expenditure in the bill is for the Department of Defense. As part of that package, the Senate on Tuesday authorized the creation of Trump's Space Force, the first new branch of the U.S. military to be created in more than 60 years.

That's Reuters' Yahaira Jacquez reporting.

Use of capital punishment is continuing with downward trend in the United States. AP correspondent Mike Hempen.

A new report says this year for the fifth straight year, fewer than 30 people have been executed and under 50 new death sentences have been imposed.

The report by the Death Penalty Information Center shows 20 of this year's 22 executions have occurred in five southern states led by Texas with 9. New Hampshire became the 21st state to abolish the death penalty, while California imposed a formal moratorium on executions.

But at the federal level, Attorney General William Barr announced federal executions would resume this month.

Mike Hempen, Washington.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is seeking to rule out any extension of an end-of 2020 deadline to strike a trade deal with the European Union.

I'm Marissa Melton. You're listening to VOA news.