VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Marissa Melton.

Taiwanese voters re-elected incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen on Saturday with more than 57 percent of the vote in parliament and presidential elections.

Shortly after the vote [tai] Tsai Ing-wen said she would do her at most to break a stalemate with Beijing. The government in Beijing considers Taiwan part of its own territory that must eventually unify with China.

Taiwanese citizens said in surveys last year they prefer today's democratic autonomy over unification with the mainland.

Iran has admitted it shot down a Ukrainian jetliner by mistake earlier this week. All 176 people aboard the plane were killed.

Iranian officials say it was a mistake and have called for an investigation. AP correspondent Ben Thomas.

In an address broadcast by Iranian state TV, the head of the Revolutionary Guard's aerospace division said his forces were at the highest level of readiness after Iran launched a ballistic missile attack on military bases in Iraq housing U.S. troops.

General Amir Ali Hajizadeh said his unit had requested several times that the country's airspace be cleared of all flights but that didn't happen. He says the plane's crew did nothing wrong, but bearing a U.S. retaliatory strike, one of his officers mistook the plane for a cruise missile and made a bad decision to open fire. He says his unit takes full responsibility for the incident.

I'm Ben Thomas.

U.S. President Donald Trump says Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in his final days was planning to attack four American embassies. Mr. Trump identified one of the facilities in a Fox News channel interview late on Friday.

"... we will tell you that probably it was going to be the embassy in Baghdad ...."

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North Korea says it will not resume nuclear talks with the United States unless Washington unconditionally accepts its demands. VOA's Bill Gallo reports from Seoul, South Korea, that the dictator Kim Jong Un may have decided to play tough in 2020.

U.S.-North Korea talks have been stalled since early 2019.

The North is now sending strong signals things will not improve anytime soon.

Kim last week said his country should be prepared for a long-term standoff with the U.S. He also threatened to resume major missile or nuclear tests. A move like that could disrupt the personal relationship between Trump and Kim who have exchanged personal letters and met three times. But the relationship hasn't led to wider progress.

By some estimates, North Korea has added enough nuclear material for ten more bombs since Trump and Kim held their first summit in June, 2018.

Bill Gallo, VOA news, Seoul.

Bushfire conditions on Australia's east coast have eased a bit. Authorities say they expect at least a week of milder weather.

In addition to the danger to people and homes, Phil Mercer reports from Sydney on dangers for Australia's animal life.

Bushfires have had a terrible impact on Australia. Lives have been lost, hundreds of homes destroyed and vast areas of land incinerated. The disaster has also had catastrophic consequences for animals. Images of badly burned koalas, Australia's famous furry marsupials, have come to define the severity of the fire emergency.

The University of Sydney has estimated that more than a billion mammals, birds and reptiles, as well as "hundreds of billions" of insects have died in the fires. Experts have warned that "for some species we are looking at imminent extinction."

Phil Mercer, for VOA news, Sydney.

At least four people have died as severe storms tore through parts of the southern United States. AP correspondent Julie Walker has that story.

The National Weather Service says an EF2 hurricane hit Bossier Parish, Louisiana, packing 135 mile per hour winds. It completely destroyed a mobile home, killing the elderly couple inside.

Sheriff Julian Whittington says it's a sad day for his community. "The two victims were actually the in-laws of one of my deputies so that makes it even closer to home."

Meteorologist Brandi Richardson with the National Weather Service says the worst is over.

"... as far as any type of severe weather or anything like that we're not looking at ...."

She also says while there a lot of flush flooding, rivers are receding.

I'm Julie Walker.

At least 20 people have died when a double decker bus caught fire after colliding late Friday with a truck on a highway in northern India. Another 21 people were taken to a hospital, some of them in critical condition.

Police suspect the truck driver lost control of his vehicle.

I'm Marissa Melton, VOA news.