VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. Via remote, I'm Marissa Melton.

The body of the late U.S. congressman and civil rights icon John Lewis returned to Washington on Monday. It's lying in state now at the U.S. Capitol as lawmakers and the public pay their last respects to Lewis' life-long efforts to promote civil rights.

Lewis died last week at the age of 80 after a yearlong battle with advanced-stage pancreatic cancer.

The motorcade carrying Lewis' flag-draped casket drove slowly through Washington at midday on Monday. It passed several civil rights landmarks as well as the newly named Black Lives Matter Plaza with inside of the White House.

Absent from the ceremonies was President Donald Trump. Lewis was openly critical of the Trump administration and did not attend Mr. Trump's inauguration ceremony. Mr. Trump was in North Carolina today.

Due to concerns over the coronavirus, the public viewing is taking place just outside the Capitol on the building's east side. Visitors are required to wear masks and engage in social distancing.

Lewis is the second Black lawmaker to lie in state in the U.S. Capitol. Congressman Elijah Cummings, who died last year, was the first.

Parties to South Sudan's revitalized peace deal missed a regional deadline Sunday to dissolve and reconstitute parliament.

A July 14 communiqué by East Africa's Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, which mediated South Sudan's peace agreement, had called on President Salva Kiir to dissolve the current National Legislative Assembly by July 26.

A partial unity government was formed five months ago, but parliament has yet to be reconstituted. President Salva Kiir appointed state governors just a few weeks ago.

The chairman of the South Sudan Opposition Alliance, Josephine Lagu, told VOA the parties were well aware of the deadline but waited for the new governors to assume their posts

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Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi pushed the White House and Senate Republicans to negotiate quickly on Monday to renew expiring federal unemployment benefits for more than 16 million Americans who are out of work because of the coronavirus pandemic.

As the administration of President Donald Trump and Republican Senate leaders prepared to release a $1 trillion coronavirus aid package, Pelosi called for them to immediately come to her office in the U.S. Capitol to work out a deal with Democrats who want a $3 trillion spending plan to bolster the faltering U.S. economy.

But the two parties are at odds over the continuing amount the federal government should pay to unemployed workers in addition to the less generous amounts they receive from state governments.

The national government has paid millions of jobless workers an extra $600 a week for the last four months. That stipend ends on Friday. The White House and Republicans want to cut the payments down to $200 a week, while Democrats are pushing to continue the current $600 figure through the end of 2020.

U.S. Major League Baseball team, the Miami Marlins, has been hit with an outbreak of coronavirus infections just after the league opened its sharply curtailed season last week.

The Marlins canceled their Monday night [ga...] home opener in Miami against the Baltimore Orioles after 14 players and coaches tested positive for the coronavirus.

The new infections brought the total on the Marlins team to at least 14 in recent days. The team had just played the Philadelphia Phillies so they stayed in Philadelphia Sunday night and the Phillies also called off their Monday night game.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un says there will be no more war as the country's nuclear weapons guarantee its safety despite outside pressure and military threats. That message came from the North Korea state media. Kim made the remarks as he celebrated the 67th anniversary of the end of the 1950 to 1953 Korean War.

The country developed nuclear weapons to win "absolute strength" to stave off another armed conflict, Kim said. He emphasized the defensive nature of the programs.

The speech came amid stalled talks aimed at dismantling Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs in exchange for sanctions relief from Washington.

Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump met for the first time in 2018 in Singapore and raised hopes for a negotiated end to North Korea's nuclear threats. But their second summit in 2019 in Vietnam and subsequent working-level meetings fell apart.

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