VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. Via remote, I'm Diane Roberts.

U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and his newly named [mo...] running mate Senator Kamala Harris held their first appearance together as a ticket socially distanced and in Biden's home state of Delaware.

He introduced his Democratic running mate as a woman ready to be vice president "on day one."

AP Washington correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

In Kamala Harris, "I have no doubt that I picked the right person to join me ...."

Biden says the California senator is smart, tough, a proven fighter for the middle class.

It was a surreal moment at mostly empty Delaware high school gym - the backdrop in a grim reminder of the virus pandemic.

Harris calls it a moment of consequence for the nation. "Everything we care about - our economy, our health, our children, the kind of country we live in - it's all on the line," ripping President Trump's handling of the virus among other things.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Harris is the first Black woman and the first South Asian American to appear on a major party U.S. presidential ticket. She is the daughter of two immigrants - her mother from India and her father from Jamaica.

President Trump has privately discussed with advisers the possibility of replacing Defense Secretary Mark Esper after the November election in the wake of a number of differences between them, a source familiar with the internal debate said Wednesday.

The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the two men were (quote) "not in a good place" (end quote) but that Mr. Trump did not intend to move on Esper until voters have rendered their judgment on a second Trump term November 3.

From Washington, this is VOA news.

Wednesday, Belarus confirmed the death of a jailed protester after police violently cracked down on demonstrations over disputed presidential polls.

The riot police have arrested thousands in street clashes across the country after long-serving leader Alexander Lukashenko claimed a landslide victory in Sunday polls.

The strongman's opponents accuse him of rigging the election where his main rival was a massively popular opposition candidate.

The Belarusian Investigative Committee said in a statement a 25-year-old man died after he was detained Sunday and sentenced to 10 days in prison for taking part in illegal protests.

Police in the southern Indian city of Bengaluru, also known as Bangalore, say three people are dead after violence erupted between police and protesters there. The two groups clashed over a reportedly derogatory Facebook post about the Prophet Muhammad.

The *Times of India* newspaper reports the violence began when a nephew of a lawmaker allegedly posted remarks. That led to thousands taking to the streets and clashing with officers.

According to Bangalore's police chief, officers were unable to quell protesters and opened fire with live ammunition in self-[depence] -defense. Police also said the person responsible for the offensive post had been arrested.

U.S. Democrats and the White House were no closer to agreeing on a new emergency pandemic spending package Wednesday as Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin traded blame with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi over failed negotiations.

President Donald Trump's administration and Democratic leadership have for weeks been discussing a new round of emergency aid to workers and businesses hit hard by the coronavirus crisis, but have been unable to agree on how much to spend.

Mnuchin said he spoke with Pelosi by phone but that she was unwilling to budge unless the White House agreed to spend at least $2 trillion as part of the new measure - a figure rejected by Republicans.

Wednesday, the Brazilian state of Parana reached a deal with Russia to produce a COVID-19 vaccine that Moscow has touted as the first to market. This is according to the state's press office although details of the agreement were not immediately available.

The Russian vaccine has grabbed headlines and raised safety concerns for going to market while other pharmaceutical companies are still carrying out mass testing.

Venezuela's opposition-run Congress has opened an investigation into an oil spill that continues to pollute beaches along the South American nation's Caribbean coast, legislator María Gabriela Hernández said Wednesday.

Authorities said last week they were cleaning up the oil slick that washed up on the coast of Falcon state known for wetlands and nature preserves, but did not provide an estimate of how much had spilled or the cause.

Via remote, I'm Diane Roberts.