

# U.S. Lawmakers Move to Limit Trump's Powers



President Donald Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell shake hands after attending the Senate Republican policy luncheon in Washington on Jan. 9, 2019.

WASHINGTON (AP) - The White House and Republican senators sought compromise on limiting presidents' powers to unilaterally declare national emergencies, as chances improved that President Donald Trump might avoid a long-expected rejection by Congress of his effort to divert billions more for building barriers along the Mexican border.

As a Thursday showdown vote in the Senate neared, GOP Sens. Mike Lee of Utah, Thom Tillis of North Carolina and others were talking with the White House about related

border emergency would send it to the White House, where it would face a certain veto — Trump's first.

By late Tuesday, there were indications that GOP opposition to Trump's emergency along the Mexican border was softening. If it stands, the declaration will let Trump divert \$3.6 billion from military construction projects to build border barriers, even though Congress had voted to limit him to less than \$1.4 billion for barrier construction in the budget.

Tillis is among four Senate Republicans who have said they'd vote with Democrats to oppose Trump's border emergency. At a closed-door lunch Tuesday, Tillis suggested he could be open to backing the president, said two people familiar with his comments. One said Tillis told his colleagues he could change his vote if Trump was indeed ready to curb presidential powers to declare emergencies without Congress' approval.

Republicans control the Senate 53-47, meaning that four GOP defections would be enough to send the resolution blocking Trump's border emergency to the White House. The others are Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Rand Paul of Kentucky.

Paul said earlier this month that there were "at least 10" GOP senators prepared to oppose Trump's emergency. But he told reporters Tuesday that he now expects fewer defections.

legislation that would curb the ability of presidents to declare national emergencies. If Trump commits to signing a bill handcuffing future emergency declarations, more GOP senators might support his border emergency declaration in Thursday's crucial vote.

Lee and Tillis were among five GOP senators who met privately Tuesday at the Capitol with Vice President Mike Pence as Republicans sought a way to bolster support for Trump. Since the Democratic-run House voted last month to block Trump, Senate passage of the resolution rejecting the

# UK in Chaos After Parliament Kills May's Deal Again



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May speaks after the results of the vote on Brexit deal in Parliament in London, March 12, 2019.

LONDON (AP) - Britain and the European Union braced Wednesday for a chaotic, cliff-edge Brexit after UK lawmakers rejected the divorce deal that the two sides had agreed upon. Britain's Parliament was to hold votes later that aimed to rule out or postpone a disruptive no-deal departure for Britain from the bloc.

But top EU officials warned the prospect could not be eliminated unless the UK Parliament approved some type of exit deal. "The risk of a no-deal has never been higher," chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier said. "I urge you please not to underestimate the risk or its consequences," he told European lawmakers in Strasbourg, France.

British lawmakers rejected Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal for a second time on Tuesday, throwing it out by a 391-242 vote. With Brexit set for March 29, just 16 days away, Parliament were to vote later Wednesday on whether to rule out leaving the EU on that date without a deal.

Both Britain and the EU have ramped up planning for a "no-deal" Brexit, which would rip up decades of rules for travel and trade between Britain and the EU. Economists say it could cause huge upheaval, with customs checks causing gridlock at UK ports, new tariffs triggering sudden price hikes and red tape for everyone from truckers to tourists.

On Wednesday, the UK government announced its plans for the Irish border after Brexit, saying it wouldn't impose new

checks, duties or controls on goods coming from EU member Ireland into Northern Ireland. It also said it wouldn't slap tariffs on most goods coming into Britain from the EU — though there would be new levies on imports of some items including meat and cars.

The British government said 87 percent of imports by value would be tariff-free, a "modest liberalization" compared with current trade rules. A mixture of tariffs and quotas would apply to beef, lamb, pork, poultry and some dairy "to support farmers and producers who have historically been protected through high EU tariffs."

The tariffs, intended to be temporary, wouldn't apply to goods crossing from Ireland to Northern Ireland, raising fears the plan would spark a rise in smuggling across that border.

UK Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay told the BBC the government was well prepared but "no-deal is going to be very disruptive for the economy."

Carolyn Fairbairn, director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, said the no-deal arrangements would be "a sledgehammer for our economy."

A weakened May, her authority shredded by successive Brexit defeats in Parliament, said her Conservative lawmakers could vote Wednesday according to their conscience, rather than having to follow a party line.

If a no-deal Brexit is ruled out, Parliament will vote Thursday on whether to ask the EU to delay Britain's departure.



MILAN (Reuters) -- Italy is studying mechanisms to monitor commercial accords signed under the "Belt and Road" memorandum agreement with China, as well as other measures to protect "strategic activities and national interests," Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte told the Corriere della Sera newspaper on Wednesday. In separate comments to Corriere, a spokesman for the White House's group of national security advisers, Garrett Marquis, warned the accord was "a political hazard." Corriere reported that the White House had warned Italy it would no longer be able to share sensitive information, such as intelligence reports, if the Rome government were to buy equipment from China's Huawei. The United States has urged allies not to use products made by Huawei, the world's biggest maker of telecoms equipment, saying they could enable Chinese state espionage. No evidence has been produced publicly and Huawei has repeatedly denied the allegations. But several Western countries have restricted, or are considering restricting, the company's access to their markets, fuelling speculation of U.S. pressure.

LONDON (Reuters) -- China needs to learn lessons from Japan's lost decade and control future levels of debt, the country's former central bank governor said on Tuesday. Debt levels in China are too high, but the Chinese government is taking steps to try to deleverage the economy, Zhou Xiaochuan said in a speech at Chatham House in London. "Japan had very fast development and later then a so-called lost decade," he said. "The Chinese economy may have a similar overleveraged problem and we need to absorb the knowledge and lessons from what happened." The lost decade refers to a period of economic stagnation in Japan that began in the 1990s.

MELBOURNE (AFP) -- Disgraced Australian Cardinal George Pell was on Wednesday sentenced to six years in prison for the "brazen" sexual abuse of two choirboys, in what the judge lambasted as a "grave" abuse of power. The former Vatican number three -- who managed church finances and helped elect two popes -- was sentenced in a Melbourne court on five counts, including oral rape and molestation of boys in 1996-1997. Judge Peter Kidd, his remarks broadcast live on television, said the 77-year-old was guilty of "appalling offending" and "breathtakingly arrogant" attacks that took advantage of his position of authority over the boys, then aged 13. Kidd said the cardinal, with his "significant history of cardiac problems", would be eligible for parole in late 2022, but acknowledged he "may not live to be released from prison". Wearing a black shirt without his usual white clerical collar, Pell sat largely impassively, hands interlaced on his lap, as Kidd graphically described his "brazen and forceful sexual attack on the two victims".

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) -- A quarter of all premature deaths and diseases worldwide are due to manmade pollution and environmental damage, the United Nations said Wednesday in a landmark report on the planet's parlous state. Deadly smog-inducing emissions, chemicals polluting drinking water, and the accelerating destruction of ecosystems crucial to the livelihoods of billions of people are driving a worldwide epidemic that hampers the global economy, it warned. The Global Environment Outlook (GEO) -- a report six years in the making compiled by 250 scientists from 70 nations -- depicts a growing chasm between rich and poor countries as rampant overconsumption, pollution and food waste in the developed world leads to hunger, poverty and disease elsewhere. As greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise amid a preponderance of droughts, floods and superstorms made worse by climbing sea levels, there is a growing political consensus that climate change poses a future risk to billions. But the health impacts of pollution, deforestation and the mechanized food-chain are less well understood. Nor is there any international agreement for the environment close to covering what the 2015 Paris accord does for climate.

KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) -- Malaysia has shut 34 schools after a suspected chemical leak last week left more than 200 children, teachers and others being treated for poisoning, the education ministry said on Wednesday. Authorities believe the poisoning was caused by toxic waste dumped into a river near the schools in the southern state of Johor. "Unfortunately, I was told today that the situation is getting more critical," Education Minister Maszlee Malik said in a statement on his official Facebook page. The number of people treated climbed to 207 compared to 35 reported last week. As of Monday, 44 were in hospital where six were in intensive care. Thirty-three of them are pupils. "I've ordered for all schools within a three-kilometer radius be shut immediately," Maszlee said.

SAO PAULO (AP) -- Authorities say hooded teenagers opened fire at a school in southern Brazil, killing six people before taking their own lives. Wednesday's shooting happened in a public school in Suzano, a suburb of Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest city. The state government of Sao Paulo says two youths armed with guns and wearing hoods entered the school and began shooting at students and then killed themselves. Authorities say five students and an administrator at the school were killed. Latin America's largest nation has the largest number of annual homicides in the world, but school shootings are rare. Brazil's new President Jair Bolsonaro recently announced that gun ownership controls would be loosened.

# Building Collapse Traps 100 Children in Nigeria



People gather as rescue workers search for survivors at the site of a collapsed building containing a school in Nigeria's commercial capital of Lagos, Nigeria March 13, 2019.

LAGOS (Reuters) - As many as 100 children and many others were feared trapped on Wednesday after a building containing a primary school collapsed in Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos.

A Reuters reporter at the scene saw a boy of 10 being pulled from the rubble covered in dust but with no visible injuries. A crowd erupted into cheers as another child was pulled

from the wreckage. The two were among eight children residents said had been rescued so far.

Workers on top of the rubble shoveled debris away as thousands of people swarmed around the rescue site — dozens watching from rooftops and hundreds more packed into the surrounding streets.

"It is believed that many people including children are currently trapped in the building," said Ibrahim

Farinloye, spokesman for the National Emergency Management Agency's southwest region, adding that casualty figures were not yet available.

Residents of the area said around 100 children attended the school, which was on the third floor of the building.

At the site, many people were shouting and screaming. A fight almost broke out as anger at the collapse boiled over.

In the crowd's midst stood ambulances, fire trucks and a fork lift. Workers from the Red Cross and police were on hand.

The building was in the Ita-faji area of Lagos island, the original heart of the lagoon city before it expanded onto the mainland.

Nigeria is frequently hit by building collapses, with weak enforcement of regulations and poor construction materials often used. In 2016, more than 100 people were killed when a church came down in southeastern Nigeria.

In Lagos that same year, a five-story building still under construction collapsed, killing at least 30 people.

A floating school built to withstand storms and floods was also brought down in Lagos in 2016, though nobody was reported injured.

# China Lawmakers Urge Freeing Up Family Planning



A graduate of Ayi University, a training program for domestic helpers, holds the child of a potential employer and talks to a staff member in Beijing, December 11, 2018.

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - Delegates to China's parliament are urging the overhaul or even scrapping of controversial family planning rules and say radical steps are needed to "liberate fertility" and reverse a decline in births and a rapidly shrinking workforce.

With its population ageing as a result of longer lifespans and a dwindling number of children, the world's most populous nation decided in 2016 to allow all couples to have a second child, relaxing a tough one-child policy in place since 1978.

But birth rates plummeted for the second consecutive year last year. Policymakers now fret about the impact a long-term decline in births will have on the economy and its strained health and social services.

In proposals submitted at the National People's Congress, delegates from across the country urged leaders to improve healthcare and maternity benefits, offer tax breaks and provide more free public education.

Some went further, saying China should forget about trying to control births and even remove all references to family planning from the constitution.

"Continued control over fertility will inevitably defeat the purpose and make it even harder to resolve ingrained population problems," Guangdong province delegate Li Bingji said in a proposal that described

population as China's number-one priority for the next four decades.

The number of live births per 1,000 people fell to 10.94 in 2018, official data showed, less than a third of the 1949 level. Liaoning in the northeast, which has seen its population decline in recent years, has a birth rate of 6.49 per thousand.

The estimated number of children each Chinese mother will have in their lifetime is 1.6, down from 5.18 in 1970. The global average is 2.45.

Think tanks expect China's population to peak at 1.4 billion in 2029 and then begin an "unstoppable" decline that could reduce the workforce by as much as 200 million by 2050.

They also forecast that over-60s will account for 25 percent of the population by 2035, up from 17.3 percent in 2017. More than a third of China's population could be over 60 by the middle of the century.

According to Steven Mosher, president of the U.S.-based Population Research Institute which opposes government attempts to control population, China is entering a "low-birthrate recession".

"China has set up a deadly demographic trap for itself, condemning itself to low or no growth for years to come, regardless of how many babies they can, using persuasion or compulsion, get young women to bear," he said.

# EU Complicit in Systematic Abuse of Migrants: Amnesty

BIHAC, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) - A leading rights group has accused European Union states of complicity in the "systematic, unlawful and frequently violent pushbacks" by Croatian border guards of thousands of asylum-seekers to squalid and unsafe refugee camps in Bosnia.

Amnesty International said in a report released Wednesday that "European governments are not just turning a blind eye to vicious assaults by the Croatian police, but also funding their activities."

The report said that "in doing so, they are fueling a growing humanitarian crisis on the edge of the European Union."

In a response to the Amnesty International report on Wednesday, Croatian Interior Minister Davor Bozinovic said that the ministry has received more than 200 complaints issued by international rights

groups of alleged illegal and violent pushbacks of migrants, but that after investigations no foul play was detected in a single case.

In Brussels, European Commission spokeswoman Mina Andreeva said that the EU's executive body is concerned about the allegations made in the report and is taking them very seriously.

Thousands of migrants have been stuck in Bosnia as they seek to move on toward Western Europe. Migrants mostly travel illegally with the help of people smugglers.

Currently, around 5,500 women, men and children are trapped in two small Bosnian towns near the Croatian border, Bihac and Velika Kladusa, living in defunct former factories without basic amenities, the Amnesty International report said.

In the Bihac camp, migrants are claiming regular beatings by

Croatian border guards.

"They catch us, they steal our phones, they damage them," Afghan migrant who identified himself as Ajmal told The Associated Press. "Sometimes they take money, sometimes, but not every time. And they also kick us, they take a stick and beat us on our back."

The Amnesty International report said people fleeing war and persecution "are beaten and robbed by the Croatian police and forcibly pushed back to legal limbo, left at the mercy of a failing asylum system in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

"In spite of these appalling practices at the border, the European Union has continued to allocate significant funds to assist Croatia in its border security infrastructure. The EU has also willfully ignored the failures of the European asylum system that make these journeys necessary," the report said.