

UN in the red, salaries at risk

United Nations | United States

The United Nations has an overall annual operating budget of several billion dollars, covering everything from humanitarian work to disarmament, but right now, it's just trying to make sure its employees get paid after this month.

How did the world body end up more than \$200 million in the red?

The answer: member states who have not paid their expected contributions, including the United States.

On Tuesday, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned of the "worst cash crisis facing the United Nations in nearly a decade."

He cautioned the UN "runs the risk of depleting its liquidity reserves by the end of the month and defaulting on payments to staff and vendors."

Several member states are behind in their dues payments. The UN will not publicly identify those countries, but sources said the main culprits are the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Iran.

In all, 64 countries owe money to the UN. Also on the list of budget delinquents are Venezuela, North Korea, South Korea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

The last country to have paid up is war-ravaged Syria, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Tuesday at his daily press conference.

In a letter sent Monday to



United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres

the 37,000 employees at the UN secretariat, Guterres said the UN had a deficit of \$230 million as of the end of September.

On Tuesday, he indicated that if the world body had not taken the initiative to cut spending since the start of the year, the hole would have been even bigger in October -- possibly \$600 million -- and could have affected last month's General Assembly attended by world leaders.

A UN official speaking on condition of anonymity said Guterres had raised the budget issues with member states as early as this past spring, asking them to pay up, but they refused.

Not including what it pays for peacekeeping operations, the UN's operating budget for 2018-2019 is close to \$5.4 billion, with the United States contributing 22 percent.

The portion still owed? Nearly \$1.4 billion.

Washington is also the largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping tab.

EU ready to make 'major concession' on Brexit deal

Reuters | London

The European Union is ready to make a "major concession" on a Brexit deal by offering a mechanism for the Northern Irish assembly to leave a new so-called backstop after a number of years, The Times newspaper reported yesterday.

Talks with the EU to reach an agreement on Britain's departure have hit an impasse over the backstop, an insurance policy to prevent the return to a hard border between the British province of Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland if a future trade deal falls short of keeping the border open.

Johnson says he wants to remove what he calls the "undemocratic backstop" and has



Flags flutter outside the Houses of Parliament in London

proposed replacing it by suggesting that Northern Ireland stay under EU regulations, customs checks should be made

away from the border, and that Northern Ireland's assembly, Stormont, would have the right to vote on the arrangements.

But Brussels fears handing Northern Ireland "consent" would give Johnson's allies, the Democratic Unionist Party, a veto.

The new idea, as reported by the Times, would be a modified version of the consent principle.

Citing diplomatic sources close to the talks, the Times said European governments were prepared to "concede a unilateral revocation of the withdrawal treaty by Stormont after a period of time. The date of 2025 has been mooted, as long as both communities agree to it.

A European source was quoted by the Times as saying: "A landing zone on consent could be a double majority within Stormont, to leave, not to continue with the arrangements after X years."

Facebook extends fact-checking programme to 10 African states

Paris

Facebook on Tuesday announced the expansion of its third-party fact-checking programme to 10 new African countries in partnership with Agence France-Presse and other media.

The programme will be available in Ethiopia, Zambia, Somalia and Burkina Faso in partnership with AFP; in Uganda and Tanzania with Pesa Check and AFP; in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ivory Coast with France 24 and AFP, in Guine-

ea with France 24, and Ghana in partnership with Nigerian fact-checking platform Dubawa.

"The expansion of third-party fact-checking to now cover 15 countries in a little over a year shows first-hand our commitment and dedication to the

continent, alongside our recent local language expansion as part of this programme," said Kojo Boakye, Facebook head of public policy, Africa.

AFP has fact-checkers in nearly 30 countries, working in nine languages.

BAC celebrates KLM Royal Dutch Airlines' 100 year anniversary



BAC officials cutting a cake celebrating the 100th anniversary of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Airport Company (BAC), the operator and managing body of Bahrain International Airport (BIA), celebrated the 100th anniversary of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, welcoming the arrival of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines flight KL445, which touched down at BIA yesterday.

BAC Chief Commercial Officer, Ayman Zainal said: "The Bahrain-Amsterdam route has been proudly sustainable for 46 years and has played a key role in strengthening connectivity between the Kingdom and Europe, bolstering bilateral relations, trade, and tourism in the process."

BAC CCO further said he is looking to achieving more

"joint successes and new horizons of progress and prosperity".

Zainal added: "With the launch of the new Passenger Terminal Building, we expect to see a surge in the number of airlines operating out of BIA. We also remain committed to working with our existing partners to develop new routes that will further connect the Kingdom

with the rest of the world."

KLM is one of the major international airlines operating out of BIA and continues to operate daily flights, connecting passengers to Amsterdam and the rest of the airline's extensive global network.

Founded in 1919, KLM is the oldest airline in the world still operating under its original name.

US civil rights birthplace elects first black mayor

Washington

Voters in Montgomery, Alabama, the southern city considered the birthplace of the US civil rights movement, have elected their first African-American mayor.

Steven Reed, a 45-year-old county probate judge, easily defeated David Woods, a local television station owner, by 32,918 votes to 16,010 votes in Tuesday's runoff election.

"This election has never been about me," Reed said at a victory rally. "It's been about all of the hopes and dreams that we have as individuals and collectively in this city."

Montgomery, the capital of Alabama, has a population of around 200,000 -- 60 percent of whom are black -- and was founded in 1819.

It was briefly the capital of the Confederacy after southern states seceded from the Union in 1861, sparking the US Civil War.



Steven Reed, a 45-year-old county probate judge

The city was the site of the 1955 arrest of Rosa Parks, a black woman who refused to give up her seat on a public bus in what is considered a seminal moment in the civil rights movement.

Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr preached at a Baptist church in Montgomery and the city was the scene of several protests seeking an end to segregation.

Bro Krift, the executive editor of the Montgomery Advertiser newspaper, described Reed's election as a "historic moment for a city heralded for changing civil rights for all."



The Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) held yesterday at its premises a workshop titled 'Conventional Jobs versus Entrepreneurship; skills and success keys'. The workshop, delivered by Hala Sulaiman, targeted school students and shed a scope light on fundamental topics including stages of starting a business, competencies of successful entrepreneurs, and business sustainability. BCCI's second vice-chairman Mohammed Al Kooheji voiced his pride in Bahraini youth, and stressed the important role they are to play in shaping the economy of the country. The workshop is one in a series of workshops organised by the Studies and Initiatives Center of the Chamber.