

## Airbus boosts US footprint with new A220 plant in Alabama

Mobile, United States

European aircraft manufacturer Airbus on Wednesday broke ground on its second assembly line in the southern US state of Alabama, where it plans to build its small A220 jets, as it seeks to swipe market share from rival Boeing.

"We continue to grow," Airbus Americas CEO Jeff Knittel said at the ceremony in Mobile, where the company already opened a plant in 2015 for building its A320 passenger jet.

Now, more than 1,500 of our planes are flying in the US," he added.

Production at the \$300 million plant is expected to begin in the third quarter of this year, with the first delivery of an A220 set for 2020. The facility expects eventually to put out four of the aircraft a month.

Airbus says it generated \$48 billion in aircraft- and space-related expenditures in the US in 2017, supporting more than 275,000 jobs.

## Japan's Hitachi freezes British nuclear project

Tokyo, Japan

Hitachi said yesterday it would freeze construction of its stalled nuclear power station in Wales due to problems financing the project, a blow to Britain's nuclear strategy.

The company said in a statement the decision was made "from the viewpoint of Hitachi's economic rationality as a private enterprise".

Shelving the project at the Wylfa Newydd plant on Anglesey, a small island off the Welsh coast, will cost the Japanese firm 300 billion yen (\$2.8 billion), it said.

Hitachi launched the planned construction after acquiring Britain-based Horizon Nuclear Power in 2012.

# US shutdown after 4 weeks

Volunteer groups are collecting food to hand out, towns are organising job fairs, and banks and telecommunications firms have loosened rules on payments



Volunteers prepare a free meal for furloughed federal workers at Andres in Washington, DC

Washington, United States

Four weeks into the US government shutdown, cash-strapped federal workers are tapping life savings, selling possessions and turning to soup kitchens to make ends meet -- ramping up pressure Wednesday for leaders in Washington to strike a deal.

Communities from Washington to Kodiak, Alaska are feeling increasing pain, with the cutoff of paychecks to families snowballing to hit stores and businesses dependent on their spending.

Volunteer groups are collecting food to hand out, towns are organising job fairs, and banks and telecommunications firms have loosened rules on payments, all to cushion the hardship.

In Washington, celebrated chef Jose Andres launched a "ChefsforFeds" programme with a new "food kitchen" offering free meals to hard-hit workers on Pennsylvania Avenue -- halfway between the White House and Congress.

In Pennsylvania, West Virginia and other states, furloughed federal workers were getting

advice on applying for unemployment benefits.

And in Middletown, New York, Pets Alive, an animal shelter, announced free dog and cat food for the pets of families hit by the shutdown.

"We will provide 1 bag of food per family, Need proof of fed employment," they announced.

**No sign of compromise**

By afternoon Wednesday, there was no sign of a breakthrough in the faceoff between President Donald Trump and Democrats in Congress, which led to the partial shutdown of the government on December 22. More than 800,000 federal workers didn't get paid last week, pain shared by several million more contractors who also have been idled by the shutdown -- many of them low-paid service workers who live paycheck to paycheck.

Trump insists he won't agree to open the government until Congress signs off on his demand for \$5.7 billion to build a border wall, which he argues is needed to prevent illegal immigration.

"It is becoming more and more obvious that the Radical Democrats are a Party of open borders

and crime. They want nothing to do with the major humanitarian Crisis on our Southern Border," Trump tweeted Wednesday.

"He is just sticking to his position and won't budge," said Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the top Democrat in Congress, meanwhile pressed Trump to postpone his January 29 State of the Union address until after the government opens, citing security concerns arising from the shutdown.

**Unpaid bills, battered economy**

Furloughed government workers gathered at the congressional office of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell Wednesday to pressure him to help get the government back to work.

Even the Trump administration admits that the shutdown is damaging to the economy and people's lives. The White House Council of

Faye Smith, a furloughed Smithsonian contract worker who has not been paid during the partial government shutdown, holds an unpaid electric bill to present to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's office on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC

ty line ... I know that they're frustrated. They're sad. They're angry. They're still on duty," said retired Rear Admiral Cari Thomas, chief executive of Coast Guard Mutual Assistance, a non-profit set up to help Coast Guard families.

**Food banks**

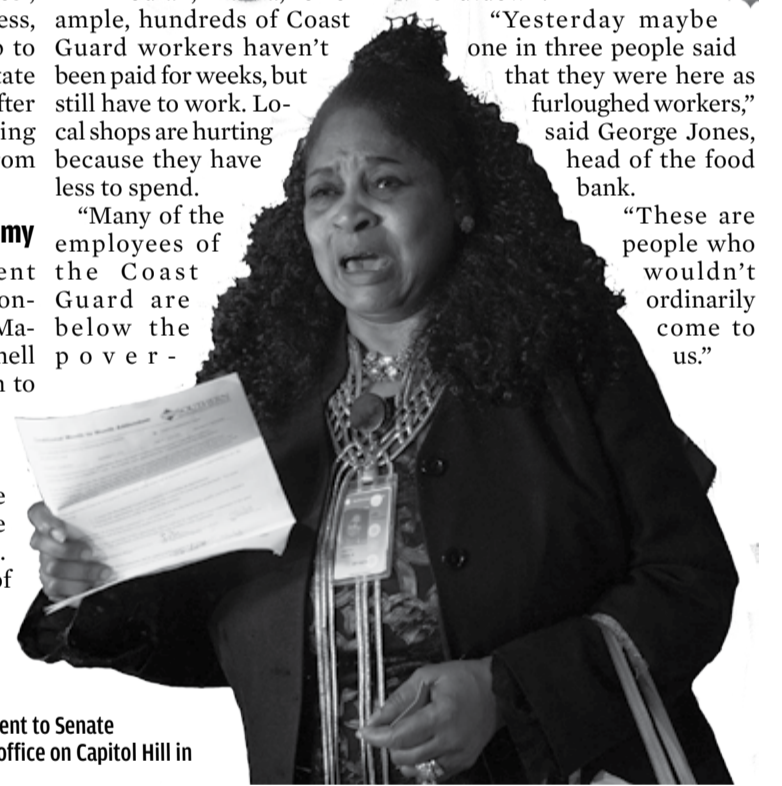
Chef Andres drew crowds and headlines when he launched his "ChefsforFeds" free lunch on Wednesday. "It calls some attention about the people left in the cold by a lot of selfish administrators and congressmen. They should wake up and see how their actions are affecting people," said Lewis Chlitt, who works at the National Gallery, where the doors are locked to visitors due to the shutdown.

Less publicly, more humble local food banks around the country were calling for donations and opening their doors to laid-off workers.

Washington's Bread for the City said visitors seeking food handouts surged to more than 500 Tuesday after it offered a five-day supply of groceries to people left out of work by the shutdown.

"Yesterday maybe one in three people said that they were here as furloughed workers," said George Jones, head of the food bank.

"These are people who wouldn't ordinarily come to us."



## New York breaks tourism record with 65.2m visitors

New York, United States

A record-breaking 65.2 million tourists visited New York in 2018, its tourist board said Wednesday, with British people particularly keen to visit the Big Apple from overseas.

According to new figures from NYC & Company, around 51.6 million Americans and 13.5 million foreign tourists visited the city last year -- compared to 13.1 overseas visitors in 2017.

Britons topped the list of overseas visitors, with 1.24 million, followed by China (1.1 million), Canada (1 million), Brazil (920,000) and France (807,000).

New York ranked the 6th most-visited city in the world for foreign tourists, according to Mastercard's annual Global Destination Cities list published in September, based on a projected 13.1 million visitors.

Bangkok topped that list,



Tourists take a photo in Times Square in Manhattan, New York.



Britons topped the list of overseas visitors, with 1.24 million, followed by China (1.1 million), Canada (1 million), Brazil (920,000) and France (807,000).

ahead of London, Paris, Dubai and Singapore.

The US's financial capital, where tourism employs over 390,000 people, hopes to break records again in 2019 with a predicted 67 million visitors.

India gives Volkswagen 24 hours to pay Dieselgate fine

New Delhi, India

India's environmental court yesterday threatened Volkswagen executives with arrest and gave the German automaker a day to pay \$14 million for violating pollution norms by fudging emission tests.

The "Dieselgate" scandal, which saw VW cheat emissions tests on millions of diesel vehicles, has already cost the firm over \$30 billion in fines, recalls and compensation worldwide.

India's National Green Tribunal ruled in November VW must deposit a fine of 1.7 billion rupees (\$24 million) with the pollution control board as "health damage".