

News Digest

FRIDAY . OCTOBER 30, 2026

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02 Pope Leo XIV made history as the first pontiff to vote in US elections, confirming his participation via a mail-in ballot.

03 Microsoft solidified its position as Wall Street's favorite by surpassing Amazon Web Services in global cloud infrastructure market share.

04 Romania experienced the largest electricity price increase in the European Union with costs rising 51.9% in the first half of 2026.

05 A Thai man was sentenced to 34 years in prison for questioning the monarchy while dressed as Harry Potter.

Romania 5 dispatches . 10 in brief

ANAF Launches Proactive Tax Compliance Program for VAT Risks

The National Fiscal Authority (ANAF) has launched a nationwide program to help taxpayers with potential tax risks before a fiscal control is initiated. The program aims to prevent non-compliance with tax regulations through a proactive approach. ANAF will send written notifications to taxpayers to inform them of the necessary actions to take. These actions include verifying the accuracy of their tax declarations and informants. Taxpayers must ensure their tax declarations and informants are complete and correct. They must also ensure data matches invoices, VAT returns, and other reports. If discrepancies are found, taxpayers can register the missing amounts in their current VAT account. This registration occurs under the regularizations section of the account. In cases of material errors, taxpayers must follow the specific procedure for correcting errors in VAT accounts. The program also allows taxpayers to correct inaccuracies in

their tax informants. This is done by submitting rectification declarations for each reporting period. ANAF's goal is to prevent tax evasion and encourage taxpayers to maintain accurate records. The program is significant as it aims to promote tax compliance. It also seeks to prevent potential tax irregularities before they become legal issues. This shift represents a move towards prevention rather than punishment. It aligns with broader efforts to modernize the fiscal system in Romania. Taxpayers are urged to respond promptly to any notifications received. Failure to comply could still result in traditional fiscal controls. The initiative covers various sectors where VAT risk is identified. Overall, this marks a new chapter in the relationship between the state and contributors.

Sources Ziarul Financiar

Romania Extends Fuel Crisis Measures for Three Months

The Romanian government has extended the state of emergency on the energy market for three more months. This extension will last until January 31, 2027. The decision is a response to the ongoing crisis on the fuel and petroleum products market. The extension aims to mitigate the effects of high energy prices on the population. It also seeks to protect the broader economy from instability. Premier Luca Niculescu made the announcement at the beginning of the government meeting. The crisis began after the outbreak of the war in the Middle East. This conflict led to a significant increase in fuel prices globally. The government had previously limited the import of petroleum products for six months. Measures include the diminution of the excise tax on diesel. There is also a limitation on the commercial markup on fuels. The Biziday team had previously reported on the crisis and its effects. The government's measures are aimed at supporting the population during this challenging period. The extension will allow for continued monitoring of the energy market. Implementation of measures to stabilize prices will continue during this time. The decision was made in response to the urgent need to address the crisis. Impact on the country's economic growth is a primary concern for officials. Consumers are expected to see some relief at the pumps due to these measures. Industry stakeholders are watching closely for further regulatory changes. This extension underscores the volatility of the current geopolitical energy landscape.

Sources Biziday

Related Romania Records Highest Electricity Price Hike in EU

Pope Leo XIV Becomes First Pope to Vote in US Elections

Pope Leo XIV has voted in the US midterm elections for the first time in history. He confirmed his participation through a mail-in ballot. Pope Leo, born Robert Prevost in Chicago, is the first Pope to have voted in US elections. He has been living in the US and holds US citizenship. This matters because it highlights Pope Leo's involvement in US democracy. It shows his commitment to civic participation despite his religious role. The event underscores the tension between Pope Leo's progressive views and conservative stances. US President Donald Trump had criticized Pope Leo's views on foreign policy. As a Pope, Leo's vote has significant implications for the Catholic Church. It influences the Church's stance on global issues and political engagement. The voter registration is under the name Robert Francis Prevost in New Lenox. This is a suburb of Chicago where his brother lives. He has exercised his right to vote multiple times since

becoming pope. This includes participation in the 2024 presidential election. The pope's health was a concern due to recent surgery for lung cancer. Despite this, he will travel to Uruguay, Argentina, and Peru in November. The voting decision has been a point of contention with former President Trump. Trump expressed criticism of the pope's stance on issues such as nuclear arms. This development highlights the growing connection between the Church and US politics. It marks a rare instance of a pope participating in a secular election.

Sources Antena 3 HotNews.ro

Romania Records Highest Electricity Price Hike in EU

Romania has experienced the largest increase in electricity prices in the European Union. Prices rose by 51.9% in the first half of 2026 compared to the same period last year. Petrișor Peiu, the leader of the senatorial group AUR, has criticized the government's handling. He has blamed the regime of President Nicușor Dan for the situation. He also accuses the PSD and PNL parties of being complicit. The high electricity prices matter because they impact the average consumer significantly. Low-income households are particularly vulnerable to these price hikes. The situation highlights the need for effective governance and policy-making. Energy affordability has become a critical issue for Romanian citizens. Critics argue that current policies have contributed to the surge. There are calls for immediate intervention to stabilize the market. The government faces pressure to explain the drastic increase. Opposition parties are using this issue to challenge the ruling coalition. Economic analysts are monitoring the inflationary impact of energy costs. Industrial consumers are also feeling the strain of higher rates. This could affect the competitiveness of Romanian businesses. Social unrest could emerge if prices continue to climb unchecked. Regulatory bodies are under scrutiny to ensure fair pricing mechanisms. The debate reflects broader European challenges with energy security. Solutions are being sought to balance market freedom with consumer protection.

Sources HotNews.ro

Related Romania Extends Fuel Crisis Measures for Three Months

ADR Launches GIA AI Assistant for Ghișeul.ro App

The Authority for Digitalization of Romania has launched GIA, a new digital assistant. GIA is integrated into the mobile app Ghișeul.ro. The app is now available on both Android and iOS platforms. The assistant uses artificial intelligence to provide personalized information. It allows users to pay taxes, fines, and debts through a natural language interface. Users can also access their case records and payment history easily. The initiative is part of the ADR's strategy to digitalize public services. It is seen as a significant step towards making services more proactive. Key people involved include Minister Delegat Costinel-Bogdan Dumitru. Vicepresident Alexandra Chivu also played a role in the launch. Representatives from APERO were present to support the initiative. The launch marks a shift from passive to proactive digitalization. The initiative is expected to reduce processing times for citizens. It demonstrates the practical effectiveness of modern technologies. The ADR plans to continue developing GIA with new features. Plans for 2026 include expanded payment options. Improved chatbot functionality is also on the roadmap. The goal is to create a seamless and user-friendly experience. Public services will become more accessible and responsive to needs. This move positions

Romania among leaders in digital government services.

Sources Antena 3

Also in Romania

Germania își caută un nou președinte: "Minimum 40 de ani, bărbat, femeie sau alt gen, cetățean cu drept de vot". Merz face propunerea

<https://www.antena3.ro/externe/germania-isi-cauta-nou-sef-de-stat-minimum-40-de-ani-barbat-fem...>

Undă verde din SUA pentru rachete Patriot în valoare de 2,1 miliarde de dolari destinate Ucrainei

<https://hotnews.ro/unda-verde-din-sua-pentru-rachete-patriot-in-valoare-de-21-miliarde-de-dola...>

Marile companii petroliere din SUA anunță profituri uriașe, după ce războiul cu Iranul a scumpit petrolul

<https://www.antena3.ro/economic/marile-companii-petroliere-din-sua-anunta-profituri-uriae-dup...>

Noi tensiuni diplomatice între Brazilia și Argentina după fuga lui Bolsonaro. Mutarea făcută de autoritățile braziliene

<https://hotnews.ro/noi-tensiuni-diplomatice-intre-brazilia-si-argentina-dupa-fuga-lui-bolsonar...>

Cum au ales miniștrii europeni de Externe să protesteze față de prezența Rusiei la reuniunea G20

<https://hotnews.ro/cum-au-ales-ministrii-europeni-de-externe-sa-protesteze-fata-de-prezenta-ru...>

ANPC a dat amenzi de 1 milion de euro după controale la 1.600 de firme. Au găsit pene și puf pe carcase de pasăre sau ulei refolosit

<https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/anpc-a-dat-amenzi-de-1-milion-de-euro-dupa-contrtoale-la-1-6...>

Italia este sub asediu. Grevă generală și proteste în 50 de orașe. Manifestanții s-au bătut cu poliția. "Blocăm tot, suntem un milion"

<https://www.antena3.ro/externe/italia-este-sub-asediu-greva-general-a-si-proteste-in-50-de-oras...>

O unitate de hackeri de elită și un laptop compromis. Coreea de Nord ar fi în spatele jafului istoric de la Binance

<https://www.antena3.ro/externe/o-unitate-de-hackeri-de-elita-si-un-laptop-compromis-coreea-de-...>

Proprietarul Mega Image face o nouă tranzacție gigantică, de peste 1 mld. euro, după preluarea Profi. Surpriza? Pariază pe segmentul hipermarketurilor, considerat de mulți depășit de vremuri

<https://www.zf.ro/companii/retail-agrobusiness/proprietarul-mega-image-face-o-noua-tranzactie-...>

Profitul Analog Devices România, subsidiara din Cluj a grupului american de semiconductori, a crescut cu peste 250% în 2025, la 13 mil. lei. Anul trecut a fost cel mai bun pentru companie

<https://www.zf.ro/business-hi-tech/profitul-analog-devices-romania-subsidiara-din-cluj-a-grupu...>

Finance 5 dispatches . 10 in brief

Microsoft is winning the cloud wars and becoming Wall Street's new golden child

Microsoft has solidified its position as a leading cloud provider, surpassing Amazon Web Services in market share. According to recent reports, Microsoft's Azure cloud platform has gained significant traction, now accounting for 17% of the global cloud infrastructure market. Key figures involved in this success include Satya Nadella, Microsoft's CEO, and Andrew Jones, the company's Senior Vice President of Azure. Microsoft's Azure has attracted major clients, including Walmart and the US Department of Defense. This development matters because it highlights Microsoft's strategic shift towards becoming a cloud-first company. It enables the company to compete with tech giants like Amazon and Alphabet. The success of Azure showcases Microsoft's ability to innovate and adapt to the rapidly changing cloud landscape. As a result, Microsoft has become a major player in the cloud computing market. This has significant implications for its business and the tech industry as a whole. Wall Street is taking notice, labeling the tech giant as its new golden child. Investors are increasingly confident in Microsoft's long-term growth trajectory driven by cloud services. The shift represents a crucial player in the digital transformation of businesses worldwide. Analysts suggest this momentum could sustain Microsoft's stock performance through the next fiscal year. Competitors are now scrambling to match Azure's integration capabilities and enterprise offerings. The cloud wars are intensifying, but Microsoft currently holds the advantage. This dominance reinforces the company's valuation amidst broader market volatility.

Sources MarketWatch

Over The Past 55 Years, American Workers' Standard Of Living Has Fallen Much More Than Most People Realize

Financial stress is becoming an inescapable reality for most Americans, with 44% of people struggling to afford basic necessities. The median household income has increased by 9.7 times since 1971, but the purchasing power of money has declined by 88% due to inflation. This has led to a decline in the standard of living for the majority of the population. Many people are skipping meals to save money and facing financial ruin after a single hospital visit. The problem is exacerbated by the decline of good-paying jobs across the country. Many Americans are unable to find employment despite submitting hundreds of job applications. The use of AI hiring screeners is also making it difficult for people to find work. Many resumes are being discarded before they are even seen by a human recruiter. Key players discussing the impact include CEOs from American Express and Comcast. The article highlights the growing economic stress and the decline of the middle class. Most people are currently struggling to make ends meet despite working full time. Author Michael Snyder warns that good jobs are disappearing rapidly. He advises people to hold on to their current jobs tightly amidst this shift. The data suggests a structural change in the American economy over the past five decades. Workers feel increasingly insecure about their financial futures. This trend poses significant challenges for policymakers and economic planners. Income disparity continues to widen as costs outpace wage growth.

WeWork CEO John Santora explains what it takes to fix a damaged company

John Santora, CEO of WeWork, is leading the company's effort to prove that flexible work can be a disciplined and profitable business. WeWork, which emerged from bankruptcy, is undergoing a transformation under Santora's leadership. Key people involved include Santora, who has taken on the challenge of turning a damaged company into a sustainable business. He is working to share insights on the real estate market and its changes due to flexible work. WeWork is based in New York City, but the transformation has global implications. The article highlights the importance of flexible work in shaping the real estate market. WeWork's transformation under Santora matters because it provides insight into how the real estate market is being reshaped. This could have implications for businesses and individuals looking to adapt to the changing work landscape. The company is focusing on profitability rather than rapid expansion. Santora emphasizes discipline in leasing and cost management. Investors are watching closely to see if the model can survive long-term. The bankruptcy process allowed the company to shed unfavorable leases. Now the focus is on core locations and enterprise clients. This strategy differs significantly from the previous leadership's approach. Success here could validate the flexible office sector for institutional investors. Failure might signal a broader retreat from shared workspace models. The market remains cautious but attentive to WeWork's quarterly reports. Stakeholders hope this turnaround sets a precedent for distressed real estate assets.

Student-loan borrowers in public service are trapped with debt that 'should be forgiven,' a new lawsuit says

The Trump administration is facing a lawsuit over its handling of student-loan forgiveness, specifically Public Service Loan Forgiveness. The program is intended to forgive debt for government and nonprofit workers after 10 years. The American Federation of Teachers has filed a class-action lawsuit against the Department of Education. They allege that the department has failed to process buyback applications for 90,000 borrowers. The lawsuit claims that these actions have trapped borrowers in debt who should be forgiven. The AFT is seeking to have the case granted class-action status. Senior counsel Laura Dismore states that PSLF borrowers deserve better than broken promises. The Department of Education has not commented on the lawsuit yet. This is not the first lawsuit filed against the administration over PSLF. Ongoing challenges are being reported by public service workers across the nation. The department's handling of PSLF has been criticized for causing delays. These delays harm borrowers who planned their finances around forgiveness. The lawsuit matters because it highlights the need for the Department of Education to improve. They must provide relief to borrowers who have been waiting for years. The administration's student-loan repayment overhaul is also relevant to the case. It may impact the department's future handling of the forgiveness program. Legal experts suggest the outcome could set a precedent for federal debt management. Borrowers are increasingly frustrated with the bureaucratic hurdles involved. Congressional oversight may increase if the lawsuit gains traction.

Minnesota Fraud Ringleader Gets 30 Years In Prison For \$44 Million Scheme

A Minnesota man, Salim Said, has been sentenced to 30 years in federal prison for his role in a \$44 million taxpayer fraud scheme. Said, who operated Safari Restaurant in Minneapolis, was convicted of exploiting a federally funded child nutrition program. The scheme occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic when oversight was relaxed. It involved falsely claiming the restaurant distributed 6,000 meals daily. This allowed Said to collect millions in fraudulent reimbursements from the government. Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar's past association with Said's restaurant has come under scrutiny. Some Republicans are seeking records of her communications with individuals involved in the scheme. Omar's sponsorship of the 2020 MEALS Act has been questioned by critics. They argue that relaxed federal oversight requirements created opportunities for widespread abuse. The sentence matters because it highlights the damage inflicted on taxpayers. It also impacts Minnesota's reputation regarding federal program management. This is the latest in a string of investigations into Minnesota's taxpayer-funded assistance programs. The Feeding Our Future scandal is estimated to have resulted in over \$250 million in fraudulent claims. Federal prosecutors estimate that approximately \$9 billion has been lost to fraud involving high-risk Medicaid programs. The case is part of a broader effort to hold accountable those who exploit taxpayer-funded programs. Prosecutors hope this sentence will deter future fraudsters from attempting similar schemes. Community leaders are calling for stricter oversight on nutrition program distributions. The justice system is prioritizing financial crimes affecting public trust. Restitution efforts will continue to recover lost funds for the state.

Sources ZeroHedge

Also in Finance

My husband has Alzheimer's, and I have cancer. We spent \$500 a month on Uber rides until we found a \$3 alternative.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/alzheimers-cancer-caregiving-uber-cost-transportation-2026-10>

New York Bans Artificial Intelligence Features For Children

<https://www.zerohedge.com/ai/new-york-bans-artificial-intelligence-features-children>

Seattle's Socialist Mayor Faces Business Revolt As Utopia Dreams Implode, Nearly Half Weigh Exit

<https://www.zerohedge.com/political/seattles-socialist-mayor-faces-business-revolt-utopia-drea...>

Wall Street Turns Ruthless as Earnings Misses Fuel Deep Selloffs

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2026-10-30/wall-street-turns-ruthless-as-earnings-miss...>

Warren Buffett hasn't had a drink of water in 50 years. At least, that's what he told Bill Ackman.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/warren-buffett-bill-ackman-water-coke-soda-junk-food-diet-2026-10>

I planned to spend decades on Villa Vie's 'never-ending' cruise. I moved in just 26 days before it ground to a halt.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/villa-vie-residences-odyssey-never-ending-cruise-off-26-days-2026-10>

DOJ Warns It Will Sue California City Over \$2,000 Carry Permit Fees

<https://www.zerohedge.com/political/doj-warns-it-will-sue-california-city-over-2000-carry-perm...>

Feds Bust Up Phony CIA Company

<https://www.zerohedge.com/personal-finance/feds-bust-phony-cia-company>

We moved to England to live near my husband's family. After 7 months, we realized we'd made a mistake.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/moved-to-live-near-husbands-family-bad-idea-uk-relocation-2026-10>

Terrifying Study Reveals Truth About Flying That Could Make You Never Want To Board A Plane Again

<https://www.zerohedge.com/medical/terrifying-study-reveals-truth-about-flying-could-make-you-n...>

Technology 5 dispatches . 10 in brief

Hackers steal \$6.3 billion from Binance in record crypto heist

Binance has temporarily suspended customer withdrawals following a massive security breach. The hack is estimated to have impacted \$6.3 billion in funds. This marks it as the largest crypto hack in history. Approximately \$3 billion in assets have been frozen on-chain in response. Blockchain analysis firms have linked the theft to North Korean hackers. Specifically, the group known as TraderTraitor is responsible for this attack. The hackers compromised Binance's wallet-signing infrastructure to authorize transactions. This allowed them to drain billions of dollars in cryptocurrency across multiple blockchains. Binance has found no evidence that wallet passwords were leaked during the breach. The company is currently conducting a thorough investigation into the incident. CEO Yi He has assured users that their funds are safe. They stated that the company is covering all losses incurred by users. Tether and Circle CEOs froze billions in stablecoins in response. The exchange expects to allow withdrawals again within the next 48 hours. This incident raises significant concerns about the security of cryptocurrency exchanges.

Sources Slashdot Ars Technica

Anthropic VS code extension on Cursor backdoored for nearly 12 hours

A malicious version of a VS Code extension developed by Anthropic's Claude model was backdoored. This compromised package was available on the Cursor marketplace for nearly 12 hours. The incident potentially compromised up to 5,000 developers' machines. Cursor has warned users that the extension attempts to install a persistent SSH backdoor. This backdoor could potentially gain access to local files and source code. The malicious extension, version 2.1.313, was posted on Anthropic's official account. It superseded the previous version during the compromise window. The attack was described as a supply-chain compromise by security researchers. The attacker gained access to Anthropic's official

distribution channel to distribute the malware. Anthropic has not yet warned its customers about the incident publicly. Independent researcher Kevin Beaumont helped identify the malicious activity. The incident highlights the risks of supply-chain attacks in software development. It emphasizes the importance of vigilance in the deployment of software extensions. Developers are advised to be cautious when installing extensions from the marketplace. Trust in official distribution channels has been shaken by this breach.

Sources Ars Technica

The biggest names in AI are backing a new way to opt out of scraping

OpenAI, Google, Microsoft, and Anthropic are adopting a new standard to allow publishers to opt out of being scraped by AI. This standard was proposed by Kevin Kelley to manage AI training preferences. It will live within a website's robots.txt file for easy implementation. The standard can be applied across multiple AI companies simultaneously. This gives publishers more control over their AI training preferences than before. A shared policy token signal will restrict AI crawlers from accessing a site. Publishers can encounter the token to opt out of AI training completely. They can also opt out of AI grounding to reduce hallucinations in models. Meta has signaled support for the new standard as well. This development matters because publishers have been struggling with increasing AI crawlers. These crawlers scrape sites and feed content into AI models without permission. The new standard aims to provide a more coordinated approach to managing AI scraping. Google and Microsoft plan to support the standard next year. OpenAI will implement it in the coming months. This move could have significant implications for the way AI is used in search.

Sources The Verge

Thousands of "ghost students" use AI to steal millions in student loans, DOJ says

Scammers are using artificial intelligence to create and maintain fake student accounts. This scheme is defrauding the US Department of Education of potentially over \$130 million. The scheme is known as ghost students among investigators. It involves creating fake student accounts using personal identifiable information of US citizens. The victims are often unaware of the scheme until the government comes collecting on loans. At that point, their credit is damaged significantly by the fraudulent debt. The Department of Justice has identified over 830,000 potentially fraudulent accounts. They have confirmed more than \$32 million in actual losses so far. The perpetrators are tracing money to US and foreign bank accounts and cryptocurrency wallets. The FBI has been involved in the investigation to trace the money trail. The scope of the scheme is believed to be substantially higher than current estimates. The Justice Department has charged five people in connection with the scheme. The scheme involves Kenyan nationals and resulted in the seizure of cryptocurrency. Dozens of Americans have acted as money mules for the fraudsters. This case highlights the importance of protecting sensitive personal data.

Sources Ars Technica Slashdot

GM to pay \$220 million after selling customer Smart Driver data

General Motors has reached a settlement with the District of Columbia and 35 states. This follows a lawsuit to address the sharing of driver data with third parties. The data came from GM's Smart Driver system and was shared with brokers. These brokers then sold it to insurance companies without explicit consent. This led to increased insurance rates for affected drivers significantly. This settlement follows a previous agreement between GM and the FTC. That agreement banned the sharing of certain types of driver data with third parties. GM had previously discontinued Smart Driver across its entire range of vehicles. The lawsuit was led by attorneys general from the District of Columbia and 35 states. They alleged that GM had not been transparent about its data sharing practices. GM has claimed that the data sharing was necessary for safety and personalized experiences. The settlement requires a third party to assess GM's compliance with the new privacy program. GM has agreed to pay \$220 million to resolve the allegations. The settlement requires GM to obtain drivers' express consent before collecting data. The case sets a precedent for how automakers and insurance companies should handle sensitive driver data.

Sources Ars Technica Slashdot

Also in Technology

Salesforce's M&A spree continues with a reported \$375M deal for defense tech startup Rune

<https://techcrunch.com/2026/10/30/salesforces-ma-sprees-continues-with-a-reported-375m-deal-for-rune/>

Can AI data centers be mass-produced like cars? This startup aims to find out

<https://techcrunch.com/2026/10/30/can-ai-data-centers-be-mass-produced-like-cars-and-online-instantly/>

Sam Altman says it's better for RAM to be in a data center than on your desk

<https://www.theverge.com/ai-artificial-intelligence/1023820/sam-altman-ram-shortage-cloud-servers>

Meta Settles Another Social Media Addiction Case Just Before Trial

<https://yro.slashdot.org/story/26/10/30/213231/meta-settles-another-social-media-addiction-case-just-before-trial>

Applebee's exposed customers' personal data after leaving database password in app

<https://techcrunch.com/2026/10/30/applebees-exposed-customers-personal-data-after-leaving-database-password-in-app/>

You don't need to believe in a god to get a religious exemption from using AI at work

<https://techcrunch.com/2026/10/29/you-dont-need-to-believe-in-a-god-to-get-a-religious-exemption-from-using-ai-at-work/>

Dartmouth's provost warned us about AI cheating—but his own AI use cost him his job

<https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/10/dartmouths-provost-warned-us-about-ai-cheating-but...>

Reddit Will Force Everyone to Log In

https://tech.slashdot.org/story/26/10/30/0155237/reddit-will-force-everyone-to-log-in?utm_sour...

UK Social Media Ban May Lock Out More Than 100,000 Teens Without ID

<https://news.slashdot.org/story/26/10/30/160254/uk-social-media-ban-may-lock-out-more-than-100...>

Analysts find looming launch crisis is "more severe" than anticipated

<https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/10/analysts-find-looming-launch-crisis-is-more-severe-than-...>

General 4 dispatches . 6 in brief

G20 'family photo' cancelled after protests over presence of Russian minister

The G20 summit faced significant disruption when the traditional family photo was cancelled following protests. These demonstrations were specifically triggered by the presence of a Russian minister at the event. This incident occurs amidst a partial thaw in relations between the United States and Russia. US President Donald Trump has recently waived some sanctions to allow Russian diesel imports. The move is strategically timed ahead of the US midterm elections to lower fuel prices. In contrast, relations between the US and Ukraine remain notably tense. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has criticized Trump's deal with Vladimir Putin. Ukraine was notably not invited to the recent G20 meeting where these tensions surfaced. The US maintains a policy of not engaging directly with Russian ministers in certain contexts. However, Washington has approved a \$2 billion sale of Patriot missiles to Ukraine. This support aims to bolster Ukrainian air defenses against ongoing aggression. Russia has been intensifying its attacks on Ukrainian cities including Kyiv. Moscow currently controls approximately a fifth of Ukrainian territory. The situation highlights the ongoing complexities between the US and Russia. It also underscores the difficult relationship between the US and Ukraine.

Sources BBC News

He questioned Thailand's monarchy dressed as Harry Potter. Now he's in jail for 34 years

A man has been sentenced to 34 years in prison for questioning Thailand's monarchy. He was dressed as Harry Potter when he made the comments that led to his conviction. Over 290 people have been prosecuted under Thailand's lèse majesté law recently. This group includes 20 minors who faced legal action for their expressions. The prosecutions responded to student protests in 2020 regarding the monarchy's role. Those charged include activists, journalists, and ordinary citizens. They expressed negative opinions about the monarchy or its members publicly. The law, known as Article 112, is widely interpreted to cover broad criticism. This includes comments about long-deceased kings and even the king's dog. Thai officials defend the law by claiming it reflects the country's culture. They argue it protects the history and institution of the monarchy. Critics argue that the law is ambiguous and vague in its definitions. It is often impossible

to define what constitutes defamation or insult under the statute. The law has been used to silence dissent and suppress free speech effectively. The case highlights concerns about Thailand's human rights record globally.

Sources BBC News

Russell Brand accusers 'haunted' for years by alleged crimes, court hears

Russell Brand is currently on trial facing seven serious charges. These charges include rape, sexual assault, and attempted indecent assault. The case involves six different women who do not know each other. All six women have alleged Brand committed these crimes against them. Prosecutor Reil Karmy-Jones KC addressed the court regarding the accusers. He stated the women have been haunted by the alleged incidents for years. Many of the women have since moved on with their personal lives. The prosecution argues a documentary encouraged them to come forward. It did not re-invent their stories but rather gave them a platform. Brand has denied the charges brought against him in court. His defense team highlighted his previous convictions during the proceedings. This includes a fine for cannabis possession in 1995. The case has brought significant public attention to the trial. Jurors were told that the women have nothing to gain from coming forward. The case highlights the importance of supporting victims of sexual assault.

Sources BBC News

'No nation left behind' says Burnham after meeting first ministers in Glasgow

A meeting took place between Scotland's First Minister and the UK Prime Minister. John Swinney met with Rishi Sunak in Glasgow to discuss key issues. The discussions focused on devolution and the topic of independence. They disagree on independence but the meeting was seen as a welcome start. Swinney called for further devolution of powers from Westminster to Scotland. The UK government has agreed to review issues raised by Swinney. However, they will not include a second independence referendum in Scotland. Meanwhile, the First Minister of Wales met with the Prime Minister as well. Rhun ap Iwan welcomed a step forward on devolving fiscal powers. Borrowing powers to the Welsh government were also part of the discussion. Ap Iwan expressed support for a stronger relationship with the EU. He proposed a process to explore regional empowerment and reindustrialisation. The Welsh government agreed to start a process to contribute to empowerment. They aim to achieve good growth in every postcode across the region. The outcome suggests a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue.

Sources BBC News

Also in General

Canada stops using 'avalanche dogs' for rescues in Rocky Mountains, stirring outrage

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwdd8q8e9e9yo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss

Driver guilty of hitting cyclist and dragging him to death under car

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c6e3xg5we9eyo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss

What we know about Binance's \$6.3bn hack

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/videos/cv2d62e34rw5o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss

Police watchdog to investigate Met over letter about Meghan's father

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c61m42pzplnzo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss

What Howe could bring to Man Utd - and what are the challenges?

https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/articles/cr74pd99vwq3o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss

South Africa-Australia set for classic finale – what does history suggest could happen?

https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/cricket/articles/c6n8dpvyyy71o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss

End of briefing. News Digest . 19 stories . 36 in brief . 4 sections