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Texas unemployment rate remains at historic low



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# Southern DAILY

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## Global traders halt new Iran food deals as U.S. sanctions bite

LONDON/DUBAI (Reuters) - Cargill, Bunge and other global traders have halted food supply deals with Iran because new U.S. sanctions have paralyzed banking systems required to secure payments, industry and Iranian government sources say. Food, medicine and other humanitarian supplies are exempt from sanctions Washington reimposed this year after U.S. President Donald Trump said in May he was walking away from a 2015 international deal over Iran's nuclear program. But the U.S. measures targeting everything from oil sales to shipping and financial activities have deterred many foreign banks from all Iranian business, including humanitarian deals. Many smaller banks that had dealt with Iran under a previous round of sanctions have also stopped dealings this time. "There is no real chance of being paid using the existing mechanisms and many international traders are unable to do new business for the moment," said one European source with knowledge of the situation, who declined to be identified. Western and Iranian trade sources said U.S. groups Cargill [CARG.UL] and Bunge (BG.N), as well as Singapore's Olam (OLAM.SI), were among those which could not conclude new export deals for wheat, corn, raw sugar or other commodities because Western banks would not process payments with Iran. Cargill, Bunge and Olam all declined to comment when contacted by Reuters. U.S. sanctions took full effect on Nov. 5 after a winding-down period, although Washington has issued temporary waivers for some of its allies which depend on imported Iranian oil. Iran, which relies heavily on imported food staples, has years of experience working around U.S. and other Western sanctions, which were progressively tightened between 2012 and 2015 until Iran reached a deal over its nuclear program. Many sanctions were lifted in 2016 after the pact. Under the earlier round of sanctions, Iran had turned to a dwindling number of foreign banks that continued to act as a conduit for payments to keep food and other trade flowing. But this time round, many of those foreign banking channels are closing down. Three Iranian officials told Reuters that banking issues were to blame for halting food and other trade.



FILE PHOTO: A gas flare on an oil production platform in the Soroush oil fields is seen alongside an Iranian flag in the Persian Gulf, Iran, July 25, 2005. REUTERS/Raheb Homavandi/File Photo

But this time round, many of those foreign banking channels are closing down. Three Iranian officials told Reuters that banking issues were to blame for halting food and other trade.

An official with Iranian Industry, Mines and Trade Industry said only a "handful of small European banks" with no or little interaction with the United States were still doing business with Iran, and they were only involved in small-scale purchases.

## Mexico says it won't deport refugees as it seeks details on U.S. plan

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexico's government said on Friday it wanted more details from the United States on its plan to send migrants to Mexico while their asylum claims are processed, and vowed not to deport people seeking refuge. On Thursday, Mexico said it had agreed on humanitarian grounds to accept some non-Mexican migrants sent by the United States to wait in Mexico while their U.S. asylum requests were processed. However, many questions remain about how the country would house what could be thousands of people from Central America. The accord was widely viewed as a concession by Mexico's new president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump, who has threatened to shut down the Mexico-U.S. border if the flow of migrants is not contained.

Questioned at a regular news conference about why Mexico appeared to be giving Trump what he wanted, foreign minister Marcelo Ebrard said Mexico would set out its position more clearly on Monday once it had more information. "Today, I'm going to ask the U.S. authorities to give us many details," Ebrard said, noting that the fate of migrants already inside the United States would depend on U.S. law. To send people to Mexico, the Trump administration is invoking a section of the Immigration and Nationality Act that allows the government to return migrants to a foreign country bordering the United States pending their immigration process. But some legal experts argue that rule also exempts anyone found inadmissible at the border due to a lack of documents. That could apply to many asylum-seekers.



FILE PHOTO: Immigrants from Central America and Mexican citizens queue to cross into the U.S. to apply for asylum at the new border crossing of El Chaparral in Tijuana

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## Texas unemployment rate remains at historic low

The Texas unemployment rate in November held at its historic low of 3.7 percent as employers added to their payrolls for a 29th consecutive month, according to government data.

The Texas economy added 14,000 jobs in November, according to the Texas Workforce Commission. Annual employment growth for Texas was 3.0 percent in November. Related: Energy recovery would stall if oil prices stay below \$50

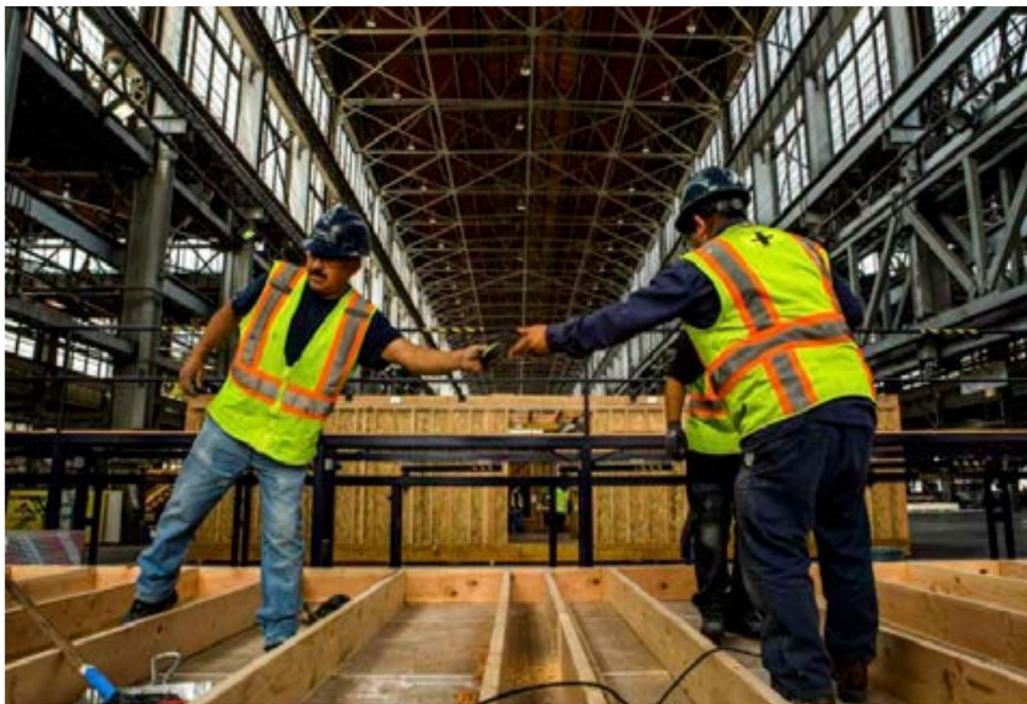
“The addition of 365,400 jobs over the year and 14,000 jobs in November demonstrates the consistency with which employers in our state create job opportunities for the highly skilled Texas workforce,” said Ruth Hughs, chair of the Texas Workforce Commission.

Manufacturing led all industries in growth and recorded the largest employment gain over the month adding 9,100 jobs. Trade, Transportation, and Utilities added 8,900 positions to the state in November while professional and business services added 1,800 followed by Information, which added 1,000 positions.

Doing well by doing good is more important than ever, a Chris Tomlinson column.

The low unemployment rate has economists watching whether the tightening labor market increases workers' earnings as employers boost salaries to attract potential employees. Workers' earnings have stagnated in recent years, here and across the country.

The just-released data do not reflect recent drops in the price of oil, which remains below \$50 per barrel. If prices stay below that point for an extended period, job growth in the state could stall or even start to decline, according to economists.



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## 美國華人 傳媒史上重大突破



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# Editor's Choice



FILE PHOTO: U.S. President George H.W. Bush is surrounded by U.S. military personnel as he greets troops following an arrival ceremony in the eastern Saudi Arabian city of Dhahran



Vietnamese tycoon Phan Van Anh Vu, also known as "Aluminium Vu" is escorted by policemen during his trial in Ho Chi Minh city



q

U.S. President Donald Trump observes a demonstration with U.S. Army 10th Mountain Division troops, an attack helicopter and artillery as he visits Fort Drum, New York, U.S., August 13, 2018. REUTERS/Carlos Barria SEARCH "POY GLOBAL" FOR FOR THIS STORY. SEARCH "REUTERS POY" FOR ALL BEST OF 2018 PACKAGES. TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY.



FILE PHOTO: Syrian Democratic Forces and U.S. troops are seen during a patrol near Turkish border in Hasakah, Syria November 4, 2018. REUTERS/Rodi Said/File Photo



U.S. Air Force Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, Commanding General, and U.S. Marine Corps Command Sgt. Maj. Paul G. McKenna, join troops for a Thanksgiving feast at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona, U.S., November 22, 2018. Sgt. Kyle Larsen/U.S. Army/Handout



The Wider Image: Terror of gang violence drives migrant caravans northward



FILE PHOTO: U.S. President Trump and U.S. Defense Secretary Mattis attend the 119th U.S. Army-Navy football game in Philadelphia



A police arm band with a sticker reading "angry policeman" barred with a black ribbon is seen on a police officer as he attends a demonstration near the Champs-Elysee in Paris

Believe it or not, all the faces in the photo above are fakes. They have been synthesized by Nvidia's new AI algorithm...

The technology works so well that we can expect synthetic image search engines soon — just like Google's, but generating new fake images on the fly that look real.

Nvidia Generative Adversarial Networks According to Nvidia, its GAN is built around a concept called "style transfer."

Coarse styles include parameters such as pose, the face's shape, or the hair style. Middle styles include facial features, like the shape of the nose, cheeks, or mouth.

Finally, fine styles affect the color of the face's features like skin and hair. According to the scientists, the generator is "capable of separating inconsequential variation from high-level attributes" too...



All the images above were created by Nvidia's AI Algorithm.

Not only the generative adversarial network is capable of autonomously creating human faces, but it can do the same with animals like cats. It can even create new cars and even bedrooms.

Nvidia's AI Algorithm Generates 'Humans' That Look 100% Real

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Nvidia's system is not only capable of generating completely new synthetic faces, but it can also seamlessly modify specific features of real people, like age, the hair or skin colors of any person.

The applications for such a system are amazing. From paradigm-changing synthetic free-to-use image search pages that may be the end of stock photo services to people accurately previewing hair styling changes. And of course, porn.

Related

Best Skills to Make Amazon's Alexa Smarter



Enabling Skills for Amazon's Alexa is easier than ever. Now, all you have to do is say, "Alexa, enable Lyft," and poof — you've given your Echo speaker or other Alexa-enabled device the ability to order you a ride.

Alexa skills are third-party apps you can add to your Alexa account based on your needs and preferences. But there are now more than 50,000 skills, so how do you decide or know which Skills to enable?

Currently, Alexa is found primarily in the Echo, Echo Dot, Tap, Echo Show, Fire TV, Echo Spot, Echo Plus, Fire Tablets and the upcoming Echo Input. But you can also find the virtual assistant in a number of third-party devices, such as the Ecobee4 Thermostat as well as speakers like the Sonos One.

Get exclusive deals If you ask "Alexa, what are your deals?" you'll hear a series of Prime member-exclusive deals

that you need an Alexa-enabled device to order. You can also visit Amazon's Voice Shopping page to get the sentences you'll need to say to trigger them.



Scare Off Burglars

Instead of leaving your lights or TV on when you leave your house, you can now use Alexa to trick burglars into thinking people are home. Say "Alexa, run Away Mode," and Alexa will play a recorded, insufferable conversation.



Wake up to your favorite jams

Rather than waking up to a simple beep-beep-beep, you can tell Alexa to play a specific song, radio station, music genre, or more at a specific time. This works with Amazon's music services as well as Spotify, Pandora, Pandora Premium, TuneIn, iHeartRadio and Vevo.

Here are some examples of things you can say: "Alexa, wake me up at 6 am every day

- to music" "Alexa, set an alarm for 7 am using BBC news on TuneIn" "Alexa, wake me up at 7 am to KISS FM on TuneIn" "Alexa, wake me up to Adele at 8 am" "Alexa, wake me up to 80s music at 8 am" "Alexa, wake me up to Beyoncé radio on Pandora at 7 am" "Alexa, wake me up to jazz music at 6 am" "Alexa, wake me up to Christmas music at 7 am" "Alexa, wake me up to pop music for running at 5 am" [Amazon Music Only]



Plan a vacation

If you have a Kayak account, you can enable Alexa to help you plan a trip. This skill can track flights and check prices. You can even tell it your budget, and Kayak Explore will tell you where in the world you can go.



Dictate hands-free text messages

Android smartphone users can send SMS messages hands-free through the Alexa app; here's how to set it up. iPhone owners, however, will need to use a third-party skill such as the Mastermind skill, which not only lets you send and receive SMS messages, but will help you find your phone, gets its battery life, turn on Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, start Google Maps, send articles from your phone to Alexa, and much more.

Advertisement for eSoon Travel (翼順旅遊) featuring various travel packages and contact information.

Advertisement for 千里行旅遊 (Qianli Travel) with a list of travel packages and contact details.

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Advertisement for 幸福新邨 (Happy Village) apartments with amenities and contact details.

Advertisement for 百樂公寓 (Bellaire Silk) with a map and contact information.

Advertisement for 美聯混凝土 (Meilian Concrete) with contact information and services.

Advertisement for 李元鐘保險 (Lee Yuanzhong Insurance) with contact information and services.

The Amador peninsula separates the concrete and glass skyline of Panama City from the soaring iron arch of the Bridge of the Americas – under which 40 cargo ships pass each day en route to or from the Panama Canal.

This strategic outpost is home to a handful of derelict buildings once used to house US military personnel. But it has become a new flashpoint in the global rivalry between Beijing and Washington, as the US struggles to develop a coherent strategy to deal with China's rising influence in Latin America.



**US-China tensions soar as 'new cold war' heats up.**

China's plans to build a new embassy on the islands were derailed after US officials pressured the government of Panama's president, Juan Carlos Varela, to withdraw its offer of a four-hectare plot, according to senior Panamanian and diplomatic sources.

"Of course there was pushback from the US: they weren't going to allow a huge Chinese flag next to the entrance to the canal," a diplomatic source told the Guardian. "But local pressure was also important. Handing over that land to the Chinese would have been a hugely unpopular move by the Varela government."

Panama's government has insisted that the decision was based on security and environmental concerns.

But a previous plan to build a new Chinese embassy in the traditional diplomatic district of Panama City was also blocked by objections from Washington, and Beijing has now established a temporary mission in an office block.



**The Panama Canal**

**A Disagreement over the site of China's embassy has underlined the strategic value of the canal – through which two-thirds of ships to or from the US pass**

## Panama: The New Flashpoint In China's Growing Presence In Latin America

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



**Jutting four kilometres into the Pacific, the Amador causeway islands separate the concrete and glass skyline of Panama City from the entrance to the Panama Canal. (Photo/Getty Images)**

The incident may prove to be a pyrrhic victory for Washington, however. This weekend, the Chinese premier, Xi Jinping, arrives in Panama for a visit aimed at cementing ties with the Central American nation.

It will be the first such visit by a senior Chinese figure since Panama cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan to open formal relations with Beijing in June 2017.

Since then, the two countries have signed 28 diplomatic and investment agreements, a \$500m renminbi-denominated "Panda" bond is expected before the end of the year and Chinese contractors have won major contracts for a port, convention centre and a new bridge over the canal.

The growth of Chinese investment and influence in the country has been the source of growing unease in Washington.



**President Juan Carlos Varela, left, and the US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, talk at the presidential palace in Panama City. Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images**

In July, the US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, ended a visit to Panama with the warning that "when China comes calling, it's not always to the good of your citizens". He added that state-run Chinese firms often operated with political, rather than market-driven, motives.

has highlighted Panama's strategic importance as a pinch-point of world commerce. Two-thirds of ships to or from the US pass through the Panama Canal – which was an unincorporated territory of the US between 1903 and 1979 and was home to dozens of American military installations. "Recent rhetoric from Washington suggests the US has not accepted that the canal has shifted from being a military asset to a commercial one," said Eddie Tapiero, a competitive intelligence specialist for the Panama Canal Authority and author of a new book on China-Panama relations. "The US has a decision to make: does it accept free trade in the Americas or does it revert to a cold war approach? The latter would be disastrous."

Negotiations for a free trade agreement between China and Panama are at an ad-

vanced stage; Panamanian officials say the country can benefit from its growing role as a regional logistics hub, build its exports to China and protect local farmers.



**A cruise ship moves through the Panama Canal.**

"We will become the gateway for Chinese goods into Latin America," the trade minister, Augusto Arosemena, told the Guardian. "I think Panama will be an example of how smaller countries can negotiate with China."

Meanwhile, the US has been caught flat-footed: diplomats were unaware of Varela's decision to establish ties with Beijing until hours before its announcement and the state department has yet to name a replacement for John Feeley, who stood down as ambassador in March saying he was "honor bound" to resign rather than serve under Donald Trump.

Wei Qiang, the Chinese ambassador to Panama, has dismissed the "apprehensive, fearful and jealous speculations" over his country's intentions. "China's world vision is one of dialogue and accommodation rather than confrontation, we have no option but to let the facts speak for themselves," he said at a recent book launch.

But in recent years, Beijing has shown growing interest in strategic infrastructure projects in the region: Chinese companies are involved in a project to build a rival interoceanic canal through Nicaragua and investigated the option of a "dry canal" railroad linking Colombia's Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

Some Panamanians are also wary of Beijing's intentions, said Euclides Tapia, a professor of international relations at the University of Panama. "The Chinese are here for the long term – and they've come for the canal," he said. (Courtesy <https://www.theguardian.com>)

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