

Trump clashes with US sports world

Urges fans to boycott NFL over anthem protests

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump yesterday urged fans to boycott National Football League games to pressure the league to fire or suspend players who show disrespect for "Flag and Country."

Trump's latest Twitter salvo was the latest blow in an escalating war of words with some of professional sports' biggest stars over his condemnation of NFL players protesting the national anthem.

"If NFL fans refuse to go to games until players stop disrespecting our flag and Country, you will see change take place fast. Fire or suspend!" he said.

"NFL attendance and ratings are WAY DOWN. Boring games yes, but many stay away because they love our country. League should back U.S.," he said.

The row began on Friday at a Republican rally in Alabama when Trump attacked activist National Football League players -- mostly African Americans -- for kneeling or sitting during renditions of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

On the same day, basketball star Stephen Curry, the top player for California's Golden State Warriors, said he would not attend a traditional White House reception honoring the winning basketball team.

Several hours later, Trump hit back with an early-morning Twitter salvo.

"Going to the White House is considered a great honor for a championship team. Stephen Curry is hesitating, therefore invitation is withdrawn!" he wrote.

Trump's outburst drew a stinging response from across the NBA, with Cleveland Cavaliers superstar LeBron James among the first to weigh in.



People look at Mount Agung in Karangasem on the Indonesian resort island of Bali yesterday. Inset, villagers eat at an evacuation centre in Karangasem. Authorities have raised alert levels for a volcano on the Indonesian resort island of Bali after hundreds of small tremors stoked fears it could erupt for the first time in more than 50 years.

PHOTO: AFP

India 'mother of terrorism'

Says Pakistan after Sushma's UN speech; fighter jets, drones on table as Pentagon chief visits key ally India

AGENCIES

Pakistan accused India of adopting a posture of that of a "predator" and said if the international community wishes to avoid a dangerous escalation between the two neighbours, it must call on New Delhi to halt its provocations and aggressive actions.

Terming India as the "mother of terrorism" in South Asia, Pakistan's Ambassador to the UN Maleeha Lodhi accused it of sponsoring terrorism in various parts of her country.

Exercising her right to reply after Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj on Saturday hit out at Pakistan for creating terror groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen and the Haqqani Network, Lodhi alleged that "in her vitriol she (Swaraj) deliberately ignored the core issue" of Kashmir. Swaraj in her remarks did not mention Kashmir.

"If the international community wishes to avoid a dangerous escalation between India and Pakistan, it must call on India to halt its provocations and aggressive actions. It must end the ceasefire violations along the Line of Control. It must halt its sponsorship of terrorist groups against Pakistan," Lodhi said.

Given that such responses are normally given by a low level foreign service official, it was quite significant that the

top Pakistani diplomat took up the floor to launch a verbal dual against India.

India did not immediately exercise its right to response to Lodhi's remarks, in which Pakistan for the second time accused the National Security Advisor Ajit K Doval of interfering in Balochistan, reported PTI.

Lodhi also said Pakistan remains open to resuming a comprehensive dialogue with India to address all outstanding issues, especially Jammu and Kashmir and discuss measures to maintain peace and security.

Meanwhile, fighter jets, drone deals and shared concerns over Afghanistan's security look set to dominate the agenda when US Defense Secretary James Mattis visits India this week, reported AFP.

Mattis was scheduled to arrive late yesterday and was set to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his new defence minister, in the first visit by a top US official since Donald Trump became president in January.

"The United States views India as a valued and influential partner, with broad mutual interests extending well beyond South Asia," a Pentagon statement said.

Mattis "will express US appreciation for India's important contributions toward Afghanistan's democracy, stability, prosperity, and security", the Pentagon said.

Pak remains open to resuming dialogue on outstanding issues

Mattis will express US appreciation for India's contributions towards Afghanistan



Top cabinet ministers in UK plotting against May

Reveals new book 'Fall Out, A Year Of Political Mayhem'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The four most senior figures in Theresa May's cabinet plotted to remove her following the botched June election with some continuing to plan for leadership bids even after pledging allegiance to her, according to a bombshell new political book.

Extracts published in the Sunday Times claimed Boris Johnson, Philip Hammond, Amber Rudd and David Davis were embroiled in plots from the moment it became clear May had lost her party's majority.

Chancellor Hammond is said to have texted Johnson in the early hours of the morning following the election to say he would support him as the next leader.

The book written by the newspaper's political editor, Tim Shipman, claims a "triumvirate" plan was hatched under which Johnson would lead, Brexit Secretary Davis would handle EU withdrawal and Hammond would run the country's finances.

But the plan failed, the book said, once it

became clear May would not stand down and Davis indicated he would not defer to Johnson.

Even once May's position appeared more secure, ministers continued to plan for her departure, it is claimed, with Johnson asking a key aide to remain and help run a leadership bid, while a key ally offered a job to a senior figure at Conservative HQ.

Meanwhile, key moderates including David Cameron, John Major, George Osborne and Ruth Davidson are said to have gathered behind Rudd, with the Home Secretary reported to have said she was keen to run.

The book entitled 'Fall Out, A Year Of Political Mayhem', also claims May brought in Damian Green in a bid to quell plotting after her Chief Whip informed her of its extent and reach into the cabinet.

After the Grenfell Fire disaster led to more criticism against May four former ministers are said to have joined forces for a drive to make her resign, with an ally of David Davis said to be involved.



Russian strikes kill 45 Syrian rebels: monitor

AFP, Beirut

Russian air strikes have killed 45 members of a rebel group in the northwestern Syrian province of Idlib, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor said yesterday.

It was unclear why the strikes, which took place Saturday, targeted members of the Faylaq al-Sham rebel group, which has taken part in peace talks supervised by Moscow in the Kazakh capital Astana.

The strikes hit the group in the province of Idlib, which is part of a so-called "de-confliction" zone agreed in a deal between Syrian regime allies Russia and Iran, and rebel backer Turkey.

The Observatory initially reported a lower toll, but said the figure had risen as bodies were recovered after the strike on one of the rebel group's headquarters on the outskirts of the village of Tal Mardikh.

Faylaq al-Sham is an Islamist rebel group considered close to the Muslim Brotherhood movement.

It has fought against the former Al-Qaeda affiliate that now effectively controls nearly all of Idlib after chasing its former rebel allies from their positions in fighting this summer.

A spokesman for Faylaq al-Sham confirmed the group's headquarters had been targeted, despite their participation in the last round of talks in Astana.

"Our participation in Astana does not in any way mean that Russia is a friendly or neutral country," Idriss al-Raed told AFP.

"The Russian bombing is not surprising, since its policy since its intervention in Syria is based on criminality and killing," he added.

Russia began an intervention in Syria in support of ally President Bashar al-Assad in 2015.

NEWSIN brief

US strikes IS camp in Libya, killing 17

AFP, Washington

US forces carried out six "precision air strikes" against an Islamic State camp in Libya, killing 17 people, the US Africa Command said yesterday. The command said the air strikes were conducted on Friday, in coordination with Libya's Government of National Accord, hitting a desert camp 150 miles (240 kilometers) southeast of the city of Sirte.

Six injured in suspected acid attack in London

AFP, London

A suspected acid attack in east London injured six people, police said yesterday adding that they had arrested a 15-year-old male. Police were called late Saturday to the Stratford Centre near London's Olympic Stadium after a noxious substance was sprayed during an argument between two groups of males.

Hopes fade in Mexico quake rescue ops

AFP, Mexico City

Hopes of finding more survivors after Mexico City's devastating quake dwindled to virtually nothing yesterday, five days after the 7.1 tremor rocked the heart of the mega-city, toppling dozens of buildings and killing more than 300 people. Yet authorities were still listening to anguished families who insisted that painstaking rescue operations continue at a handful of sites.



An aerial view shows the damage to the Guajataca dam in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, in Quebradillas, Puerto Rico on Saturday. Some 70,000 people who live downstream from the compromised dam in the north-west of the island were under orders to evacuate, with the structure in danger of bursting at any time.

YEMEN CIVIL WAR

President Hadi sees only military solution

AFP, Dubai

Yemen's civil war will "most likely" require a military solution because of Tehran's influence, the country's Saudi-backed President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

"The military solution is the most likely because it is not their (the Huthis') decision to make," he said in an interview with Al-Arabiya television broadcast at the weekend, referring to the rebels and their backers, Iran.

"Even if you come to an agreement with them, they call up Iran ... back out, and then you don't have a deal," he said.

The interview came just days after the third anniversary of the Huthi takeover of Sanaa, which the rebels control in coordination with forces loyal to Yemen's ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The rebels were in March 2015 on the verge of seizing total control of Yemen when Saudi Arabia formed an Arab military coalition and intervened in support of Hadi's forces.

Hadi, who has taken refuge in the Saudi capital Riyadh, said that US policy in the region had improved under President Donald Trump.

"The American position now is better than it was under (his predecessor Barack) Obama, because Obama's priority was getting the nuclear deal," which had allowed Iran to "expand" its influence, he said.

SAUDI NATIONAL DAY

In a first, women throng stadium

AFP, Riyadh

Hundreds of women thronged a sports stadium for the first time to mark Saudi Arabia's national day Saturday, celebrated across the conservative kingdom with a raucous display of concerts, folk dance and fireworks.

The presence of women at the King Fahd stadium marks a departure from previous celebrations in the Gulf kingdom where they are effectively barred from sports arenas by strict rules on public segregation of the sexes.

Women were allowed to enter the stadium, a previously male-only venue used mostly for football matches, with their families and seated separately from single men to watch a musical show and a play on Saudi history.

"We hope in the future that there will be no restrictions on our entrance to the stadium," Um Abdulrahman, a woman from the northwestern city of Tabuk, told AFP.

"For many years ago I have hoped that women will be given the same rights as men."

As a swell of enthusiastic women cheering swept through the stadium, with a few wearing colourful wigs on top of their veils, some Saudi men on social media lauded their participation as a "historic" moment.

Iraqi Kurds gear up for independence vote

AFP, Arbil

Iraqi Kurds were preparing to vote in a referendum set for today on independence for their autonomous northern region, despite warnings within the country and from neighbours Iran and Turkey.

Iran upped the pressure yesterday, announcing it had blocked all flights to and from Kurdistan at Baghdad's request.

Iraq's federal government has called the referendum unconstitutional and there are concerns the vote could lead to unrest.

Washington and many Western countries have also called for its postponement or cancellation, saying it will hamper the fight against the Islamic State group.

But in regional capital Arbil, the political heartland of President Massud Barzani who initiated the referendum, Kurdish flags were everywhere.

Most in the city said they would vote, but some also feared the possible consequences.

"We look forward to hearing what the situation will be after September 25, as most Kurds will vote for independence to fulfil our dream of an independent state," said labourer Ahmad Souleiman, 30.

"What we're afraid of is that our enemies have evil intentions towards us."

Iran and Turkey have sizeable Kurdish populations of their own and fear the vote will stoke separatist aspirations at home.

Iran's official IRNA news agency cited a security spokesman yesterday as saying: "At the request of the central government of Iraq, all flights from Iran to Sulaymaniyah and Arbil, as well as all flights through our airspace originating from the Kurdistan region, have been stopped."

IRAN BLOCKS ALL IRAQI KURDISTAN FLIGHTS WESTERN COUNTRIES CALL FOR CANCELLATION OF VOTE

Homeopathy is risky nonsense

Say 29 major scientific bodies

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A scientific organisation intended to influence EU policy has called for tougher regulations of alternative medicine, branding homeopathy "nonsense" and warning the "promotion and use of homeopathic products risks significant harms".

The statement was made by the European Academies Science Advisory Council (EASAC), an umbrella organisation representing 29 national academies in Europe, including the Royal Society in the UK.

Supporters of homeopathy and herbal medicine include Prince Charles, while Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, are among MPs to have signed motions in favour of it. Celebrities who are reportedly fans of the treatment include Usain Bolt, Paul McCartney, Jennifer Aniston Hilary Clinton, David Beckham and supermodel Cindy Crawford.

The council did not mince its words in its condemnation of homeopathy, which works on the principles that "like cures like" and that water can have memory.

In a 12-page statement, the group summarised extensive scientific research and concluded that homeopathy is scientifically implausible and produces nothing more than a placebo effect in patients.