

**UK PM secures cabinet backing for 'soft Brexit'**

AGENCIES

British Prime Minister Theresa May has secured approval from her cabinet to negotiate "a business-friendly" deal to leave the European Union but drew anger from headline 'Brexiters' and members of the opposition over her strategy to leave the bloc.

After a marathon 12-hour meeting at her Chequers residence on Friday, the prime minister seemed to have persuaded the most vocal Brexit campaigners in her cabinet to back plans for a new UK-EU agreement.

In a statement released late in the evening, she said the 26 cabinet members in attendance reached a "collective" agreement that would see the UK agree to negotiate a "common rulebook for all goods" in a combined customs territory.

May said her cabinet also agreed to negotiate for regulations for industrial and agro-food goods, ending the free movement of people, the supremacy of the European court and "vast" payments to the bloc.

"This is a proposal that I believe will be good for the UK and good for the EU and I look forward to it being received positively," she told reporters.

The Times newspaper said, without citing sources, that May was taking a hard line and had promised senior allies that she would sack Foreign Minister Boris Johnson, a Brexit supporter, if he tried "to undermine the peace deal".

The EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier, who previously suggested the EU would be willing to shift its position if the UK relaxed some of its "red lines", welcomed the agreement on Twitter.

# US demands 'rapacious'

*Pyongyang slams Washington as Pompeo ends 2-day 'productive' tour*

AFP, Pyongyang

North Korea slammed the United States for making "rapacious" demands during critical denuclearisation talks yesterday, after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had earlier described them as "productive".

The North's foreign ministry said the "extremely regrettable" US attitude during the meeting violated the spirit of the agreement reached between leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump last month at their historic summit in Singapore.

"The US attitude and positions at the high-level talks on Friday and Saturday were extremely regrettable," the North's Foreign Ministry said in a statement, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency. It lashed out at the US for its "unilateral and rapacious demands for denuclearisation".

This came just hours after Pompeo had characterised the meeting as a success, but critically without giving many new details as to how North Korea would honour its commitment to "denuclearise" in exchange for US security guarantees.

"These are complicated issues, but we made progress on almost all of the central issues, some places a great deal of progress, other places there's still more work to be done," he said.

Pompeo was speaking after emerging from more than eight hours of talks over two days with

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's right-hand man Kim Yong Chol in a Pyongyang diplomatic compound.

Last month, Kim agreed to "work towards complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula" in return for security guarantees and an end to a dangerous stand-off with US forces.

Trump hailed this as a successful resolution of the crisis, but the short joint statement was not a detailed roadmap to disarmament and it fell to Pompeo to follow up and put meat on the bones

North Korea says denuclearisation resolve may falter after talks

Destruction of missile engine-testing facility discussed

Repatriation of war remains to be broached at July 12 talks



of the sparse commitment.

"We talked about what the North Koreans are continuing to do and how it's the case that we can get our arms around achieving what Chairman Kim and President Trump both agreed to, which is the complete denuclearisation of North Korea," he said.

"No-one walked away from that, they're still equally committed," he said, just hours before the North issues their own, less optimistic, view of the negotiations.



An aerial view shows local residents seen on the roof of a submerged house at a flooded area as they wait for a rescue in Kurashiki, southern Japan. Photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## FLOODING, LANDSLIDES IN JAPAN

### At least 49 killed

48 missing; 1.6m ordered to evacuate

REUTERS, Tokyo

Forty nine people have been killed and 48 are unaccounted for in western and central Japan as torrential rain pounds the area, public broadcaster NHK said yesterday, with more than 1.6 million evacuated from their homes.

Japan's Meteorological Agency retained special weather warnings for three prefectures in the main island of Honshu, down from five, and urged vigilance against landslides, rising rivers and strong winds amid what it called "historic" rains.

Helicopter footage showed people on their roofs waving for help in Kurashiki, and Japanese soldiers rescuing children by boat from a flooded river in Hiroshima.

By Saturday morning, more than 1.6 million people had been ordered to evacuate their homes for fear of flooding and further landslides, with 3.1 million more advised to leave, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency said.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said about 48,000 police, firefighters and members of Japan's Self-Defense Forces were responding to appeals for help.

## 'My life is not your porn'

*South Korea women stage mass rally protesting 'spycam porn'*

AFP, Seoul

Tens of thousands of South Korean women yesterday angrily urged the government to crack down on secretly-filmed spycam pornography in one of the biggest-ever female-only protests in the country.

So-called spycam videos have become increasingly common in the South, where men caught secretly filming women -- in schools and workplaces, toilets and changing rooms -- make headlines on a daily basis.

Distributing pornography is illegal in South Korea, but such videos are widely shared on porn sites and Internet



chatrooms or used in adverts for websites promoting prostitution and gambling.

"Those men who film such videos! Those who upload them! Those who watch them! All of them should be punished sternly!" the protestors chanted in unison at the rally held in central Seoul.

Many held banners reading "My life is not your porn" and "We're humans, not a sexual object for your sick fantasy".

Organisers said around 55,000 women took part in the demonstration. Most of the protesters were teenagers or those in their 20s -- a demographic seen as the main target of the spycam epidemic.

"I and my friends always look around to see if there are any suspicious holes on a wall or a door whenever we walk into a public toilet stall," a 22-year-old protester who declined to be named told AFP.

"What kind of country has South Korea become? A country where women can't even pee without having to worry about having their butts filmed in secret?"

The number of spycam crimes surged from about 1,100 in 2010 to more than 6,500 last year, but most offenders were fined or given suspended jail terms described by many women's rights groups as a mere slap on the wrist. The offenders -- mostly men -- have included college professors, school teachers, doctors, church pastors, public servants, police officers and even a court judge.

Such practices have become so rampant that all manufacturers of smartphones sold in the South are required to ensure the cameras on their devices make a loud shutter sound when taking photos.

## Nawaz Sharif to return to Pakistan 'within 10 days'

*Set to appeal against court verdict on corruption*

AGENCIES

Maryam Nawaz Sharif, daughter of Pakistan's ex prime minister Nawaz Sharif, yesterday told reporters that she and her father would return to Pakistan within 10 days to appeal against a court verdict that gave Sharif 10 years behind bars.

On Friday after the verdict, Nawaz Sharif said that he is not a thief and that he will return to Pakistan soon.

"I will continue my struggle from jail. This is a part of the struggle," Sharif told reporters in London, his daughter Maryam Sharif sitting by his side.

Both of them were convicted by an accountability court in Pakistan on Friday in one of the four cases of corruption against Nawaz Sharif - the Avenfield corruption case, which is related to the ownership of four flats in the posh Avenfield House in London. Maryam Sharif was sentenced to seven years in prison.

The verdict comes three weeks before general elections in Pakistan on July 25.

The verdict, a potentially significant

boost for the main opposition party led by former World Cup cricketer Imran Khan, immediately raised questions over whether Sharif will return to Pakistan from London, where his wife is receiving cancer treatment. Pakistan has no extradition treaty with the UK.

Sharif was ousted from his third term as prime minister by the Supreme Court last year following a corruption investigation and banned from politics for life, but remains a powerful symbol for his ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Speaking in London, Sharif framed the charges against him as a conspiracy by the powerful military, which has ruled Pakistan for roughly half its 70-year history.

"If Sharif does not come back, his party is over," added analyst Rasool Bakhsh Rais.

"If he comes back, he will have to fight cases and he will be suffering a lot -- but in this way he will save his party."



## 3 protesters shot dead in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Troops shot dead three stone-throwing protesters including a 16-year-old girl in Indian-administered Kashmir yesterday, as tensions rose ahead of the anniversary of the death of a rebel commander.

Witnesses said soldiers opened fire in the southern Kashmiri district of Kulgam after hundreds of people angry at an army search operation for suspected militants gathered to protest, some hurling objects.

The killings come on the eve of the second anniversary of the death of Burhan Wani, a charismatic 22-year-old rebel killed by government forces two years ago on July 8.



Two Syrian activists wearing the cat and wolf Russia 2018 World Cup mascot's outfits perform during an event to protest against the bombings in Syria, in Binnish, yesterday. Thousands of displaced Syrians were heading home yesterday after rebels and the government reached a ceasefire deal in the south following more than two weeks of deadly bombardment.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Don't worry dad and mum'

*Trapped Thai boys write heartbreaking notes to their families*

AGENCIES

The coach of the youth football team that has been trapped in a cave in Thailand for the past two weeks has sent his "apologies" to the parents of the boys in a scrawled note handed to divers.

The "Wild Boar" football team went exploring in the Tham Luang cave network after a football game on June 23 and got trapped kilometres deep inside the cave system as floodwaters caused by heavy rains blocked the entrance.

The 12 children, aged 11 to 16, are accompanied by their coach, Ekkapol Chantawong, 25.

"To all the parents, all the kids are still fine. I



promise to take the very best care of the kids," Chantawong said in a note given to a diver on Friday and published on the Thai Navy SEAL Facebook page on Saturday.

"Thank you for all the moral support and I apologise to the parents."

Other touching notes signed by members of the team were directed to their families, many of whom have kept an anxious vigil outside the cave for a fortnight.

"Don't worry dad and mum," said a note from one of the boys who gave his nickname as "Bew". "I have been away for two weeks but will come back and help you sell your stuff." His family are shopkeepers.

"Love to Mum, Dad and my little brother," reads one note from 15-year-old Phiphat Photi - who is better known as "Nick".

"If I get out, please can you bring me some grilled pork and vegetables?"

The boys, however, were already looking ahead and appealed to their schools not to be too hard on them.

"Teachers, please don't give too much homework," they wrote.

The letters provoked a surge of emotion from families, who endured nine long days before their children were found and now face an agonising wait for a dangerous evacuation.

"I am so happy to see his letter, his handwriting. I'm almost crying," Night's mother Supaluk Sompiengjai, told AFP news agency. "It doesn't matter how long I wait, as long as he is safe."

## NEWSIN brief

### Canada heat wave death toll hits 54

AFP, Montreal

The death toll in a week-long eastern Canadian heat wave has reached 54, officials said on Friday. Most of the victims linked to the "overwhelming heat" were in the Montreal area, which recorded 28 fatalities. The other victims were reported in the south-west of the French-Canadian province, the Quebec health ministry said.

### Twin blasts kill five at Somalia ministry

AFP, Mogadishu

Two explosions rocked Somalia's internal security ministry in the capital Mogadishu yesterday morning killing five civilians, a police officer said, in the latest attack claimed by Shabaab militants. The Shabaab has been fighting to overthrow the internationally-backed government in Mogadishu for over a decade.

### Iran executes 815 men

AFP, Tehran

Iran has executed eight people convicted over two deadly attacks claimed by the Islamic State group in Tehran last year, the judiciary's news agency said yesterday. The Iranian men were convicted of collaborating directly with the IS jihadists who carried out the attacks on June 7, 2017, Mizan Online reported.

### East Syria car bomb kills at least 18

AFP, Beirut

A car bombing in eastern Syria on Friday killed at least 18 people including 11 members of a US-backed force that has fought the Islamic State group, a war monitor said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast, but IS has claimed similar attacks in the past.