

NEWSIN brief

Stampede at funeral of Karunanidhi kills 2

REUTERS, New Delhi

A stampede yesterday among thousands of mourners at the funeral of a powerful southern Indian politician killed two people and injured 47, a doctor at a government hospital said. Muthuvel Karunanidhi, a dominant figure in the politics of southern India for half a century who had been chief minister of Tamil Nadu state five times, died on Tuesday aged 94.

Hurricanes threaten Hawaii, Mexico, Japan

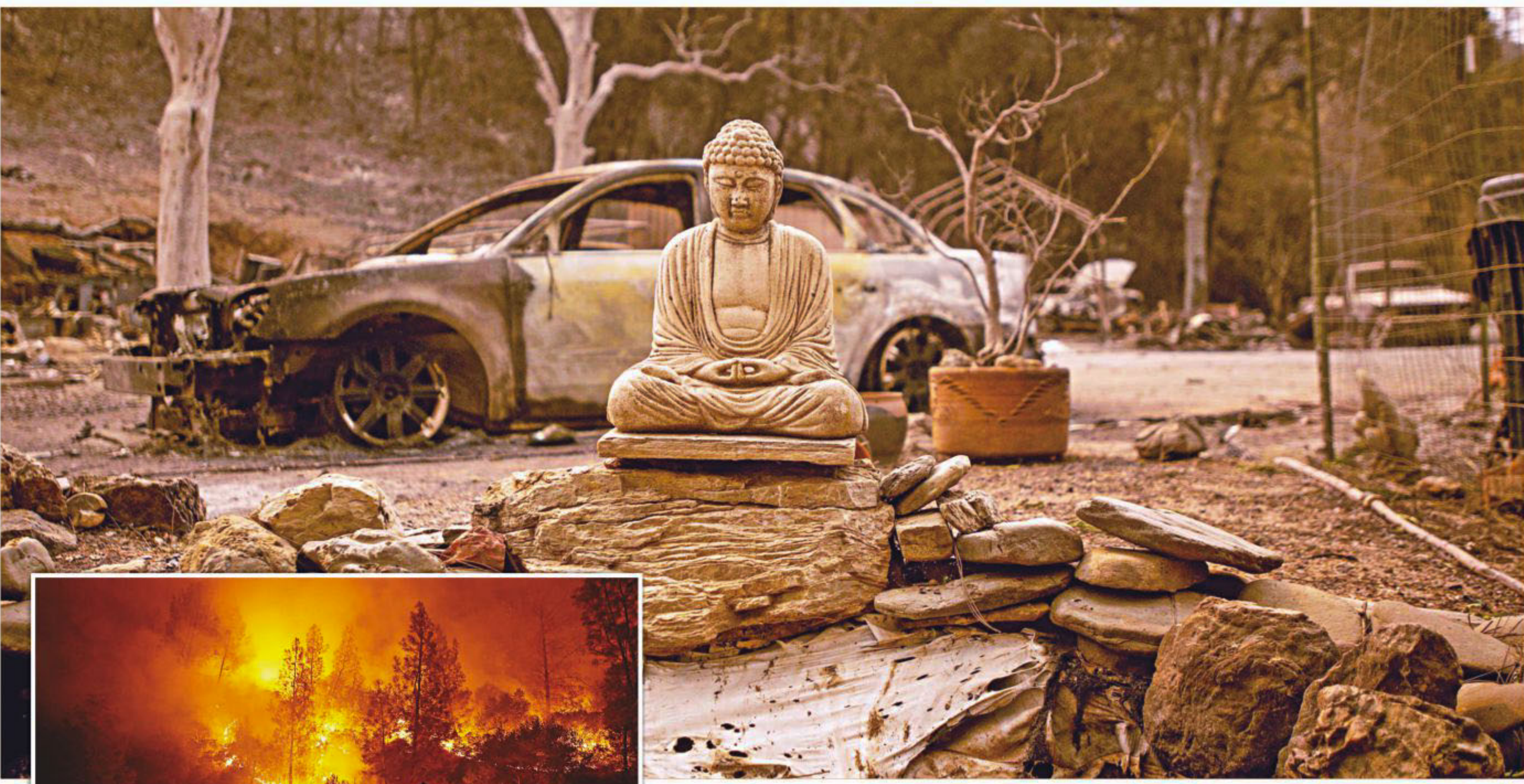
AFP, Washington

Hurricane Hector whirled toward Hawaii Tuesday with 130 mph winds, bringing the threat of dangerous sea swells on two islands in the US archipelago state. The Category Four storm was expected to pass about 100-150 km south of the Big Island on Wednesday, government forecasters said. Off the coast of Mexico, meanwhile, Hurricane John lumbered toward the Baja California peninsula as a Category Two storm. Meanwhile, Typhoon Shanshan was churning towards Japan yesterday, forcing airlines to cancel scores of flights.

9 dead in Congo's Ebola outbreak

AFP, Beni

Nine confirmed Ebola victims have died since the virus resurfaced in the Democratic Republic of Congo this month, the country's health ministry said Tuesday. The previous official toll was seven dead, with the two latest victims -- like all the others -- registered in the Beni region in North Kivu province, an eastern region with deep security problems which shares borders with Uganda and Rwanda. The health ministry on August 1 announced that the country was facing its 10th outbreak of Ebola since 1976.



Buddha statue is seen at a burned home in Spring Valley, near Clearlake Oaks, northern California, on Tuesday. Inset, Firefighters monitor a back fire as they battle the Medocino Complex fire near Lodoga, California. Thousands of firefighters battled relentless flames ripping across California yesterday, as the death toll from a series of infernos that erupted last month hit 11. PHOTO: AFP

Crisis looms in Pakistan

ECP withholds results of 26 seats complicating govt formation process; parties protest 'rigged' vote

DAWN ONLINE

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has notified the final results of the general election but withheld results of nine national and 17 provincial assembly seats for various reasons, stirring a new controversy before the formation of the next government.

The strength of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) in the National Assembly has gone down from 116 to 112 for now and its ally Balochistan Awami Party from four to three.

The nine NA constituencies where the results have been withheld include NA-53 (Islamabad) and NA-131 (Lahore) from where prime minister-in-waiting Imran Khan had defeated former PM Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and former minister Khawaja Saad Rafique, respectively.

The development related to the issuance of condition notifications of Khan's victory generated a debate on whether he would be able to form a

government at the Centre.

In all, the PTI had won on four out of the nine NA seats where the results have been put on hold. Three of the nine seats had been claimed by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and one each by the Pakistan Peoples Party and the BAP.

This has reduced the strength of the PTI in the NA to 112, followed by the PML-N (61) and the PPP (42). The strength of the BAP has gone down to three.

Meanwhile, the opposition parties yesterday held their first protest demonstration against alleged rigging in the July 25 general elections outside the Election Commission of Pakistan in Islamabad.

The decision to hold the protest was made by the newly formed 11-party grand opposition alliance, named 'Pakistan Alliance for Free and Fair Elections', at a multi-party conference held in Islamabad on Friday.

Besides the Pakistan Peoples Party

(PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the opposition alliance comprises Awami National Party (ANP), Qaumi Watan Party (QWP), Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), National Party (NP) and Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA).

Maulana Fazlur Rehman, chief of his own faction of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, who arrived after the protest had been going on for a few hours, said: "The only reason why all political parties have joined hands today is because the ECP failed to conduct free and fair elections."

PPP's Sherry Rehman and former prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani were among the leaders who took part in the protest.

The leaders have also decided to register a strong protest inside and outside parliament during the first sitting of the National Assembly, which according to caretaker Information Minister Barrister Ali Zafar would be called between August 12-14.

CARCINOGENIC PESTICIDE

Monsanto faces 'day of reckoning'

AFP, San Francisco

The lawyer for a California groundskeeper dying of cancer urged jurors Tuesday to make Monsanto pay hundreds of millions of dollars for failing to warn about the health risks of weed killer Roundup.

"Today is their day of reckoning," attorney Brent Wisner told jurors as he urged them to impose a penalty of more than \$400 million on Monsanto for hiding the cancer-causing potential of Roundup and commercial strength version Ranger Pro.

"Every single cancer risk found had this moment, where the science finally caught up, where they couldn't bury it anymore."

Terminally-ill Dwayne Johnson watched as his attorney accused Monsanto of putting profit over people's health by fighting research signaling Roundup's potential cancer risks and failing to issue warnings.

Johnson, 46, testified that he would "never" have used Roundup or Ranger Pro had he known it could lead to his illness.

The case is the first to reach trial alleging a cancer link from Roundup, one of the world's most widely used herbicides.

Launched in 1976, Monsanto's flagship herbicide Roundup has been approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency for decades.

In 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer -- a World Health Organization body -- classified glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic," and as a result, California listed it as carcinogenic.

1MDB SCANDAL

Najib charged with money-laundering

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's former prime minister Najib Razak was hit with new charges yesterday linked to a multi-billion-dollar financial scandal that contributed to his shock election defeat in May.

Appearing at a court in Kuala Lumpur, Najib was charged with three counts of money-laundering over claims he pocketed 42 million ringgit (\$10.3 million) from a former unit of scandal-hit sovereign wealth fund 1MDB.

These are in addition to the charges he faced last month after he was first arrested -- three for criminal breach of trust and a separate count that he abused his position to take the money.

The 65-year-old, who is free on bail, has denied all the charges.

Malaysia's new government led by Mahathir Mohamad is probing allegations that billions of dollars were looted from 1MDB, which was set up and overseen by Najib, in an audacious fraud that spanned the globe.



Najib is facing a long time behind bars if found guilty -- the money-laundering charges carry maximum jail terms of 15 years each, while the other four charges carry sentences of 20 years each.

The money-laundering charges allege 42 million ringgit stemming from illegal activities was transferred to Najib's bank accounts between December 2014 and February 2015.

All the charges relate to fund transfers from SRC International, an energy company that was originally a subsidiary of 1MDB.

The sums involved are just a fraction of the \$681 million that was mysteriously transferred to Najib's personal bank accounts several years ago, sparking uproar in Malaysia.



US Congress to get 1st Muslim woman

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Former Michigan state representative Rashida Tlaib will become the US's first ever Muslim woman elected to Congress after she won a Democratic primary election to represent Michigan's 13th district.

Running in a crowded field of candidates vying to replace John Conyers Jr, who served from 1965, until retirement last year following claims of sexual harassment, Tlaib took 33.6 percent of the vote following a strong grassroots campaign in which she raised over \$1m.

There are no Republican candidates contesting the seat, so Tlaib will enter Congress unopposed following a special election on November 6 2018, when she will formally replace Conyers.

Her nearest rival was Detroit Council President Brenda Jones, who despite wider name recognition and several prominent endorsements, took 28.5 percent of the vote.

Tlaib, the daughter of two Palestinian immigrants, was born in Detroit in 1976, where her father had a job at the Ford motor company. She studied politics at Wayne State University, and then law, graduating in 2004.

On Tuesday evening, she said her day had been filled with emotion and described it as "happy chaos," she told The Detroit News.

"Especially meeting voters and talking to them, they are inspired," she told the paper before the polls closed.

"One resident said she's happy for me and has already written. It's been amazing to interact with families at polling locations. I feel very much supported."

Her victory comes amid what is perceived to be a major increase in Islamophobia across the US, in the wake of Donald Trump's election in 2016.

Ominous signs for Trump, GOP

REUTERS, Washington

A hotly contested race in Ohio for a US House of Representatives seat that has gone Republican for more than 30 years remained too close to call yesterday, in an encouraging sign for Democrats and an ominous sign for the president and Republicans ahead of November's midterms.

Republican Troy Balderson led Democrat Danny O'Connor by about 1,700 votes with all precincts reporting, but the final result is likely to be days away as state officials count more than 8,000 provisional and absentee ballots.

Even if Balderson is eventually declared the winner, the narrow margin is little comfort for Republicans as they head into the November vote.

The close Ohio special election has become a referendum on Republican President Donald Trump's leadership and a last chance to gauge Democratic strength ahead of November's midterm election, in which the Republicans are defending majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Tuesday's political battleground, an affluent suburban district which is about 88 percent white, has been in Republican control for more than three decades.

Democrats need to win 23 more seats in the House and two in the Senate to control Congress and put the brakes on Trump's agenda. All 435 House seats, 35 of 100 Senate seats and 36 of 50 governors' offices are up for grabs in November.



This aerial photo taken on August 6, 2018 shows people crowding the beach as they wait to be evacuated from Gili Trawangan island to neighbouring Lombok island a day after a 6.9 magnitude earthquake struck the area. The photo was released yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

INDONESIA QUAKE

Death toll hits 131

156,000 displaced

AFP, Mataram

The death toll from a shallow 6.9-magnitude earthquake on the Indonesian island of Lombok has risen above 130, officials said yesterday, with some 156,000 forced from their homes.

The shallow 6.9-magnitude quake triggered panic among locals and tourists on Lombok on Sunday, just a week after another tremor surged through the holiday island and killed 17.

Around 1,477 people have been severely injured in the latest quake, with tens of thousands of homes damaged, and authorities have appealed for more medical personnel and basic supplies.

Workers with heavy machinery resumed searching through the rubble of homes, schools and mosques yesterday, with hope of finding any survivors fading.

Muhammad Zainul Majdi, the governor of West Nusa Tenggara province which covers Lombok, said there was a dire need for medical staff, food and medicine in the worst-hit areas.

Hundreds of bloodied and bandaged victims have been treated outside damaged hospitals in the main city of Mataram and other badly affected areas.

The Indonesian Red Cross said it had set up 10 mobile clinics in the north of the island and a field hospital had been established near an evacuation centre catering to more than 500 people in the village of Tanjung.

Kurniawan Eko Wibowo, a doctor at the field hospital, said most patients were suffering broken bones and head injuries. Across much of the island, once-bustling villages have been turned into virtual ghost towns.

"In some villages we visited the destruction was almost 100 percent, all houses collapsed, roads are cracked and bridges were broken," said Arifin Muhammad Hadi, a spokesman for the Indonesian Red Cross.

The quake struck as evening prayers were being said across the Muslim-majority island and there are fears that one collapsed mosque in north Lombok had been filled with worshippers.

'RIGHTS FIRST' FOREIGN POLICY

Can Canada swim against the tide?

AFP, Ottawa

Canada's determination to place human rights at the heart of its foreign policy could cost it billions in trade with an incensed Saudi Arabia -- the price of a diplomatic initiative that some observers say could pay off in the long run.

Since Riyadh announced the expulsion of Ottawa's ambassador and a severing of trade ties on Monday, several top officials have reiterated Justin Trudeau's mantra since becoming prime minister in 2015: there can be no compromise on the country's progressive principles.

"We are going to lead with our values," Finance Minister Bill Morneau said Tuesday.

"It's important that we bring Canadian values around the world, and we are going to continue to enunciate what we believe are the appropriate ways of dealing with citizens."

Canada has long pressed Saudi

Arabia for the release of jailed blogger Raif Badawi, after granting asylum in 2013 to his wife and their three children.

A Twitter message calling on Riyadh to "immediately release" his sister and other women's rights activists appears to have tipped the scale.

In addition to the diplomatic rupture, Saudi Arabia also suspended scholarships for more than 15,000 Saudi students in Canada with plans to relocate them to other countries, and the state airline Saudia suspended flights to Toronto.

Canada had been eager to boost investment and exports to Saudi Arabia as the kingdom diversifies its economy. Saudi Arabia is its second largest export market in the Gulf behind the United Arab Emirates. In 2017, exports to the kingdom stood at CAN \$1.4 billion (US \$1.1 billion).

The clash with the Saudis is not the first time Canada risked losing major business over its "rights first"

diplomacy.

Earlier this year, the Philippines cancelled a defense contract for 14 Canadian helicopters after Trudeau's government ordered a review of President Rodrigo Duterte's rights record.

Canada's insistence on environmental protections in new trade deals has also made negotiations harder, for example, with the United States and Mexico, and with China.

But other analysts questioned what, if anything, Canada has gained by squaring off with Riyadh.

"This has nothing to do with human rights. That's just a poor excuse," Amir Attaran, a professor at the University of Ottawa, told AFP.

"There are geopolitics at play, particularly the strategic and theocratic rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. And Saudi Arabia is taking aim at Canada over Trudeau's refusal to endorse sanctions on rival Iran."

Letter-boxes!

Johnson causes storm in UK with burqa remarks

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Theresa May on Tuesday backed calls for her former foreign minister Boris Johnson to apologise for disparaging comments he made about Muslim women wearing burqas -- but he branded his critics "ridiculous".

May said his remarks "have clearly caused offence" and agreed with the chairman of her Conservative party, Brandon Lewis, who had asked Johnson to apologise.

"I do think that we all have to be very careful about the language and terms we use. And some of the terms Boris used describing people's appearance obviously have offended," the prime minister said.

In a column in Monday's Daily Telegraph newspaper, Johnson said women wearing the full face veil looked like "bank robbers" or "letter-boxes", prompting accusations of Islamophobia.

But the former top diplomat, who has a reputation for causing controversy and quit May's cabinet last month in protest at her Brexit plan, refused to back down.

"It is ridiculous that these views are being attacked - we must not fall into the trap of shutting down the debate on difficult issues," a source close to Johnson told reporters.

In his article, Johnson said he opposed a ban on face-covering veils, but added that it was "absolutely ridiculous that people should choose to go around looking like letter-boxes".