

Take Brexit deal or crash out of EU

UK PM warns rebels in her party

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Theresa May insisted her Brexit plan was the only alternative to leaving the EU without an agreement -- something the IMF said yesterday would inflict "substantial costs" on the UK economy.

Despite strong opposition in her Conservative party and criticism in Brussels, May has stuck by the so-called Chequers proposal to keep close trade ties with the European Union after Brexit on March 29 next year.

"The alternative to that will be not having a deal," she told the BBC in an interview out yesterday.

May will meet EU leaders in Salzburg on Wednesday and Thursday, as she seeks a breakthrough in talks on the Brexit divorce and the future UK-EU trading relationship.

The International Monetary Fund yesterday said Britain's economy would suffer "substantial costs" should it leave the EU without a deal.

Brussels and London have failed to resolve "fundamental" aspects of Brexit and this could leave London defaulting to World Trade Organization (WTO) tariffs, the IMF said in its annual outlook on the UK economy.

"Fundamental questions -- such as the future economic relationship between the two and the closely-related question of the status of the land border with Ireland -- remain unanswered," it noted in a statement.

"Resolving these questions is critical to avoid a 'no-deal'

No-deal Brexit 'would entail substantial costs': IMF

EU 'to do everything possible to avoid hard Brexit': Austria



Brexit on WTO terms that would entail substantial costs for the UK economy -- and to a lesser extent the EU economies -- particularly if it were to occur in a disorderly fashion," the IMF added.

The gloomy assessment contrasts with that of May, who indicated last week that a no-deal hard Brexit would not be a disaster for Britain.

May remains confident of striking an acceptable deal with Brussels.

But even if she gets an accord in the coming weeks, it must be signed off in parliament, where she can only muster a slender majority.

Former foreign minister Boris Johnson, who quit in July in protest at the Chequers plan, launched a fresh attack on it in his weekly newspaper column yesterday.

Austria holds the EU's rotating presidency and Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said the EU should strain to strike a deal with London at the Salzburg summit.

"We have to do everything possible to avoid a hard Brexit and to make possible that there will be a strong cooperation between the UK and the European Union," Kurz said yesterday ahead of talks with French President Emmanuel Macron.



Oliver Kelly, 1 year old, cries as he is carried off the sheriff's airboat during his rescue from rising flood waters in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence in Leland, North Carolina, US, on Sunday. Inset, a boat sits in a backyard after the passing of the hurricane in New Bern, North Carolina.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Killer storm stalks US

More than dozens dead in southeast; catastrophic floods raise threat of landslides, dam failures

AFP, Grifton

Catastrophic floods raised the threat of landslides and dam failures across the southeastern United States yesterday, prolonging the agony caused by a killer hurricane that has left more than a dozen people dead and caused billions of dollars in damage.

Downgraded to a tropical depression, Florence crept over South and North Carolina, dumping heavy rains on already flood-swollen river basins that authorities warned could bring more death and destruction.

The National Hurricane Center said the storm was expected to weaken further yesterday "before re-intensifying as it transitions to an extratropical cyclone Tuesday and Wednesday."

The National Weather Service Weather Prediction Center warned of "heavy and excessive rainfall over the next couple of days."

There is an "elevated risk for landslides" in western North Carolina and southwest Virginia, as well as a danger of "catastrophic and life-threatening flash flooding" in parts of the Carolinas, it said.

"A lot of people have evacuated already," said Denise Harper, a resident of Grifton, a

small North Carolina town threatened by rising water levels in a nearby creek and the River Neuse. "It's worrying to watch the water slowly rising."

At least 15 people have died since Florence made landfall Friday as a Category 1 hurricane near Wrightsville Beach -- 10 in North Carolina and five in South Carolina.

"Unfortunately we've still got several days to go," Brock Long, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, told Fox News.

Long said more havoc lies ahead as the storm broadens its geographic scope over regions deeply saturated with water.

Of particular concern were the risks to dams, already stressed by heavy rainfall from a tropical storm earlier in the month, he said, urging citizens to heed official warnings about what is now a "flood event."

The tiny town of Pollocksville, population 300, found itself cut in two on Sunday afternoon after the River Trent burst its banks.

North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper earlier told reporters "the strongest storm bands are dumping two to three inches of rain per hour" over regions that had already received up to two feet of rain.

ROHINGYA CRACKDOWN

Russian 'FB' bans top Myanmar general

AFP, Yangon

Russian social media site VKontakte (VK) has followed Facebook by banning Myanmar's army chief and a nationalist monk known for stirring up Islamophobia in a country condemned globally for the treatment of its Rohingya Muslims.

Facebook blacklisted Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and other top military brass three weeks ago after a damning report by UN investigators called for their prosecution for genocide over the army's brutal crackdown on the Rohingya.

The military head immediately opened up an account on VK, which has a very similar blue and white interface to its Silicon Valley counterpart but is hosted by Myanmar's staunch ally Russia.

He quickly amassed some 37,000 followers but users were greeted yesterday with a message that the account had been suspended "due to a violation of the VK terms of service."

VK told AFP that the accounts of Min Aung Hlaing and hardline abbot Wirathu had been "blocked permanently after receiving many complaints from users", adding that it had hired Burmese-speaking moderators to monitor posts.

Wirathu is an influential monk known for his hatred of Islam and the Rohingya in particular.

Facebook disabled his account in January after a string of vitriol targeting the stateless minority.

Last year's army campaign forced some 700,000 Rohingya to flee over the border into Bangladesh, with refugees bringing testimony of widespread murder, rape and arson.

AID FROM CHINA

Nothing comes for free: Indian army chief

TNN, Pune

Indian Army Chief General Bipin Rawat said here on Sunday that countries which have taken financial aid from China will soon realise that "nothing comes for free".

He was speaking to the media on the sidelines of the concluding ceremony of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) "Military Exercise 18" at the Aundh military station.

Speaking in the context of the growing proximity between Nepal and China, Rawat said, "Any country looking for its economic growth is bound to explore bilateral or multilateral ways of cooperation. China has got money and they are splurging it. But the countries taking such aid will soon realise that nothing comes for free. All these ties are temporary and are bound to change as per the change in the global socio-



economic scenario.

Army Chief General Bipin Rawat said, "The best example of this is the US-Pakistan relations as it has not remained the same what it used to be 70 years ago. As such, we don't need to worry about these temporary alliances. We need to make our country economically strong."

Rawat said, "Countries like Nepal and Bhutan will have to be with India due to the geographical conditions which do not favour other countries. India is taking a conscious effort towards developing diplomatic relations with the neighbouring countries. India has been following the motto of 'neighbourhood first and act east' and the BIMSTEC is part of it.

Afghan, 'Bengali' immigrants to get citizenship: Pak PM

UN refugee agency welcomes the move

AGENCIES

Pakistan's new premier Imran Khan has vowed to give citizenship to some Afghan refugees and Bengali immigrants, officials confirmed yesterday, granting rights to many who have lived in the country for decades.

He announced this while addressing a fundraising event for dam construction during his first official visit to Karachi on Sunday.

Urdu-speaking Biharis, who went to Pakistan after Bangladesh's Liberation war in 1971, are considered Bengalis there.

The PM said that the identity crisis of thousands of Bengali and Afghan immigrants is pushing them to crime.

"Terrorism and target killing has declined in Karachi but there is a major reason behind the street crimes. It is an underclass. They are illiterate and jobless. They are the Bengalis and Afghans who are living in Pakistan."



"These immigrants have lived here for decades, their children were born here, but they don't have identity cards and passports," he said.

The people of this deprived class can't get jobs without ID cards and passports, so our government has decided to issue them computerised national identity cards and passports, Khan said.

There are around two million Bengali and Burmese migrants in Pakistan. They either do not possess ID cards or their cards have been revoked on suspicion of being illegal immigrants, reported Samaa TV.

In 2016 a wave of forced repatriations sparked fears of a humanitarian crisis, with Human Rights Watch issuing a scathing report describing Pakistan's "coercive" approach. It accused the government of arbitrary detentions and other violations, reported AFP.

The United Nations refugee agency welcomed Khan's announcement yesterday.



Participants including elderly and middle-aged people exercise with wooden dumbbells during a health promotion event to mark Japan's "Respect for the Aged Day" at a temple in Tokyo's Sugamo district, an area popular among the Japanese elderly, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

PALESTINIAN AID

US cuts another \$500 million

AFP, Jerusalem

The United States has cut additional aid to the Palestinians for programmes supporting conflict resolution with Israelis, an official said Sunday, adding to more than \$500 million in other cuts.

The latest cuts come from \$10 million in programmes on reconciliation involving Palestinians as well as Jewish and Arab Israelis.

The portion of the money involving Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip was being redirected to programmes between Jewish and Arab Israelis, a US embassy official said.

It was not clear how much of the \$10 million was being redirected.

US officials also could not confirm whether the latest cut meant all non-security related aid to the Palestinians had now been eliminated.

"As announced in August, the administration redirected more than \$200 million that was originally planned for programmes in the West Bank and Gaza," a US embassy official said.

"At the same time we redirected a portion of the \$10 million which was planned for conflict management and mitigation."

'Evil genius' Trump will be a two-term president

Says documentary filmmaker Michael Moore, believes US leader behind numerous White House leaks

CNN ONLINE

Michael Moore believes President Donald Trump is an "evil genius" who will be re-elected.

The documentary filmmaker spoke to CNN while promoting his upcoming film about the impact of Trump's 2016 victory, "Fahrenheit 11/9."

"Too many people in the summer of 2016 were so sure Hillary [Clinton] was going to win, saying no one is going to vote for this idiot," Moore said. "He could win again. I operate as if he is a two-term Trump. I have to. If you think any other way you are guaranteeing that whoever is going to run against him will lose."

"I think the man is an evil genius and he was able to outsmart the smartest person

ever to run for president," Moore said. "He figured out how to win by losing the election. How did that happen? Historians are going to deal with this for years to come."

Moore said he believes Trump is behind numerous White House leaks, including the anonymous op-ed published by The New York Times earlier this month.

"Trump wrote it. Trump or one of his minions wrote it," he said. "He's the master distractor. He's the king of the misdirect. If we have learned anything by now, it's that he does things to get people to turn away. Let me give you the line in there that is most identifiable that he wants the public to believe. It's the line that says, 'Don't worry, adults are in the room.' That's the idea, to get us to calm down and look away from what he's really doing."



Pick up phone or pack up

Lanka president tells diplomats

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's president yesterday justified his decision to sack six diplomats -- including an ambassador -- for not answering his phone calls, saying more would follow if the foreign service did not shape up.

Maithripala Sirisena was criticised for the shock dismissal last week of his top envoy to Austria and five other Vienna-based staff after his office tried unsuccessfully for hours to reach them by phone.

"I am being attacked ferociously over social media for recalling the entire embassy staff. Yes, I did that to send a powerful message to other embassies," Sirisena told a public meeting in Colombo.

He said he ordered the sacking of ambassador Priyaneer Wijesekera and five other staff to set an example. Sirisena did not say why he needed to contact the embassy urgently, or why other avenues were not explored to reach the staffers.

The Sri Lankan embassy in Austria is accredited to UN bodies in Vienna, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

It was the second time in days that Sirisena has raised eyebrows.

NEWSIn brief

US revokes visas of PLO envoy's family

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

The US has revoked visas for the family of the PLO's ambassador in Washington, DC, the latest measure against Palestinian officials by the Trump administration. Ambassador Husam Zomlot said his family had left the US after they were informed that their visas, which were due to expire in 2020 were no longer valid.

Knife attacker wounds Belgian police officer

AFP, Brussels

A Belgian police officer received a knife wound to the head and his alleged attacker was shot and left in a "serious condition" yesterday, Brussels police said. The incident took place in Parc Maximilien, an area known as a gathering point for mainly North African immigrants hoping to head on to Britain, police spokeswoman Ilse Van Der Keeresaid.



Modi turns 68

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday turned 68 and will celebrate his birthday in his parliamentary constituency Varanasi where he will interact with school children. President Ram Nath Kovind, BJP chief Amit Shah, Congress Party President Rahul Gandhi and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee were among the first to greet Modi on his birthday.