

Norway PM issues ultimatum for govt partners

REUTERS, Oslo

Norway's Conservative Party Prime Minister Erna Solberg has set a Monday deadline for the three junior partners in her coalition to decide whether they should remain in her government.

The crisis was triggered by a long-simmering conflict between two of the four parties in Solberg's majority government, the right-wing Progress and the centrist Liberals, over how to pay for investments in roads and public transport.

If one of the parties leaves, Norway faces the prospect of a minority government, either with Solberg as prime minister or with opposition Labour Party leader Jonas Gahr Støre taking the reins, depending on the support found in parliament.

Parties that want to stay in the cabinet must accept an ultimatum presented by Solberg if they want to remain.

"I've presented a final proposal," Solberg said late on Friday, while adding that the annual additional cost was estimated at around 2 billion Norwegian crowns (\$223 million).

Faced with opinion polls showing declining support ahead of local elections on Sept. 9, the right-wing Progress Party has called for large cuts in road tolls - a proposal opposed by the environmentally minded Liberal Party.

11-year-old

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Majumder, assistant commissioner of land in the upazila, explained to the girl's mother -- Shahana -- of the negative impacts of child marriage.

She finally realised her fault and declared that there would be no wedding now.

Shahana, a cleaner of Amtali municipality, arranged her daughter's marriage with one of her fellow workers Shamim a few days ago.

Her husband Jewel, a rickshaw puller, had also okayed the marriage, Shahnaj told The Daily Star.

Monika told reporters, "I want to be educated and become a police officer so that I can prevent child marriage in future."

Najmun Nahar, Monika's neighbour, said what Monika did was courageous and that they were proud of her.

Eight killed

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Meanwhile, Executive Engineer of Roads and Highways Department in Faridpur KM Naquibul Bari said, "A portion of the bridge's railing was made of bamboos where the steel was damaged."

"This was a temporary fix," he said, but could not tell when the bamboos were put up there. "I took charge of the department six months ago. The bamboo railing was installed before that."

The official said the bridge is old and damaged. A new bridge is being built beside it, the construction of which is now at the final stage, he said. "We have put up a signboard citing the condition of the bridge."

Asked why the bamboo railing was not changed in more than six months, he said, "The bus skidded off the bridge where the railing was made of steel. I heard the bus was overspeeding and fell off the bridge while overtaking a motorcycle."

FOUR MORE DIE IN SEPARATE ACCIDENTS

Meanwhile, four more people were killed and 21 others injured in separate road accidents in different districts yesterday.

In Faridpur, three people including a woman and her son were killed and two others injured as a local bus hit a battery-run easy bike in Talma Mor area in Nagarkanda upazila.

The deceased were Reshma Begum, 30, and her son Md Roni, 8, of Barokhadiya village, and Abul Sikder, 42, of Monohorpur village of the same upazila.

Quoting locals, Officer-in-Charge of Nagarkanda Police Station Mizanur Rahman said easy bike passengers Reshma and her son died on the spot.

The injured were taken to Faridpur Medical College Hospital, but passers-by Abul

Sikder died on the way. Police seized the bus but the driver fled.

In Thakurgaon, the helper of a bus was killed and nine others injured when the bus hit a roadside tree and got overturned in Jagannathpur area of the sadar upazila.

The dead was Yusuf Ali, 45, of Dakkhin Sreepur village in Chandpur's Haziganj upazila.

The accident took place around 5:00am when the driver lost control over the wheel, said Ahmadullah Haque, sub-inspector of Thakurgaon Police Station.

Fire-fighters and police brought the injured to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital where Yusuf died.

In Narayanganj, at least 10 people were injured when a bus collided head-on with a staff bus of a garment factory in Shiddhirganj.



Aerial picture showing smoke from a two-kilometre-long stretch of fire billowing from the Amazon rainforest about 65km from Porto Velho, in the state of Rondonia, in northern Brazil, on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bolsonaro bows, deploys army

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year since 2013 -- which experts blame on accelerating deforestation as land is cleared during the months-long dry season to make way for crops or grazing.

More than half are in the Amazon. Around 700 new fires were ignited between Wednesday and Thursday, according to the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), fueling air contamination in cities including Sao Paulo, where thick smog turned day into night on Monday.

After a late-night crisis meeting with members of his cabinet, Bolsonaro on Friday issued a decree permitting the deployment of armed forces to help extinguish fires and crack down on criminal activities in the region.

Bolsonaro's decision came as demonstrations are held around the world over the fires in the Amazon forest, a region considered the "lungs of the planet" and seen as crucial to keeping climate change in check.

Several thousand protesters marched in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, amid growing European pressure as well as offers to help put out the fires from US President Donald

Trump and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

In an escalating public row over the blazes, Macron on Friday accused Bolsonaro of lying to him on Brazil's stance on climate change.

France will now block a trade deal between the European Union and the South American trade bloc Mercosur, which includes Brazil, a French presidential official said.

Ireland also threatened to block the deal, and Finland said it would propose to EU countries that they stop importing Brazilian beef.

Bolsonaro insisted that the fires should not be used as an excuse to punish Brazil.

"There are forest fires all over the world, and this cannot be used as a pretext for possible international sanctions," Bolsonaro said in brief remarks on television Friday evening.

Macron had tweeted Thursday that the fires burning in the Amazon amount to an international crisis and should be discussed as a top priority when the G7 countries meet this weekend in France.

Bolsonaro then blasted Macron as having a "colonialist mentality."

Environmental specialists say the

fires have accompanied a rapid rate of deforestation in the Amazon region, which in July quadrupled compared to the same month in 2018, according to INPE data, which Bolsonaro previously described as lies and prompted the sacking of the agency's head.

Bolsonaro instead attributes the blazes to increased drought, and accuses environmental groups and NGOs of whipping up an "environmental psychosis" to harm Brazil's economic interests.

Earlier in the week, Bolsonaro accused NGOs of starting the fires.

Brazil's powerful agriculture sector -- a key supporter of Bolsonaro -- has expressed concerns over the president's rhetoric, fearing a boycott of their products in key markets.

Thomaz Favaro of Control Risks consultancy, told AFP Bolsonaro's comments were "raising the risks of sanctions and retaliation, including against the EU-Mercosur deal."

"Brazil has gone from being a global model of forest conservation to an international pariah," Robert Muggah, research director at the Igarape Institute, a think tank in Rio

de Janeiro, told AFP.

Bolsonaro had given "ammunition" to countries opposed to the EU-Mercosur deal, said Oliver Stuenkel, professor of international relations at Getulio Vargas Foundation.

The mayor of Manaus, Brazil's largest city in the Amazon, told reporters Friday the rainforest was "fundamental for the world."

"The entire world demands sensible, intelligent, appropriate governance for the Amazon at the risk of regrettable consequences for our country," Arthur Virgilio Neto said on the sidelines of a UN climate change workshop in the northeastern city of Salvador.

Legendary tribal chief Raoni also called for international help to extinguish the fires.

Neighboring Paraguay and Bolivia are also battling separate wildfires that have devastated large areas of their rainforests.

The Bolivian government on Friday took delivery of a "supertanker" aircraft to help extinguish fires that have destroyed around 7,770 square kilometers (3,000 square miles) of the eastern province of Santa Cruz for the past month.

Daily hospital admissions come down

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Hospital sources said that the number of people visiting different public and private hospitals to get dengue-detection tests was also declining.

Experts are giving credit to people's awareness, early detection, and access to proper medical care for decrease of dengue patients in the capital and other districts.

They, however, said there was no place for complacency as the data shows that September is the "peak" time for Aedes mosquitoes to breed and spread the disease. If breeding grounds of the mosquitoes are not properly destroyed, the fatal virus can spread again.

People's awareness and steps taken to destroy possible sources of Aedes mosquitoes were a big factor for the decease of dengue patients at hospitals, said Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research Director Professor Meerjady Sabrina Flora.

Prof Sanya Tahmina, line director of Communicable Disease Control at the DGHS, said if the weather

remains favourable and vector control continues properly, the number of dengue patients will keep decreasing.

This year's dengue spread is already the worst the country has seen, with at least 62,217 cases detected and at least 115 dead so far.

However, official number is 47.

The number of reported infections is six times that of last year, and the actual figures are likely to be higher as many cases go unreported.

DGHS said 97 dengue patients were admitted and a total of 417 dengue patients were under treatment at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital on August 7.

On Friday, 41 patients were admitted and 318 patients were under treatment at the hospital.

On the other hand, 477 people turned up for the NS1 Antigen test, which is conducted to diagnose dengue within three days of fever, and 248 people came for the IgG and IgM tests that are conducted to diagnose dengue at a later stage on August 7.

The number of people for NS1 test came down to 212, and for IgG and

IgM tests the number dropped to 146 at the hospital on Friday.

The numbers of dengue patients and of people coming for diagnosis have also decreased at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and Mugda Medical College Hospital.

At DMCH, 162 dengue patients were admitted and a total of 721 dengue patients were under treatment at the hospital on August 7, while on Friday 111 patients were admitted and 533 patients were under treatment.

Director of DMCH Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin said the number of people who come for NS1 tests came down to 250 to 350 from 700 per day around the first week of this month.

Imran Hasan, in-charge of pathology of Mugda Medical College and Hospital, said 243 people turned up for the NS1 tests on August 5. On Friday, the number came down to 123.

"We are expecting a decrease from now onwards. But to keep the trend, we have to continue vector control activities," said Meerjady Sabrina Flora.

UK fishing town warns Johnson over Brexit

AFP, Milford Haven

Welsh fishmonger Lenny Walters has a warning for Prime Minister Boris Johnson as he celebrates his one-month anniversary in office yesterday.

If he goes back on his promise to deliver Brexit at any cost on October 31: "I think there will be riots."

"People are getting nasty," the 67-year-old said while filleting monkfish with a razor-sharp knife.

The new British leader is trying to steer his splintered nation through one of its most perilous moments in generations as it hurtles out of the European Union.

The 46-year partnership has helped places like Milford Haven -- a once-thriving Welsh fishing community that has turned into one of the poorest corners of Europe and a major recipient of aid from Brussels.

Its waters are now filled mostly with non-British European trawlers who land their catch at the tiny town's wharf.

Locals see Johnson as their last great

hope for reviving the local fishing industry. Their trust in his ability to do so is not terribly strong.

"Do I have faith in Boris? I am not sure," fish merchant Mark Davis said after a moment's thought.

"I'd vote for Boris because there is no alternative," the 58-year-old added. "He's the only choice."

Johnson needs places such as Milford Haven behind him as he battles his own parliament and the 27 EU leaders through the denouement of a Brexit saga that kicked off when Britain voted by a 52-48 percent margin to leave the EU three years ago.

The region around Milford Haven backed Brexit 57 percent to 43 and in the recent European elections anti-EU Nigel Farage's Brexit Party won with 38 percent.

The Brexit Party has said that a no-deal Brexit is "the best deal" and is poised to win support at any future election if Johnson strikes a compromise with Brussels.

Johnson's past as mayor of London has many in this corner of Wales

doubting his true commitment to the Brexit cause.

Johnson himself has admitted that his decision to back Britain's withdrawal from the European project was "agonisingly difficult" and had caused him "a huge amount of heartache".

His publicity stunts and metaphoric orations convinced crab potter John MacNamara that Johnson is "a bit of a freak".

"But in a good way," the 36-year-old said after lowering a meshed basket used for trapping crab and lobsters onto a waiting boat.

MacNamara said Johnson had "a no-care attitude".

"Whether it's fake or it's real is yet to be seen. From what I've seen, yes, he believes in it. But the proof's in the pudding."

"I tell you who would have delivered it (Brexit) -- Margaret Thatcher," Davis said as he packed crates in what was once Milford Haven's biggest fishing market -- now little more than a shed overlooking

the town's deserted bay.

"What we need is somebody with backbone and courage to stand up and say enough is enough."

Fellow fish processor Phillip Rees tossed the latest catch in the back of a van and warned about attempts by anti-Brexit lawmakers to frustrate Britain's departure.

"I don't have to tell you where the conflict lies -- it's between the politicians and the public, isn't it," said Rees.

Walters agreed.

"The fix is in," he grumbled. "These shysters are trying to overrule him and overrule the people who voted him in."

Both Rees and Davis said they had nagging suspicions that Johnson would use resistance in London and Brussels as a last-minute excuse to try and delay Brexit for a third time.

But fishmonger Walters -- the one who predicted a street revolt -- said Johnson would not dare.

"By hook or by crook -- by October 31, out," Walters said.

Trump challenges court rule barring him from blocking Twitter users

REUTERS, Washington

President Donald Trump is challenging a federal appeals court decision that ruled he violated the US Constitution by blocking people whose views he disliked from his Twitter account.

In court papers filed late on Friday by the US Justice Department, Trump sought a rehearing by the full 2nd US Circuit Court of Appeals in New York, calling the 3-0 decision "fundamentally misconceived."

Trump has more than 63 million followers on Twitter, and often uses his account to make significant announcements, including Friday when his tweets about trade with China sent U.S. stock and oil prices down sharply.

The three-judge panel last month upheld a May 2018 lower court ruling that forced Trump to unblock several dozen followers.

Twitter Inc and the White House declined to comment.

In the appellate court ruling, Circuit Judge Barrington Parker wrote, "the First Amendment does not permit a public official who utilizes a social media account for all manner of official purposes to exclude persons from an otherwise-open online dialogue because they expressed views with which the official disagrees."

White House social media director Dan Scavino, who was also a defendant, is also challenging the appeals court ruling.

The Justice Department court filing Friday warned that if the appeals court ruling was upheld, "public officials who address matters relating to their public office on personal accounts will run the risk that every action taken on that account will be state action subject to constitutional scrutiny."

Parker, however, had said Trump's account bears "all the trappings of an official, state-run account" and is "one of the White House's main vehicles for conducting official business."

Trump has made his @realDonaldTrump account, which he opened in 2009, a central and controversial part of his presidency, using it to promote his agenda and attack critics.

His blocking of critics was challenged by the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, as well as seven Twitter users he had blocked.

The Justice Department filing noted that since the ruling two lawsuits were filed accusing Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of violating the First Amendment for blocking individuals on her personal Twitter account.

The Justice Department filing said the court's "mistaken First Amendment reasoning is being applied not just to any public official, but to the President of United States."

Yemen separatists declare ceasefire with govt forces in Shabwa

REUTERS, Aden

Yemen's southern separatists declared a ceasefire in their clashes with government forces in the oil-producing province of Shabwa after two days of fighting.

"The Southern Transitional Council (STC) calls upon all parties in the Shabwa governorate to exercise restraint and abide by the ceasefire called for by the Arab coalition," the council said in a statement early yesterday.

The council also called on its forces to remain in their positions and maintain control over the institutions and property they overtook.

However, it warned against any attacks on the Saudi-led coalition forces.

The United Arab Emirates-backed separatists earlier this month took over the southern port city of Aden, the interim seat of Yemen's Saudi-backed government, and last week extended their control to neighbouring Abyan.

Both sides are part of a Saudi-led coalition that intervened in Yemen in 2015 against the Iran-aligned Houthis group that ousted the government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi from power in the capital Sanaa in late 2014.

But the STC, who seek self-rule in the south, turned on the government after accusing a party allied to Hadi of being complicit in a Houthi attack on southern forces.

Saudi Arabia has called for a summit to end the standoff, which has complicated U.N. efforts to end the war in Yemen. But Hadi's government said it would not participate until the separatists cede control of sites they have seized.

The standoff has exposed differences between regional allies Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which in June scaled down its presence in Yemen while still backing thousands of southern separatist fighters.