

International

Where's Johnson? UK candidate criticized for avoiding scrutiny

Come out of your bunker, Boris: Daily Mail

LONDON: Boris Johnson, the favorite to succeed British Prime Minister Theresa May, was criticized yesterday by rivals who said the former foreign minister was avoiding public scrutiny in the contest. After three years of political deadlock over Brexit, the ruling Conservative Party is picking a new leader from 10 candidates and hopes to have a new prime minister in place by the end of July. Johnson, who led the official campaign to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum, is the frontrunner to replace May despite a long record of scandals and gaffes. Betting markets give him a 60 percent probability of winning the top job.

But rivals have turned on Johnson over his pledges to cut taxes for the wealthy, deliver Brexit with or without an exit deal and his apparent desire to keep a low profile. Rival Matt Hancock said: "I certainly think that everybody who puts their name forward to be prime minister should be open to scrutiny, should be accountable."

"Everybody should participate in the proposed TV debates. And I think we've got to ask the question: why not?" he told BBC radio. "I've got nothing to hide and that's why I am here." When asked about Johnson, Mark Harper, another candidate, said: "If you've got nothing to hide, you won't mind answering questions." A spokesman for Johnson did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Johnson left his home in London yesterday morning without comment, a Reuters reporter said. He is

due to begin his campaign today. "Time to come out of your bunker, Boris" the Daily Mail, Britain's second-most-read newspaper, said in an editorial. "Usually he positively craves media attention ... Yet for weeks now he has been stuck in his trench, drib-



Why is Johnson avoiding scrutiny? Hancock asks

bling out vague policy ideas," the newspaper said. Rivals say he is avoiding the limelight because the contest is his to lose - a stray word or poorly placed joke could deprive him of his best chance at getting Britain's top job.

'Boris'

Johnson made his name as a European Union-bash-

ing journalist in Brussels, then entered politics in the Conservative Party. He also raised his profile through a series of appearances on a television comedy. He upset some Europeans before Britain's Brexit referendum by comparing the goals of the EU with those of Adolf Hitler and Napoleon. His quick wit and eccentric style helped him shrug off a series of scandals, among them getting sacked from the party's policy team while in opposition for lying about an extra-marital affair. That and other episodes earned him the tabloid nickname "Bonking Boris".

But where others would have floundered, Johnson became increasingly popular, culminating in his two victories in usually left-leaning London's mayoral contests in 2008 and 2012. He was considered a favorite for the top job when David Cameron resigned after the 2016 referendum. But his close ally, Michael Gove, abruptly deserted him and announced his own candidacy.

Gove, again one of his main rivals for the leadership, on Monday taunted Johnson. "If I get through, which I am sure I will, actually, to the final two against Mr Johnson, this is what I will say to him: 'Mr Johnson, whatever you do, don't pull out. I know you have before, and I know you may not believe in your heart that you can do it, but the Conservative Party membership deserve a choice,'" Gove said. — Reuters



LONDON: Conservative MP Boris Johnson leaves his home in London yesterday. The contest to replace Theresa May as Britain's next leader formally has begun, with candidates lining up to define themselves against the 'bluff and bluster' of frontrunner Boris Johnson. — AFP

News in brief

7 die; migrant boat sinks

ATHENS: At least seven people died yesterday when a boat carrying migrants sank near the Greek island of Lesbos, the coastguard said. Assisted by an EU border patrol boat, the coastguard said it had rescued 57 people and is continuing to search for survivors. No information was given on the nationalities of the migrants. But a coastguard source said the dead were four women, a man and two young girls. More than 300 refugees and migrants have died this year while trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe, according to the International Organization for Migration. Greece is hosting some 70,000 mostly Syrian refugees and migrants who have fled their countries since 2015, and crossed over from neighboring Turkey. — AFP

Wreckage of missing plane

NEW DELHI: Indian authorities yesterday spotted the wreckage of a plane missing with 13 air force personnel aboard after days of searching a remote mountainous region close to China. The Soviet-built AN-32 plane, carrying eight crew and five passengers, disappeared from radar on June 3 in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, prompting a frantic search by the Indian Air Force (IAF) and ground teams. "The wreckage of the missing #An32 was spotted today... at an approximate elevation of 12,000 ft by the #IAF Mi-17 Helicopter undertaking search in the expanded search zone," the IAF said on Twitter. "Efforts are now continuing to establish the status of occupants & establish survivors." — AFP

Ukraine hospital fire kills 6

ODESSA: Six people died when fire swept through a psychiatric hospital for war veterans in the Ukrainian city of Odessa, authorities said yesterday. The fire erupted late Monday evening in the one-storey building, Ukraine's emergency services said in a statement. "Six people died and four have been hospitalized," the statement said. Nine other people escaped unharmed. The facility provided mental health care for veterans of the Soviet Union's 1980s war in Afghanistan and World War II. Police and emergency services did not immediately comment on whether the fire was started deliberately, but said it did not appear to have originated inside the building. Paramedics continued to search the hospital after the fire had been extinguished, looking for any patients who could have been left behind, an AFP journalist said. — AFP

Roadside bomb kills six

KANDAHAR: At least six people were killed yesterday after a roadside bomb ripped through their vehicle in southern Afghanistan. It is the latest violence to hit the war-weary country where ordinary Afghans continue to bear the brunt of decades of conflict. The vehicle was travelling from Kandahar's Dand district to the provincial capital when the bomb detonated near the car, killing everyone inside, according to provincial police spokesman Qasim Afghan. "Four children - two girls and two boys - are among those killed in the blast. They are all members of one family," he said. Haji Abdullah, governor of Dand district, said the bomb was placed by the Taliban on a road frequently used by foreign and Afghan forces. — AFP

NYT's anti-Semitism row

NEW YORK: The New York Times (NYT) has announced it will no longer include daily political cartoons in its international edition, weeks after apologizing for publishing a caricature of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu deemed anti-Semitic. The cartoon, published in April, depicted Netanyahu as a guide dog wearing a Star of David collar and leading a blind Donald Trump - who was wearing a kippah, or a Jewish skullcap. It prompted an uproar within the Jewish community, with Israel's ambassador to the UN likening the drawing to the content of Nazi propaganda tabloid Der Sturmer. Editor James Bennet said the paper had planned for a year to cease running political cartoons in the international print version of the Times, in line with the US edition. The decision will come into effect on July 1, Bennet said in a Monday statement. — AFP

Germany to ban gay 'conversion therapy'

BERLIN: German Health Minister Jens Spahn said yesterday he plans to write a law this year to ban so-called conversion therapies that aim to make gays and lesbians heterosexual. "My position is clear: homosexuality is not an illness, which is why it does not need to be treated," said Spahn, who is gay and married to a man. "I would very much like to have a bill this year that could then be presented to parliament," he told a Berlin press conference.



PLAYAS DE TIJUANA: Photo captures an aerial view of US (left)-Mexico border fence in Playas de Tijuana, Baja California state. — AFP

Travelers' images exposed in US data breach

WASHINGTON: Images of tens of thousands of travelers crossing the United States' border have been stolen from an immigration subcontractor in a data breach, US media reported on Monday. The images were snatched from the network of a subcontractor for US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), after the company copied data to its database without the agency's consent, according to The New York Times. The data included images of drivers in their cars and license plates taken over a six-week period at an undisclosed border crossing, the newspaper said.

An unnamed official said as many as 100,000 people may have had their images stolen, the Times reported. "As of today, none of the image data has been identified on the

When Iran was at 'edge of the abyss'

TEHRAN: A decade has passed since Iran held its most bitterly contested elections ever, the aftermath of which shook the Islamic republic to its core over allegations of mass electoral fraud. Massive demonstrations and counter demonstrations by protesters and state supporters raged across major cities for 19 months, nowhere more so than in the capital Tehran, in what was later described by Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as the "edge of the abyss".

As the world watched on in amazement, the so-called Green Movement that started out with "silent" demonstrations against ultra-conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election as president and demands for an independent recount evolved into running battles between protesters and security forces.

The advent of camera-equipped mobile phones and the spread of the internet meant images of the protests fanned out quickly, causing the main focus of the demonstrations

Medical experts consider psychological or spiritual interventions to change someone's sexual orientation pseudo-scientific, ineffective and often harmful.

The most controversial techniques involve administering electric shocks as subjects view images of homosexual acts, or injections of the male hormone testosterone. In Germany, there are an estimated 1,000 attempts a year to "re-educate" homosexuals - from family members, "coaches" and therapists, and sometimes involving prayers and even exorcisms, said Joerg Litwusch-Barthel of the anti-discrimination Magnus Hirschfeld Foundation.

Early last year the European Parliament adopted a non-binding text that called on EU members to ban the practice, something that so far only Malta and some Spanish

regions have done. Spahn has commissioned two reports and a 46-member expert panel which have concluded that a ban is both "medically necessary and legally possible," his ministry said.

Several people who underwent such therapies testified about their suffering to the panel, said the ministry in a statement. One gay patient reported how during standard psychotherapy, the doctor suddenly declared sexual conversion a "therapy goal" and pursued it through "indoctrinating conversations". When electric shock treatment was also proposed, the patient terminated the treatment. The health ministry said it plans to release a final report in August, to pave the way for a law to be written before the end of the year. — AFP

Pompeo restricts gay pride flags at US embassies

WASHINGTON: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has barred US embassies from flying the rainbow flag of the gay pride movement on flagpoles, the State Department confirmed Monday after criticism. Pompeo, an evangelical Christian, has said that he defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman but has also said he respects employees regardless of sexual orientation.

"The secretary has the position that, as it relates to the flagpole, that only the American flag should be flown there," State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortugas told reporters. But she said that US diplomats overseas were free to display rainbows flags elsewhere at embassies in June - Pride Month, with this year marking the 50th anniversary of New York's Stonewall uprising that sparked the modern gay rights movement. "Pride month, that we're in right now, was celebrated around the world by many State Department employees," she said.

The previous administration of president Barack Obama, an advocate of gay rights equality, let US embassies fly the pride flag without no questions asked and even lit up the White House in the rainbow colors when the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationwide in 2015. News of Pompeo's orders, first reported last week by NBC News, provoked outrage among advocates of gay rights. "At a time when LGBTQ+ communities around the world face persecution, this Trump @StateDept decision is a blatant attack on LGBTQ rights," said Senator Ed Markey, a Democrat from Massachusetts.

"As we celebrate Pride Month, this decision must be reversed. I am demanding the Trump admin explain this hate," he tweeted. Chad Griffin, head of the Human Rights Campaign, the lead US gay rights group, said that the flag order "sends a chilling message not only to LGBTQ people in this country, but around the globe." A number of US embassies have already highlighted their celebrations of Pride Month. The US embassy in New Delhi was lit up in the rainbow colors as a sign of solidarity in a country where the Supreme Court last year overturned a colonial-era ban on gay sex. One of the most prominent gay members of President Donald Trump's administration is Richard Grenell, the US ambassador to Germany. — AFP

Mousavi. On Friday, June 12 when polling stations opened, the turnout-officially at 85 percent-forced voting hours to be extended late into the night. The first signs that something had gone awry came when Iranians realised the SMS messaging system had been disabled overnight.

Reformists soon claimed telephone lines to their vote tallying centers had been cut and many observers had not been allowed to enter polling stations. Later on, some of Mousavi's main campaign centers in Tehran were closed by security forces. Mousavi held an impromptu press conference late at night and claimed victory, warning that any reports to the contrary would be a sign of fraud. The final official count showed Ahmadinejad had won with nearly 63 percent of the vote, and within hours sporadic protests began in Tehran and soon spread to other major cities. As the vote breakdown was published, reformists pointed to irregularities and claims of mass fraud gained traction. Ahmadinejad's victory rally on June 14 in which he called protesters "dirt and rubbish" riled many voters. When Mousavi and the other reformist candidate Mehdi Karubi, who had officially gained 34 and one percent respectively, called for a counter rally in Tehran on June 15 the response by supporters was beyond expectations. — AFP



Mike Pompeo

Dark Web or internet," CBP said in a statement quoted by the Times. CBP hasn't identified the name of the subcontractor hacked but the newspaper identified it as Perceptics, which makes license plate readers and works with the agency on border security matters.

Facial recognition is being deployed in airports around the United States, aiming to help speed boarding and arrivals and also monitoring for suspects and people who may have overstayed their visas. US customs authorities are also reported to be studying the technology to help identify illegal immigrants. Supporters of the technology argue that facial recognition systems can help police fight crime and make streets safer.

But rights groups have raised concerns about the technology, particularly its use by law enforcement, because of its reliance on huge databases with little oversight and potential for error. Last month, San Francisco passed a ban on law enforcement's using facial recognition. Civil liberties activists decried the reported CBP breach. "The best way to avoid breaches of sensitive personal data is not to collect and retain it in the first place, @CBP," the American Civil Liberties Union said on Twitter. — AFP

to switch from electoral fraud to repression. The determination of the state to stamp out what it considered to be "sedition" at any cost, including mass trials and death sentences, gradually brought the movement to a standstill. One of the reformists arrested in the first wave of the crackdown was journalist and activist Ahmad Zeidabadi.

"History will look back at the defeat of the green movement as a bitter event that left its supporters extremely and deeply frustrated and disillusioned," said Zeidabadi, who was detained the day after the election. Amir Mohebbian, a conservative politician and analyst, said the circumstances had changed in many ways since 2009 when "the state realized that the opposition and America" were behind the riots, and therefore used its "full powers to take control of the situation".

'Where is my vote?'

The 2009 election campaign might well have been one of the most dynamic in the Islamic republic's history. The one-on-one TV debates between candidates changed the mood of the campaign from festive to a bitter face-off, none more so than an explosive encounter between Ahmadinejad and his main challenger Mir Hossein