



UK's Johnson rallies party for Brexit fight

## Nations that make weapons, foment migration but refuse refugees: Pope

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TAEZ: A Yemeni child buys sweets from Majd Al-Din Al-Shamiri (unseen), a 16 year-old Yemeni who set up a shop in his family's car that was destroyed during the ongoing war in the Jabal Sabr area of the southwestern city of Taez. — AFP

# New fuel shortage hits Yemen

## Yemen faces humanitarian crisis due to civil war

**SANAA:** A fuel shortage is deepening Yemen's humanitarian crisis, forcing drivers to wait for days in queues that stretch back from some petrol stations as far as the eye can see. The new shortage is just one of many problems causing suffering in the civil war being fought by the Iran-aligned Houthi movement and a Saudi-led coalition backed by the West.

But its consequences are far-reaching. Fuel is needed not just for cars but also for water pumps, hospital generators and to transport goods around a country where millions are on the brink of famine. "It's affecting us and all the Yemeni people," said Nashwan Khaled, who had already been waiting for two days in a queue for petrol in Sanaa, the Houthi-controlled capital where many petrol stations have been forced to close.

"I put my job and my life on hold," he said. Petrol on the black market is selling for almost three times

the official price. Drivers can queue for two or three days. "Fuel shortages in Yemen exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation in the country and lead to unacceptable levels of suffering," said Sultana Begum, a representative of the Norwegian Refugee Council humanitarian organization.

### Controls and bureaucracy

Imports into areas controlled by Houthis have to go through stringent controls imposed by the Saudi-led military coalition which intervened in Yemen in 2015 to restore the government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. Supplies can be held at ports and frontline borders for months because of bureaucracy on both sides, aid agencies say. "Today we are in a very bad situation, there's a fuel crisis and they are stopping fuel ships from entering Yemen with the excuse of security," said Ahmed Nasser, standing at a

petrol station. "We suffer shortages of fuel, goods, all commodities."

A Djibouti-based UN inspection mechanism was



### Bureaucracy and stringent controls hamper supplies

set up in 2015 after the coalition accused the Houthis of smuggling Iranian weapons through Yemeni ports

under their control, a charge both the group and Tehran deny. Ships also need permission from the internationally recognized Yemeni government and the Western-backed, Sunni Muslim coalition to enter ports. Last week, United Nations aid chief Mark Lowcock said he was concerned that imports were being further complicated by new Yemeni government regulations on commercial fuel.

He said earlier this month that the coalition and government were preventing 10 vessels carrying 163,000 metric tons of commercial fuel imports - more than an average month's imports - from entering the port of Hodeidah. Two of the ships have since been allowed to dock, port sources told Reuters. The coalition's spokesman was not immediately available for comment. A government committee accused the Houthis of "fabricating" the fuel crisis in response to the regulations, Saudi state media said. — Reuters

## Netanyahu, Gantz trade blame over breakdown in Israel coalition talks

**JERUSALEM:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his rival Benny Gantz traded blame yesterday over the failure so far of efforts to reach a unity government deal following deadlocked elections. A new round of negotiations between Netanyahu's right-wing Likud and Gantz's centrist Blue and White broke down yesterday and the two sides appeared far from reaching a compromise.

Likud said Netanyahu would make a "last effort" to reach a deal before informing President Reuven Rivlin he is unable to form a government. That would leave Rivlin to decide whether to ask Gantz to try to do so or call on parliament to agree on a candidate for prime minister by a vote of at least 61 out of 120 members.

Netanyahu "will make a last effort to realize the possibility of forming a government at this stage, before returning the mandate to the president," Likud said in a statement. It called the latest round of negotiations a "big disappointment." Blue and White accused Likud of "throwing around slogans with the sole aim of generating support in preparation



TEL AVIV: (Right to left) Retired Israeli General Benny Gantz, leader and candidate of the Israel Resilience party, sits with independent Gabi Ashkenazi and Telem party's Moshe Yaalon, all part of the Blue and White (Kahol Lavan) political alliance, after giving a statement and toast for Rosh Hashanah to reporters. — AFP

for dragging Israel into another round of elections at the behest of Netanyahu."

This month's poll was the second this year, after Netanyahu failed to form a coalition following April polls. Israel marks the two-day Rosh Hashanah holiday beginning yesterday night and serious negotiations are not expected during that time. Likud said later that Gantz and Netanyahu had spoken by phone, agreeing that negotiators for both sides would meet Wednesday morning followed by talks between the two leaders.

Blue and White had not confirmed the meetings. Likud wants to negotiate on the basis of a compromise set out by Rivlin to form a unity government, which takes into account the possibility of Netanyahu being

indicted for corruption in the weeks ahead. The proposal could see Netanyahu remain prime minister for now, but step aside if indicted. Gantz would step in as acting premier under such a scenario.

Netanyahu also says he will not abandon the smaller right-wing and religious parties supporting him in parliament, giving him a total of 55 seats backing him for prime minister. Blue and White says Gantz must be prime minister first under any rotation arrangement, since it finished with the most seats in September 17 elections. It also says it cannot serve in a government with an indicted premier and insists Likud negotiate on its own, not on behalf of the smaller parties supporting it. — AFP

## France expands rape probe against Islamic scholar Ramadan

**PARIS:** The French authorities have expanded an investigation against Tariq Ramadan, a leading Islamic scholar already charged in France with raping two women, to include evidence from two more alleged victims, judicial sources said yesterday. Ramadan, a Swiss national, 57, has already been charged in France with raping a disabled woman in 2009 and a feminist activist in 2012. He denies all the charges.

Paris prosecutors earlier this month instructed the investigating magistrate handling the case to look into the evidence from "two new potential victims" over incidents that took place in 2015 and 2016, a judicial source told AFP, confirming a report in Le Journal du Dimanche newspaper. Investigators took witness statements from the two women after they were identified from documents found on his computers. The women themselves have not filed a criminal complaint.

But they both say they were led into a brutal sexual relationship with

Ramadan, one from November-December 2015 and the other in March 2016. "It was something other than physical rape, it went beyond that... there was a moral rape," one of the women said in her testimony seen by AFP. "He had such a hold on you that you did everything that he demanded. But this relationship was consensual, yes," she said. "I asked him to be milder, but he said 'it is your fault, you deserve it' and that he needed to be obeyed, which is what I did," the other said.

Le Journal du Dimanche said prosecutors believe the two testimonies contained "serious and concurring" evidence that could incriminate Ramadan. Ramadan was taken into custody in February 2018 and held for over nine months before being granted bail. Authorities in Switzerland are also investigating him after receiving a rape complaint in that country while two other criminal complaints of rape have been filed relating to incidents in March 2018 and July 2019.

Ramadan has in the last week gone on a media offensive to deny all the allegations against him, publishing a book called "Duty of Truth" and insisting all his relationships have been consensual. Ramadan was professor of contemporary Islamic studies at Oxford University until he was forced to take leave when rape allegations surfaced at the height of the "Me Too" movement in late 2017. — AFP