

## IN BRIEF



## Pak. sends Czech model to jail on drug charge

LAHORE  
A Lahore court on Wednesday sentenced 22-year-old Czech model Tereza Hluskova to eight years and eight months in prison for drug trafficking. According to the court, Hluskova was found in possession of 8.5 kg of heroin in January 2018 at the Lahore airport, from where she was heading to Ireland via Dubai, UAE. AP

## Afghan presidential poll delayed to Sept. 28

KABUL  
War-torn Afghanistan has delayed its presidential election until September 28, officials announced on Wednesday, the second time the ballot has been put back. The election was originally scheduled for April 20, then delayed to July 20. AFP

## Oman denies it has agreed to invest in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO/DUBAI  
Oman's Oil Ministry on Wednesday denied being part of a \$3.85 billion plan to build an oil refinery in Sri Lanka, a day after the government in Colombo announced the Arab country's participation. "No one on this side of the panel is aware of this investment in Sri Lanka," Salim al-Aufi, Undersecretary of Ministry of Oil and Gas, told reporters. REUTERS

## Karadzic sentence increased to life

THE HAGUE  
United Nations appeals judges on Wednesday upheld the convictions of former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and increased his sentence from 40 years to life imprisonment. Karadzic showed almost no reaction as presiding judge Vagn Joensen read out the judgment. AP

## Short Brexit delay possible only if U.K. Parliament backs deal: EU

Warns extension beyond May 23 will pose institutional difficulties, legal uncertainty

VIDYA RAM  
LONDON

Britain's political crisis continued to unfold on Wednesday as European Council President Donald Tusk said that a "short extension" to Article 50 would be conditional on a "positive vote in the House of Commons."

The length of that conditional extension is yet to be determined, as the European Commission and the Council indicated their concerns about the U.K.'s proposal for an extension till June 30. Any extension beyond May 23, when European parliamentary election is due to take place, would pose "institutional difficulties and legal uncertainty", they warned.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Theresa May wrote to EU Council President Donald Tusk, seeking a short extension to Article 50 till June 30, and insisting that she would press ahead with another vote on her withdrawal deal next week.

## Same motion

It comes despite a ruling by the Speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow, earlier this week that the same motion could not be put before the House repeatedly during the same parliamentary session and despite warnings from EU leaders that an extension would only be granted if the U.K. had clear and precise reasons as to why it should be given.

After details of the letter emerged, the Commission swiftly expressed concerns about the request. [European Commission President Jean-Claude] Juncker formally warned Theresa May against including a date for



Crisis deepens: European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, left, with EU Council President Donald Tusk. AP

the extension that is after European Parliamentary elections. Withdrawal has to be before 23 May, otherwise we face institutional difficulties and legal uncertainty. Elections have to be held if extension is after May 23," said Margaritis Schinas, the European Commission's chief spokesperson.

"A short extension will be possible but it will be conditional on a positive vote on the withdrawal agreement in the House of Commons," Mr. Tusk said, as he briefly stepped out of talks with EU leaders, ahead of a meeting of the European Council on Thursday at which the request for an extension is set to be discussed. While the suggestion of June 30 had its merits, it creates a "series of questions of a legal and political nature," he said. "Leaders will discuss this tomorrow."

During a heated session of Prime Ministers Questions, a defiant Ms. May had insisted

that an extension that lasted longer than June 30 would require the U.K. to take part in EU parliamentary elections on May 23 (the new parliamentary session would open on July 2).

## 'Unacceptable idea'

"I do not believe such elections would be in anyone's interest. The idea that three years after voting to leave the EU they should be asked to elect a new set of MEPs [Members of European Parliament] would be unacceptable... This is the point the House has the decision to take as to what it wants the future to be..."

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn slammed the government's "incompetence, failure and intransigence", and warned that the U.K. was in a "national crisis" and called for Ms. May to hold talks with the Labour party to find a route forward.

In the letter to Mr. Tusk, Ms. May asked the European

Council to approve the supplementary documents outlining legally binding changes to the withdrawal deal that were agreed between Ms. May and European Commission President Juncker earlier this month.

She said this would enable the government to confirm changes to their proposition to Parliament, while they also intended to put further proposals to confirm previous commitments to protect the internal market given concerns about the backstop.

These additions would allow the government to bring the deal to Parliament again next week, and she was "confident" that Parliament would ratify the deal. "While we will consult with the Opposition in the usual way to plan the passage of the Bill quickly and smoothly as possible, the timetable for this is inevitably uncertain at this stage," she wrote, asking for the extension.

Mr. Tusk said he was inclined to recommend the request relating to the approval of the supplementary documents as they could help the ratification process in the U.K. Were EU leaders to agree to a conditional extension, and were the withdrawal to be approved by the U.K. parliament next week, the extension could potentially be granted without a further meeting of the EU Council though one could be held if necessary.

"Even if the hope for final success may seem frail, even illusory and although Brexit fatigue is increasingly visible and justified we cannot give up seeking till the very last moment a positive solution," Mr. Tusk said.

## Australian PM slams Erdogan for 'reckless' comments

He had referred to a First World War campaign as anti-Islam

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
ANKARA

Turkey's President has sparked an acute diplomatic spat with New Zealand and Australia, referring to a key First World War campaign and the more recent Christchurch mosque shooting as targeting Islam.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has been campaigning for local elections due at the end of the month, suggested this week that Australia and New Zealand had sent troops to fight in the First World War's Gallipoli campaign due to their opposition to Islam. The battle, marked by heavy casualties on both sides, was a disastrous defeat for the allies against the then Ottoman Empire. Although the battle later helped cement friendship between the three countries, more than a century later it remains a highly sensitive subject in both Australia and New Zealand.

Australia was aghast at Mr. Erdogan's comments, with Prime Minister Scott Morrison summoning Turkey's Ambassador on Wednesday and demanding that Mr. Erdogan take the comments back, saying "all options are on the table" if he did not.

On Wednesday, Mr. Erdogan, inaugurating a theme park in Ankara as part of his campaign, called for votes for his party candidates as a response to "occupiers who attempt to threaten our nation from tens of thousands of kilometers away."

"Remarks have been made by the Turkish President Erdogan that I consider highly offensive to Australians and highly reckless in this very sensitive environment," Mr. Morrison told re-



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaking after inaugurating a theme park in Ankara on Wednesday. AP

## UAE deports man for praising mosque attacks

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
DUBAI

An employee at a Dubai-based security company was fired and deported for celebrating the deadly New Zealand mosque attacks under a fake identity on Facebook, the firm said on Wednesday.

"Despite posting under a false name, the employee

porters in Canberra, Australia's capital.

"They are offensive because they insult the memory of our Anzacs and they violate the pledge that is etched in the stone at Gallipoli," he said, referring to a promise made by the founder of modern Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, that those who are buried rest on friendly soil. "I do not accept the excuses that have been offered for those comments."

Mr. Erdogan has also sparked outrage abroad by screening at his campaign rallies excerpts of a video taken by the gunman who killed 50 people in mosques in Christchurch, to denounce what he has called rising hatred and prejudice

responsible for last week's inflammatory comments has been identified, terminated as per Transguard policy and handed over to the authorities," the Transguard security group said in a statement.

It did not name the employee or reveal his nationality.

against Islam. He has also been showing parts of a manifesto said to have been left by the gunman in which he threatens Turks and Mr. Erdogan himself.

New Zealand's Foreign Minister Winston Peters is due in Istanbul this week for a meeting of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation to discuss the mosque shootings and was expected to take up the issue during the visit.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu later held a telephone conversation with his Australian counterpart, Marise Payne, Turkish Foreign Ministry officials said. They did not provide further details about the call.

## Kazakhstan renames capital as new President takes office

Astana will be called Nursultan after former President

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
ALMATY

Kazakhstan's new interim President was sworn in on Wednesday following the shock resignation of the country's long-time ruler, and in his first official act renamed the capital after his predecessor.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev took office in less than 24 hours after Nursultan Nazarbayev, the only leader an independent Kazakhstan had ever known, suddenly announced resignation.

Mr. Tokayev immediately proposed changing the name of the Central Asian nation's capital from Astana to Nursultan, or 'Sultan of Light' in Kazakh, and Parliament approved the change within hours.

The Senate also appointed Mr. Nazarbayev's eldest daughter Dariga Nazarbayeva



Interim President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, right, with predecessor Nursultan Nazarbayev. REUTERS

as Speaker, setting her up as a potential contender to succeed her father.

Mr. Tokayev, 65, will serve out the rest of Mr. Nazarbayev's mandate until election due in April next year, though the former President retains significant powers in

the country he ruled for nearly three decades.

## 'Historic event'

Mr. Tokayev told lawmakers that Mr. Nazarbayev had "shown wisdom" by deciding to step down, a rare move in ex-Soviet Central Asia where other leaders have stayed in power until death.

"Yesterday, the world witnessed a historic event," Mr. Tokayev said, hailing Mr. Nazarbayev as a visionary reformer.

"The results of an independent Kazakhstan are there for all to see," Mr. Tokayev said. Mr. Nazarbayev changed the capital from Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty to Astana in 1997, transforming it from a minor provincial town into a futuristic city of skyscrapers rising from the steppes.

## Water world



Residents stranded on the stands of a stadium in a flooded area of Buzi, central Mozambique, on Wednesday. International aid agencies raced to rescue survivors and meet spiralling humanitarian needs in three impoverished countries battered by one of the worst storms to hit southern Africa in decades. Five days after tropical cyclone Idai cut a swathe through Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi, the confirmed death toll stood at more than 300 and hundreds of thousands of lives were at risk, officials said. AP

## 40 animals to be rescued from Gaza zoo

For far too long, they have had to live under dreadful conditions: Four Paws

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GAZA CITY

Forty animals, including five lions, are to be rescued from squalid conditions in the Gaza Strip, an animal welfare group said on Wednesday.

The animals would be taken out of a zoo in the Palestinian enclave and relocated to sanctuaries in Jordan next week, the Four Paws organisation said. Among the other animals to be taken out were a hyena, monkeys, wolves and porcupines, the organisation said in a statement.

The owner of the Rafah Zoo in southern Gaza was not immediately available for comment.

The zoo hit the headlines last month when the cash-strapped owner revealed he had declared one of the lions there, so that custom-



Falestine, a lioness, being declared so that zoo visitors can play with her, in this file photo of February 12. AP

ers could play with her for money.

The organisation condemned the declawing, with almost 1,500,000 people signing a petition against the treatment.

The animals would be

treated and sedated, before being taken through Israel into Jordan, Four Paws said. "For far too long, the animals of Rafah Zoo have had to live under unimaginably dreadful conditions," said Four Paws veterinarian and

head of mission Amir Khalil. "We are happy to finally put an end to this horror," he said in the statement.

The animal welfare group had previously evacuated two other zoos in Gaza, where desperate poverty means owners are often unable to provide adequate conditions.

Israel has imposed a crippling blockade on the Gaza Strip for more than a decade, measures it says are necessary to isolate the enclave's Islamist rulers Hamas.

In 2016 Four Paws helped facilitate the transfer of the sole tiger in the Gaza Strip, with it eventually relocated to South Africa. In 2017 the organisation rescued a lion and a bear from a zoo in Mosul in Iraq.

## Teacher killed over 'gender mix reception'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani student was arrested on Wednesday after stabbing his professor to death for organising a mixed-gender reception at a government college.

Associate professor Khalid Hameed was killed on the campus of Sadiq Egeron College in Bahawalpur. "The professor had organised a gender mix reception for the new students and the event was supposed to take place tomorrow, on Thursday," a police officer said. "The gender mix reception is against the teachings of Islam and I had warned him to stop it," the student was quoted as saying in the report filed with the police.

## Pak. to sell unused govt. properties to pay off debt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ISLAMABAD

The cash-strapped Pakistan government has decided to sell unused properties owned by federal Ministries to pay off the country's mounting debts, the media reported on Wednesday.

The decision was taken during a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday aimed at finding solutions for generating revenue and boosting the country's economy, which is already under a debt of over 27 trillion Pakistani rupees.

Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry said that only those properties of Ministries and allied departments would be put up for sale which are lying unused.

"Prime Minister Khan has



Pakistan PM Imran Khan

sought the lists of properties of ministries for disposal," the Minister was quoted as saying by Dawn newspaper.

Mr. Chaudhry said the Ministries had finalised their lists of properties and sent them to the Cabinet.

To fast-track the process, an Asset Management Committee has been formed by the Ministry of Privatisation on the directions of the Prime Minister Khan.

## Pompeo urges resolution to Gulf crisis

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
JERUSALEM

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday renewed calls for a resolution to a festering dispute between Qatar and four other Arab nations, all of them America's partners.

On a visit to Kuwait, which has been attempting to mediate an end to the crisis, Mr. Pompeo said the dispute that has roiled the Gulf Cooperation Council for almost two years is hindering efforts to combat regional threats posed by Iran, the Islamic State and other terrorist groups.

"It's not in the best interest of the region, it's not in the best interest of the world," Mr. Pompeo told reporters at a news conference with Kuwait's Foreign Minister. "We need the Gulf countries working together on the complex set of challenges that face each of them."

Mr. Pompeo lauded mediation efforts in the dispute by Kuwait's emir and said the United States would do whatever it could to assist.

"We are working to help those countries find a set of common ground," he said. "We all have the same set of threats, the threats from al-Qaida and from ISIS, the threat from... Iran. We all are working diligently to find a path forward so that the rift between those countries can be resolved."

Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE began a boycott of Qatar in June 2017, alleging that Qatar funds extremist groups and has too-cozy ties to Iran.

Qatar has long denied funding extremists, but Doha shares a massive offshore natural gas field with Tehran that gives its citizens one of the highest per-capita incomes in the world. It restored diplomatic relations with Iran after the crisis erupted.