

World News Roundup

Britain

'Beautiful little boy'

Terminally-ill baby Charlie Gard dies

LONDON, July 29, (AP): **Charlie Gard**, the terminally ill British baby at the center of a legal and ethical battle that attracted the attention of Pope Francis and US President Donald Trump, died Friday. He was one week shy of his first birthday.

Charlie's parents fought for the right to take him to the United States for an experimental medical treatment for his rare genetic disease, mitochondrial depletion syndrome, which left him brain damaged and unable to breathe unaided. His case ended up in the courts when doctors opposed the plan, saying the untested therapy wouldn't help Charlie and might cause him to suffer.

A family spokeswoman, Alison Smith-Squire, confirmed Charlie's death on Friday, a day after a judge ordered that he be taken off a ventilator at the Great Ormond Street Hospital in London and moved to an undisclosed hospice for his final hours.

"Our beautiful little boy has gone, we're so proud of him," his mother, Connie Yates, said in a statement.

Charlie was seemingly healthy at birth but soon began to weaken. He was admitted to Great Ormond Street Hospital, Britain's premier children's hospital, when he was two months old and remained there until almost the end of his life.

His legal case became a flashpoint for debates on the rights of children and parents, on health-care funding, medical interventions, the responsibilities of hospitals and medical workers and the role of the state. It gained international attention last month when Pope Francis and President Trump expressed their support for Charlie and his family.

The intervention of two of the world's most powerful men made the case a worldwide talking point. Images of Charlie hooked to a tube while dozing peacefully in a star-flecked navy blue onesie graced websites, newspapers and television news programs.

The pope reacted quickly to the news of Charlie's death, tweeting late Friday "I entrust little Charlie to the Father and pray for his parents and all those who loved him."

Saddened

US Vice President Mike Pence tweeted "Saddened to hear of the passing of Charlie Gard. Karen & I offer our prayers & condolences to his loving parents during this difficult time."

Charlie's parents raised more than 1.3 million pounds (\$1.7 million) to pay for the experimental treatment they believed could prolong his life. But British courts consistently accepted the hospital's position, ruling that it was in Charlie's best interests that he be allowed to die.

After months of legal battles, High Court judge Nicholas Francis ruled Thursday that Charlie should be transferred to a hospice and taken off life support after his parents and the hospital failed to agree on an end-of-life care plan.

Under British law, it is common for courts to intervene when parents and doctors disagree on the treatment of a child. In such cases, the rights of the child take primacy over the parents' right to decide what's best for their offspring. The principle applies even in cases where parents have an alternative point of view, such as when religious beliefs prohibit blood transfusions.

The case made it all the way to Britain's Supreme Court as Charlie's parents refused to accept earlier rulings.

Offers of help for Charlie came from Dr. Michio Hirano, a neurology expert at New York's Columbia Medical Center, and from the Vatican's Bambino Gesù pediatric hospital. Both said an experimental treatment known as nucleoside therapy had a chance of helping Charlie.

Great Ormond Street Hospital disagreed. It said the proposed treatment had never been tried on someone with Charlie's condition and no tests had even been done on mice to see whether it would work on a patient like Charlie.

The case caught the attention of Trump and the pope in late June after the European Court of Human Rights refused to intervene. Their intervention triggered a surge of grassroots action, including a number of US right-to-life activists who flew to London to support Charlie's parents.

Great Ormond Street soon reported that its doctors and nurses were receiving serious threats over the case. London police were called in to investigate.

On Friday night, the hospital offered its condolences to Charlie's family.

Condolences

"Everyone at Great Ormond Street Hospital sends their heartfelt condolences to Charlie's parents and loved ones at this very sad time," the hospital said.

Medical ethicist Arthur Caplan said the Charlie Gard case shows how the medical profession is struggling to adjust to the age of social media, which puts the general public in the middle of decisions that in the past would have been private issues for doctors and the family.

"I do think that in an era of social media, it is possible to rally huge numbers of people to your cause," said Caplan, of New York University's Langone Medical Center. "The medical ethics have not caught up."

The heated commentary over Charlie prompted Judge Francis to criticize the effects of social media and those "who know almost nothing about this case but who feel entitled to express opinions."

In the end, the increased attention did little for Charlie.

His parents gave up their legal battle on Monday after scans showed that Charlie's muscles had deteriorated so much that the damage was irreversible.

"Mummy and Daddy love you so much Charlie, we always have and we always will and we are so sorry that we couldn't save you," his parents wrote when they announced their decision. "We had the chance but we weren't allowed to give you that chance.

"Sweet dreams baby. Sleep tight, our beautiful little boy."

Meanwhile, following news of the boy's death, Pope Francis, who supported the campaign, tweeted: "I entrust little Charlie to the Father and pray for his parents and all those who loved him."

British Prime Minister Theresa May said she was "deeply saddened" by the death.

In related news, photographs of baby Charlie Gard dominated the front-pages of Britain's Saturday newspapers, which paid tribute to a "beautiful little boy" who had raised tough ethical questions for Western societies.



Baby Charlie



British Riot police advance along a street in east London on July 28, where people gathered in response to the recent death of 20-year old Roshan Charles. Protesters angry over the death of young black man Charles, have clashed with riot police in London, throwing bottles and fireworks and setting garbage cans on fire. (AP)

London police arrest one at protest over death of detainee

Police in east London arrested one person after violence broke out at a protest over the death of a man who had been detained a week earlier, police said on Saturday.

Roshan Charles, 20, died on July 22 after he was chased by a police officer who attempted to remove an object from his mouth or throat, according to an independent body which deals with

complaints about the police.

A protest over his death in the borough of Hackney turned violent on Friday night when bottles and other objects were thrown at officers and small fires were started, police said.

Windows of local businesses and cars were damaged and police in riot gear and some on horseback were called in to help clear the area. BBC

television showed what appeared to be fireworks exploding near police officers.

The person arrested was a 17-year-old male who was held on suspicion of causing grievous bodily harm, police said. No one was seriously injured during the disturbance, they said.

The BBC said some protesters carried Black Lives Matter placards.

A further protest was planned for Sat-

urday in the same area, police said.

Britain's Independent Police Complaints Commission has said it will investigate "thoroughly and rigorously" the incidents that led to Charles' death. CCTV camera footage show him being wrestled to the ground by a police officer in a shop. Then the officer appears to try to remove something from Charles' mouth. (RTRS)



Britain's Prince William, Duke of Cambridge (left), arrives for his final shift working with the East Anglian Air Ambulance as a pilot at Cambridge Airport, eastern England on July 27. The Duke of Cambridge completed his last shift with the East Anglian Air Ambulance on July 27. (AFP)



Javid



Khan

Britain

UK announces fire safety review:

Britain announced a review of building and fire safety rules on Friday after tests conducted following last month's deadly tower block blaze in London found a cladding system known to be used on 82 buildings breached regulations.

Police have said they believe the system of insulation and cladding panels added during a refurbishment of Grenfell Tower may have contributed to the rapid spread of the fire in which 80 people died.

After initial testing highlighted potential fire risks in buildings across the country, a second, more extensive round of tests found a specific cladding system known to be in use on 82 buildings did not meet building regulations, the government said in a statement.

Alongside the release of the test results, ministers ordered an independent review of building regulations and fire safety.

"It's clear we need to urgently look at building regulations and fire safety," communities minister Sajid Javid said in a statement. "This independent review will ensure we can swiftly make any necessary improvements."

The review will look at the existing regulatory system, compliance and enforcement of the regulations, and will draw on similar regulations overseas. (RTRS)

Fewer homes for poor: London boroughs with the highest property prices are failing to build low-cost homes for their poorest residents, according to a report released on Wednesday that further highlights the social divide in the capital's housing market.

A study by GMB, one of Britain's largest unions, found that six out of the capital's 10 most expensive boroughs built below-average levels of low-cost rental housing in the last year.

Brexit

UK may need 3-yr transition post-Brexit: Treasury chief

Divisions deepen over Irish border

LONDON, July 29, (Agencies): Britain's progress towards life outside the European Union became more entangled on Friday, with divisions deepening over Northern Ireland's border and even the type of divorce Britain actually wants.

The uncertainty coincided with the EU's top negotiator warning that formal talks are set to be delayed, eating up more of the two-year divorce timetable.

Negotiations on the future relationship between Britain and the EU are now less likely to start in October because of a lack of progress at the initial stage of talks about the breakup, Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier has told EU ambassadors.

Britain responded that it was confident that enough progress could be made to start the second stage of talks but as Prime Minister Theresa May holidayed in Italy, her ministers engaged in a public debate about how Brexit should look.

Finance minister Philip Hammond, who opposed leaving the EU in last year's referendum and has one eye on the business community, said there should be no immediate change to immigration or trading rules when Britain leaves.

A shift to new arrangements could last until mid-2022, he said, adding he wanted to avoid a cliff-edge. He stressed that British hospitals and care homes relied as much on EU migrant workers as many businesses.

"We've been clear that it will be some time before we are able to introduce full migration controls between the UK and the European Union," he told BBC radio.

May's loss of her majority in the British parliament with a botched gamble on a snap election has prompted an apparent softening of rhetoric on Brexit. But some EU member state diplomats say it now hard to discern what Britain wants.

Britain has less than two years to negotiate the terms of the divorce and the outlines of the future relationship before it is due to leave in late March 2019. Both sides need an agreement to keep trade flowing between the world's biggest trading bloc and the fifth largest global economy.

"In the immediate aftermath of leaving the European Union goods will continue to flow across the border between the UK and EU in much the same way as they do now," Hammond said.

Predicted

Britain's economy weathered the immediate shock of last year's vote to leave the EU much better than the government and most analysts had predicted.

But growth in the first half of this year has been the weakest since 2012, and earlier on Friday a closely watched consumer survey showed sentiment was its weakest in a year. Households viewed the economy as the worst in four years.

Meanwhile, Britain will abide by some European Union rules for up to three years after it officially leaves the bloc in March 2019, the country's Treasury chief said Friday.

Hammond said a transition period is needed "to get from the status quo today to the new normal." He said the transition should end before Britain's next election,

which is scheduled for 2022.

Many British businesses accuse the government of sending mixed signals about Brexit. Officials say Britain will leave the bloc's single market and customs union, and end free movement from EU countries.

But officials also say the changes, which have huge economic implications, won't happen overnight.

Hammond told Sky News that a transition period will let businesses "go on operating normally" while Britain works out its post-Brexit relationship with the EU.

His comments come amid conflicts within the government between those, including Hammond, who want a compromise "soft Brexit" to ease the economic shock of leaving the EU, and those who want a clean, sharp break.

In related news, Irish Minister Leo Varadkar said Ireland would not accept an economic border with Northern Ireland after Brexit and urged Britain to come up with alternatives in an unusually blunt statement.

"As far as this government is concerned there shouldn't be an economic border. We don't want one," said Varadkar, who came to power last month.

He warned Ireland would not "design a border for the Brexiters" and said that the onus was on Britain to come up with proposals since it had created the problem by voting to leave the European Union.

"It's Britain that has decided to leave and if they want to put forward smart solutions, technological solutions for borders of the future and all of that that's up to them," he told Irish media.

The study comes a month after a huge fire at a social housing block in one of Europe's richest boroughs revealed the city's gaping rich-poor divide.

In the elegant west London borough of Kensington and Chelsea, where the blaze killed at least 80 people and destroyed 127 apartments, only 76 social homes

were built in the last year, according to the council.

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea council has been criticised by locals and politicians for its slow and ineffective response to the fire, which many accuse the authority of turning its back on social housing.

The borough did not respond to questions about the lack of new housing stock. Out of 23,250 homes built London-wide between 2016 and 2017, 5,360 were for the below-market "social" housing sector, according to the study.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan said earlier this month that his growing city needs to build 50,000 homes each year, and aims to deliver 35 percent "affordable" housing — a measure that includes social homes and other reduced-cost schemes.

A spokesperson for the mayor, who was elected last year, said his predecessor had left "outrageously low levels of affordable housing," and Khan's attempts to boost the number built for social rents will be a marathon, not a sprint.

"He has begun by taking important steps to boost the number of new and affordable homes by funding 50,000 new affordable homes to buy and rent, including a third around social rent levels," the spokesman told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. (RTRS)



Relative Mary Mendy holds a picture of the late Mary Mendy (right), and Khadija Saye as attendees of a memorial service for five of the Grenfell Tower victims gather after the service outside St Helen's Church in west London on July 27. (AFP)