

World News Roundup



An interior view of the 'Temperate House' at Kew Gardens in west London on May 3. A gleaming monument to the ambition and creativity of its age, the world's largest Victorian glasshouse will re-open on May 5, 2018 after a lengthy facelift to show off some of the world's rarest plants. The glasshouse is large enough to house three

jumbo jets and has been shut for the past five years for a £41 million (\$57 million, 46 million euros) renovation project. (Inset): A horticulturist waters plants in the 'Temperate House' at Kew Gardens in west London on May 3. (AFP)



This handout photo obtained May 2, 2018 courtesy of the Savannah International Association Fire Fighters (IAFF Local 574) shows a US military C-130 engulfed in flames and smoke down at 21 and Gulfstream Road, in Savannah, Georgia. A military cargo plane with five people aboard crashed in the southern US state of Georgia on Wednesday, according to officials. The emergency management agency for Chatham County, which comprises the city of Savannah, tweeted that a plane had crashed at a highway intersection. Georgia National Guard spokeswoman Desiree Bamba told AFP the aircraft was a C-130 carrying five people. It belonged to the Puerto Rico National Guard, and the condition of the occupants was not immediately known, she said. (AFP)

America

Debate underway ahead of hearing: With few details about Gina Haspel's undercover career, debate over President Donald Trump's nominee to lead the CIA descended into verbal sparring between those who praise her experience and others who want her disqualified because of her role in the spy agency's harsh interrogation of terror subjects after 9/11.

Haspel faces a contentious hearing in the Senate intelligence committee next week ahead of what the White House admits will be a close confirmation vote in the full Senate.

Hoping to sway senators his way, Trump tweeted on Wednesday: "Gina Haspel has displayed dedication and leadership throughout her more than three decades of service with the CIA and is the right person to lead the Agency."

That was a few hours after her critics held a conference call in which Chris Anders of the American Civil Liberties Union lamented: "If confirmed, Gina Haspel would be the first and only person confirmed by the Senate — we believe in its entire history — with a known operational role in using torture." (AP)

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Trump presents teaching award: President Donald Trump presented the National Teacher of the Year award on Wednesday to a Washington state educator who gave him a stack of letters from some of the teenage refugees she teaches that talk about what coming to the US has meant to them.

Trump did not mention the types of students Mandy Manning teaches during a White House ceremony honoring her and other winners. Manning teaches English to new refugee and immigrant students from all over the world at the Newcomer Center at Joel E. Ferris High School in Spokane.

"Teachers like Mandy play a vital role in the well-being of our children, the strength of our communities and the success of our nation," Trump said. "The job of a teacher is not only to instruct the next generation of workers but the next generations of citizens to teach our children to care for others, to think for themselves, to love their country, to be

Privacy

'Foreigners guided NC GOP, Tillis'

Cambridge Analytica to close after FB 'scandal'

LONDON, May 3, (Agencies): Cambridge Analytica, the British marketing analytics firm, announced Wednesday that it was closing and would file for insolvency in Britain and the United States after failing to recover from the Facebook data scandal.

The decision follows weeks of intense pressure on the company, hired by Donald Trump's presidential campaign, after allegations emerged it may have hijacked up to 87 million Facebook users' data. It claimed it has been "vilified" by the "numerous unfounded accusations" which torpedoed its business and left the firm with "no realistic alternative" but to go into administration.

Despite Cambridge Analytica's unwavering confidence that its employees have acted ethically and lawfully ... the siege of media coverage has driven away virtually all of the company's customers and suppliers," it said in a statement.

"As a result, it has been determined that it is no longer viable to continue operating the business."

An affiliate of British firm Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL), CA has offices in London, New York, Washington, as well as Brazil and Malaysia.

It drew attention after former Trump chief strategist Steve Bannon reportedly once sat on its board and was bankrolled to the tune of \$15 million (12.5 million euros) by US billionaire and Republican donor Robert Mercer.

It first became embroiled in scandal in March when Canadian whistleblower Christopher Wylie, a 28-year-old former analyst for the firm, revealed it had created psychological profiles of tens of millions of Facebook users via a personality prediction app.

The revelations instantly reverberated around the world, wiping billions from the social media giant's market value and drawing scrutiny from politicians and regulators on both sides of the Atlantic.

To make matters worse for CA, CEO Alexander Nix was suspended within days after he was filmed by undercover reporters bragging about ways to win political campaigns, including through blackmail and honey traps.

As the crisis intensified, Facebook chief

Mark Zuckerberg was forced to apologise to its billions of users amid a small but growing exodus from the site. He eventually appeared before Congress for a two-day grilling by lawmakers, and has since vowed to overhaul the way the Facebook shares its users' data.

In Britain, regulators ratcheted up a probe into CA, raiding its London offices, and later extending the investigation to 30 organisations, including Facebook.

British authorities, meanwhile, are promising to continue their investigation of Cambridge Analytica, the campaign consultant at the centre of the Facebook privacy scandal, even though the company is going out of business.

Cambridge Analytica announced Wednesday that it plans to file for bankruptcy in Britain and the US, saying negative publicity surrounding allegations that it improperly harvested data from millions of Facebook users drove potential clients away.

Also:

RALEIGH, NC: The North Carolina Democratic Party filed a formal complaint Wednesday against US Sen Thom Tillis and the state Republican Party over work performed by Cambridge Analytica.

Cambridge Analytica is the British-based firm that ex-employees allege vacuumed up data from tens of millions of Facebook users to influence the 2016 presidential race for Donald Trump. The firm, which announced later Wednesday that it is declaring bankruptcy and shutting down, also was paid by the Tillis campaign and the state GOP for work in the 2014 elections, according to campaign finance reports.

State Democrats allege in their Federal Election Commission complaint that Tillis' campaign and the state Republican Party violated the law because Cambridge Analytica employees were foreign nationals who helped make key campaign decisions. Cambridge's website says the company's "unique data-rich voter file" was used to build high-tech profiles for all North Carolina voters and increase turnout, helping Tillis unseat Democratic Sen Kay Hagan.

proud of our history and to be true pillars of their families and their communities."

The word "citizens" was written in all-caps in the president's prepared remarks while the other words were lowercased.

The remarks were projected on three teleprompters in the room for him to read.

The Republican president has taken a hard-line



Trump



Manning

approach to both legal and illegal immigration and for a period suspended the US refugee program. During the campaign, Trump compared refugees fleeing war-torn Syria to a Trojan horse carrying would-be terrorists. He also proposed banning Muslims from entering the country. (AP)

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WH meets VA candidates: The White House is considering a number of candidates to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs after White House physician Ronny Jackson withdrew his nomination for the post.

White House officials said the president intends to take some time finding the right person to lead the sprawling federal agency with 360,000 employees serving 9 million veterans. It's a marked contrast from how President Donald Trump picked Jackson for the post in March after firing former Obama administration official David Shulkin following an ethics scandal and mounting rebellion within the agency. (AP)

Britain

'Let Brits be Belgian'

England votes in local elections

LONDON, May 3, (Agencies): Voters in England went to the polls on Thursday to choose local councillors in the first electoral test for Prime Minister Theresa May since she lost her parliamentary majority last year.

May's Conservative Party is braced for defeats in London, where all 32 local councils are up for grabs, and which is traditionally a stronghold of the opposition Labour Party. But elections are taking place across England, including in cities such as Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle, with a total of more than 4,300 seats being contested.

Turnout is usually low — only around one third of voters bothered in last year's local elections, compared to 69 per cent in the national vote in June.

Since then the government has been rocked by divisions over Brexit, as well as a recent scandal over its treatment of Caribbean citizens who emigrated in the 1960s and 1970s, and which led to the resignation of a senior minister at the weekend.

Also:

BRUSSELS: British EU staff in Brus-

sels should be given Belgian passports after Brexit if they want, Jean-Claude Juncker urged Belgium's prime minister on Thursday, appealing him to end a policy of rejecting most requests.

President Juncker, whose European Commission employs nearly 1,000 Britons who will lose their EU citizenship when Britain leaves the bloc next March, made the appeal to premier Charles Michel directly during a debate in the European Parliament.

Praising Belgium's generosity in hosting European Union institutions, Juncker referred to fears among his own staff that they may lose jobs and careers after Brexit. He told Michel:

"I would also like the Belgian authorities to demonstrate the same generosity when it comes to conferring Belgian nationality on the British officials who are here in Brussels.

"They deserve it. They deserve it. But, as I know that the prime minister is sometimes extremely generous, I am absolutely sure that he will take our wishes and remarks into account."

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