



Migrants rest on a Mediterranean Saving Humans NGO boat, as they sail off Italy's southernmost island of Lampedusa, just outside Italian territorial waters on July 4. An Italian humanitarian group whose boat has been barred from docking in Lampedusa said the health of the 54 migrants it rescued at sea is rapidly deteriorating, prompting fears of another standoff with Italy's populist government. Mediterranean Saving Humans said Friday in a tweet that its sailing boat ALEX was off Italy's southernmost island of Lampedusa, just outside Italian territorial waters, and that it has been banned from entering Italian jurisdiction by ministerial decree. (AP)

Britain

'Outside the govt'

Hammond pledges to fight a 'no-deal Brexit'

LONDON, July 15, (RTRS): British finance minister Philip Hammond said on Monday he would not stay in his job when the country's next prime minister takes over next week, and he would do everything he could to stop a no-deal Brexit.

Hammond told CNBC television he did not want to make life difficult for either **Boris Johnson** or Jeremy Hunt, the two contenders to replace Theresa May as prime minister on July 24.

But he made it clear he would work to block any attempt to take the country out of the European Union without a transition deal to soften the economic shock. "If the new government tries to drive the UK over a cliff edge called no-deal Brexit, I will do everything I can to stop that happening," he said.

A majority of Hammond's fellow British lawmakers voted against a no-deal Brexit earlier this year. But Johnson and Hunt have both said they are prepared to leave the bloc without an agreement if necessary.

Hammond supported the losing Remain campaign in Britain's 2016 Brexit referendum and has angered Leave supporters since then by making clear his opposition to a no-deal Brexit.

Hammond also told CNBC that Facebook's proposed new Libra currency was potential a positive step forward but could become a channel for money-laundering if not properly regulated.

Meanwhile, Germany's Ursula von der Leyen said on Monday she would support giving Britain more time to negotiate its exit from the European Union as part of a series of promises to persuade EU lawmakers to back her as European Commission president.

EU lawmakers will cast their vote in a secret ballot on Tuesday amid worries that von der Leyen will fail to garner the absolute majority required. The greens have already said they will oppose her nomination.

Boris Johnson, the frontrunner to become Britain's next prime minister would want to meet US President Donald Trump within the first two months of becoming prime minister to negotiate a post-Brexit trade deal, the Times newspaper reported on Sunday citing an ally of the former London mayor.

The former foreign secretary is ready to travel to the United States as soon as possible if he becomes the prime minister to secure a limited agreement before the Brexit deadline of Oct 31, the paper said.

Theresa May boogied away one of her last weekends as British prime minister, showing off some of her famously awkward dance moves to Abba hits such as "Dancing Queen" and "Mamma Mia" at a festival. In a video clip, she is shown dancing at the Henley Festival as her husband and other men in black tie swing their arms to the tunes.

Also:

SHEPPERTON, England: Royal officials clad in scarlet outfits took to the River Thames in traditional boats on Monday for the annual "Swan Upping" ceremony, an 800-year-old tradition of counting the swans owned by **Britain's Queen Elizabeth**.

Teams in old fashioned skiffs will row up a stretch of the river over the next five days to carry out the annual census of the birds, shouting "all up" when they come across a mute swan and its family.

The swans and their young cygnets are then counted, weighed and checked for injury.

"I am pleased to see that the breeding season has begun very well this year with a high level of nesting activity on the river," said **David Barber**, the queen's **Swan Marker**. The ancient ceremony dates back to the 12th century when the English crown first claimed ownership of all mute swans, which have long curved necks, orange beaks and white feathers and were then considered a delicacy that would be served at banquets.



Polish President Andrzej Duda (left) and Slovakian President Zuzana Caputova (right), attend a military welcome ceremony at the presidential Palace in Warsaw, Poland on July 15. Caputova is staying for an official visit in Poland. (AP)



Von der Leyen



Sanchez

Europe

Bid to woo EU lawmakers: The nominee to head the European Commission **Ursula von der Leyen** said in letters to lawmakers on Monday that she will propose a guaranteed minimum wage to all EU workers and an unemployment benefit scheme.

In a bid to persuade reluctant socialist and liberal parliamentarians the day before they will vote on her candidacy, von der Leyen said she will also support cutting EU's carbon emissions up to 55% by 2030. She pledged to introduce a "carbon border tax" and to extend the bloc's emissions trading scheme.

She also promised reforms in the way the EU monitors the respect of the rule of law in member states, and pledged an overhaul of migration and foreign policies. (RTRS)

Spanish PM says talks collapsed:

Spain's caretaker prime minister and Socialist leader, **Pedro Sánchez**, says he considers negotiations to form a government with the support of the far-left We Can party have failed.

More than two months after topping the general election but falling far short of a parliamentary majority, Sánchez has not secured the votes of We Can, whose leader Pablo Iglesias wants to be in the Cabinet. The Socialists reject a formal coalition with the anti-austerity party.

Sánchez faces a confidence vote in Parliament next Tuesday. If he fails to gain an absolute majority, he will face a second vote two days later in which he will need a simple majority. Interviewed on SER radio on Monday, Sánchez called on two major right-of-center parties to abstain, to allow him to win the vote and lead a minority government. (AP)

Sweden plane crash kills 9: Nine Swedes were killed when their plane crashed during a skydiving trip near Umea, a small university city in northern Sweden, authorities said on Sunday.

The small plane designed to carry parachutists crashed on an island on the

Poland

Poland says sees EPP representative at EU top

New party leader in 2023: Kaczynski

WARSAW, Poland, July 15, (Agencies): The leader of the right-wing party that has governed Poland since 2015 said Sunday he plans to step down at some point to make way for a new leader in 2023.

Law and Justice leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski is a lawmaker without a Cabinet post but is Poland's most powerful politician, forging the nation's politics.

The 70-year-old Kaczynski said at a "family picnic" campaign event that "four years from now, someone else will stand in my place because I am of a certain age."

Under Law and Justice, Poland's government has instituted generous family benefits that are popular with the country's citizens and have earned the party wide voter backing. It also has taken control of the judiciary in a way that has put Poland at odds with the European Union which says that the nation's rule of law and democratic values are under threat. Kaczynski dismissed the accusation of being "dictatorial."

"It is nonsense," Kaczynski said. "If there was dictatorship there would have been no opposition," and no public criticism of the party, Kaczynski told a rural community in Kuczki-Kolonia.

"We are an island of freedom in Europe," he said.

Poland's government is also critical of EU ways and wants more decision-making powers.

Kaczynski and his twin, Lech Kaczynski, were active in the Solidarity democracy movement in the 1980s and later in democratic Poland's politics as party founders and leaders. In 2006-07 they held the nation's top positions, when Lech Kaczynski was the president and Jaroslaw Kaczynski was the

prime minister until 2007.

President Lech Kaczynski was killed in a plane crash in 2010 and Jaroslaw Kaczynski has worn black suits and black ties ever since, in a sign of mourning.

Meanwhile, Poland's President Andrzej Duda said on Monday he would want a representative of the conservative European People's Party (EPP) to head the European Commission.

The appointee for the job is now Germany's defence minister, Ursula von der Leyen, a member of Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative CDU party, which is part of the EPP.

In other news, Polish cities are resorting to communist-era mobile soda fountains to convince residents to switch to drinking tap water.

Many Poles still believe tap water isn't safe to drink, despite recent upgrades of city water systems, prompting authorities to introduce a modern version of the water trolley that was an integral feature of the city landscape during communist times.

This time, flavoured tap water is also available, such as with raspberry syrup, to make it more appealing.

The water trolleys, known as 'saturators', are now seen in public squares in big provincial cities. They are linked to the municipal water supply network and carbonate the water.

Adam Grabowski, who operates five trolley 'saturators' and two buffet versions of the soda fountain in the southern city of Katowice, said the element of nostalgia is making them popular, particularly among middle-aged and older people who remember the original trolleys.

"In a fraction of a second, people travel back in time and feel younger," said Grabowski.

Katowice and other big cities used

EU funds to modernize and develop their water systems in the past two decades.

"We hope (residents) will see that tap water is tasty and will come home and drink it at home as well. That's what our campaign is about," said Agnieszka Jaszkaniec, a spokeswoman for Katowice Waterworks.

Other Polish cities that have launched tap water campaigns using 'saturators' include Poznan, Czestochowa, Sosnowiec and Bialystok.

Residents of smaller towns and cities, however, may still have reason to be wary of tap water. Unlike in larger cities, many of the water systems in these places are over 50 years old, potentially affecting the water quality, according to a report released by the Polish Supreme Audit Office in June.

Also:

WARSAW: Polish police are searching for the fifth straight day for a small boy whose father failed to deliver him to his mother and then died after being hit by a train.

In one of the force's biggest searches ever, the police, aided by sniffer dogs and drones, have combed in vain through thousands of hectares (acres) of land and abandoned buildings around a highway between Warsaw and **Grodzisk Mazowiecki**, where the father's car was last seen Wednesday.

Later that day, the father of 5-year-old **David Zukowski** was killed by a train. Media reports quoted the train's driver as saying the man threw himself under the train.

The police have been appealing to people for any information and have published images of the boy, who is both Polish and Russian, and of his Polish father.

Umea river shortly after takeoff from Umea airport, police spokesman Peder Jonsson said, adding that those on board were on a skydiving trip.

The police said that all the victims were

Swedish, with one person holding dual citizenship. The names of the victims were not been disclosed.

King Carl XVI Gustaf expressed his sorrow in a statement. "In view of today's

tragic air crash outside Umea, which took nine people's lives, I want to convey my condolences. My family and I send our thoughts to their families and relatives," he said on Facebook. (RTRS)



Police escort people from an abandoned school which they had occupied on the outskirts of Rome on July 15. Police are evicting migrants and Italians from an abandoned former school on Rome's outskirts in the latest operation to empty occupied buildings of migrants and squatters. (AP)

French police fire tear gas: French police fired tear gas to disperse protesters from Paris's Champs Elysees avenue on Sunday, a few hours after President Emmanuel Macron had reviewed the traditional Bastille Day military parade alongside other European leaders.

The famous boulevard was reopened to traffic as soon as the parade finished, but a few hundred protesters from the grassroots 'yellow vests' movement tried to occupy it.

Macron and his guests had already left for the Elysees presidential palace for lunch. Police fired tear gas to disperse the protesters, some hooded, who were trying to block the road with metal barricades, dustbins and other debris.

Several loud bangs were heard. Protesters hurled objects at the police, booted and set bins on fire. Police drove some of the demonstrators to adjacent streets where they regrouped and set up new barricades, drawing more tear gas fire.

A video obtained by Reuters showed a man kicking a policeman to the ground from behind and punching him after the policeman had used pepper spray to push back a couple. The policeman and his colleagues fought back with truncheons. (RTRS)