

Final bid to forge Italy unity

ITALY'S populist parties launched a last-ditch bid yesterday to resurrect a coalition government that collapsed as the president vetoed their controversial pick for economy minister.

Luigi di Maio, head of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement, said on Wednesday he was prepared to offer a compromise candidate in the place of economist Paolo Savona, who has called for Italy to drop the euro.

It would be an olive branch to President Sergio Mattarella, who at the weekend ruled out approving the coalition's cabinet lineup if it included Savona - prompting Di Maio to demand the president's impeachment.

Nearly three months of political turmoil following an inconclusive election in the eurozone's third

biggest economy have rattled financial markets, although they rebounded slightly on Wednesday and yesterday.

Investors have deep doubts over Italy's financial stability, with the country struggling under a debt mountain of €2.3-trillion (R29-trillion).

Popular support has soared for the nationalist League party, Five Star's more powerful coalition partner, leading many to fear that fresh elections could essentially become a referendum on euro membership.

Mattarella has asked pro-austerity economist Carlo Cottarelli to form a caretaker government, but now says he is assessing Di Maio's offer of a compromise with "great interest".

The League has been beating

the drum for new elections, but its leader, Matteo Salvini, said on Wednesday he had never closed the door on hammering out a government.

Salvini, 45, and the 31-year-old Di Maio were to meet in Rome.

Cottarelli, meanwhile, has a caretaker team ready to step in should the Five Star-League negotiations fail - but the lineup is doomed to lose a confidence vote in the populist-dominated parliament, meaning that elections would likely be held after August.

The timing of polls is already the subject of heated debate, with the centre-left Democratic Party saying they should be held in July while the League says they should take place after the summer holidays. - AFP

Lithuania, Romania 'knew CIA might torture suspects'

LITHUANIA and Romania were complicit in a controversial CIA programme to hold terror suspects in secret detention sites on their territories, the European Court of Human Rights ruled yesterday.

Two suspects now being held at the US military prison in Guantanamo Bay lodged the case with the court in 2011 and 2012, saying they had been illegally held and tortured at CIA "black sites" in Romania and Lithuania from 2004 to 2006.

The court said Romanian authorities had known Saudi national Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri would risk torture and the death penalty when it allowed the CIA to hold him at a secret facility in their country from

April 2004 to November 2005.

Nashiri is accused of orchestrating maritime terror attacks including the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen that left 17 dead.

The former Soviet republic of Lithuania was found complicit in hosting a secret CIA prison from February 2005 to March 2006, when it illegally held a top Palestinian operative for al-Qaeda, Abu Zubaydah.

A 2014 US Senate report found Zubaydah and Nashiri - considered high-level detainees - had been subjected to enhanced interrogation techniques in CIA detention, including waterboarding, or simulated drowning. - Reuters

Clock ticks on trade war

Tensions simmer as deadline for US tariffs on EU steel, aluminium looms

TRADE tensions between the European Union and the United States ran high yesterday as the clock was ticking for US steel and aluminium tariffs against European producers to kick in.

On Wednesday, US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross rejected calls to extend exemptions on the punishing import tariffs and warned that duties for massive US imports of vehicles were on the horizon.

Washington would announce plans to impose tariffs on EU steel and aluminium imports, two sources said, while a magazine reported US President Donald Trump was now focused on pushing German cars from the country.

German magazine Wirtschaftswoche reports that Trump had told French President Emmanuel Macron he wanted to stick to his trade policy long enough that Mercedes-Benz cars were no longer cruising through New York, news that dented share prices in BMW, Daimler and Volkswagen.

The Trump administration launched a national security investigation last week into car and truck imports, using the same 1962 law that he has applied to curb incoming steel and aluminium.

The prospect of the metals tariffs taking effect today caused mounting frustration in Europe, the single-largest source of US steel imports.

"World trade is not a gunfight at the OK Corral," French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire quipped yesterday, in reference to a 1957 western movie.

Le Maire warned that the EU would take all necessary measures if the US imposed the tariffs.

"It's not everyone attacking the other and we see who remains standing at the end," he said, declaring that the stiff taxes would be "unjustified, unjustifiable and dangerous".

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the EU would respond in a firm and united manner to the tariffs.

"We want to be exempt from these tariffs" which were not compatible with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules, Merkel

told a media conference with Portuguese premier Antonio Costa in Lisbon.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, meanwhile, warned against the threat of protectionism, saying yesterday that international partners could have no interest in the clock being turned back on trade policy.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday that Washington would allow the EU exemption to expire, after weeks of talks failed to yield a compromise, such as a quota arrangement.

EU-US tensions are casting a shadow over a meeting of finance ministers from the world's top economies which opened in a Canadian mountain resort yesterday.

The harsh duties imposed in March to combat global overcapacity of the metals and boost domestic production were only among a flurry of different developments, coinciding with a political crisis in Italy, which this week has roiled markets.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin was due to hold meetings with his European counterparts to discuss Trump's confrontational trade agenda, officials said.

But Jacob Kirkegaard, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said the agenda Canada, the current G7 chair, had set for the meeting - which included uncontroversial themes such as inclusive development and innovation in finance - would be swept aside amid the raw relations between America and its traditional allies.

"Hopefully they can agree to keep talking about these issues, although that is unlikely," he said, adding that Trump's recent actions proved to US allies that Washington would not de-escalate the dispute.

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström and Japanese Economy Minister Hiroshige Seko also warned yesterday against the US threat, saying it would cause serious turmoil in the global markets.

Such tariffs could also lead to the demise of the multilateral trading system based on WTO rules, the ministers cautioned. - AFP, Reuters

IN BRIEF

Al-Assad threatens US-backed Kurds

SYRIAN President Bashar al-Assad has warned US-backed Kurdish forces he would not hesitate to use force to retake the third of the country they control.

"The only problem left in Syria is the SDF," al-Assad told Russia Today in an interview aired yesterday, referring to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces which have spearheaded battles against Islamic State jihadists.

"We're going to deal with it by two options," he said.

"The first one: we started now opening doors for negotiations. Because the majority of them are Syrians, supposedly they like their country, they don't like to be puppets to any foreigners," al-Assad said.

"We have one option, to live with each other as Syrians.

"If not, we're going to liberate the areas by force. It's our land and the Americans should leave." - AFP

Media body slams staging of murder

THE International Federation of Journalists has described the staged murder of a Russian dissident journalist who dramatically reappeared alive a day later as "intolerable" and "inadmissible".

Ukrainian authorities had said Arkady Babchenko, a 41-year-old critic of President Vladimir Putin and of Russian policy in Ukraine and Syria, had been shot dead at his flat on Tuesday.

But Babchenko reappeared on Wednesday in the middle of a media briefing about his own "murder".

The incident raised many questions, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said yesterday.

He said he expected to get further details on his trip to Kiev later yesterday. - Reuters

Stiff fines for rowdy Amsterdam tourists

AMSTERDAM has warned rowdy British and Dutch tourists who party excessively in the city that they could face stiff fines, in the latest campaign to halt drunken mayhem on the streets.

The campaign specifically targets men aged between 18 and 34 who are increasingly attracted by the Dutch capital's beer-drinking and soft-drug culture, as well as the salacious draw of its red light district.

Enticed by cheap travel, groups of young men frequently roam the inner city's canal-lined streets on elaborate pub crawls or to celebrate stag parties.

"All too often the result is drunkenness, litter and public urination," Amsterdam Marketing said. - AFP

Man admits Prince George terror plot

A BRITISH man, who suggested Islamist militants should target four-year-old Prince George - destined to be Britain's future king - pleaded guilty to terrorism offences yesterday.

Husnain Rashid, 32, posted information on the Telegram messaging service to encourage jihadis to carry out attacks along with information to help them with possible targets such as soccer stadia.

Prosecutors said this included posting a picture of Prince George, son of Queen Elizabeth's grandson Prince William and his wife Kate, and third in line to the throne, next to a silhouette of a jihadi fighter. - Reuters



NOT FEELING THE LOVE: Activists shout slogans during a protest against corruption at the Kenyan parliament. Picture: REUTERS

Kenyatta, Odinga kiss and make up

KENYAN President Uhuru Kenyatta, opposition leader Raila Odinga and their deputies exchanged hugs and apologies yesterday, cementing their pledge to promote unity after a fractious and bloody election.

The unusual scene unfolded at the country's annual national prayer meeting.

It came eight months after Kenyatta's re-election in a drawn-out poll that divided the nation and left at least 92 people dead, rights groups said.

In March, longtime rivals Kenyatta and Odinga shook hands and pledged reconciliation in a move that stunned the nation, as well as members of Odinga's opposition alliance who said they had not been consulted.

What is now known as "The Handshake" had spurred endless speculation but little concrete action.

N Korean talks positive - Trump

UNITED STATES President Donald Trump said talks with North Korea in New York have been very positive and he was expecting the delegation from Pyongyang to travel to Washington today to deliver a letter to him from leader Kim Jong-un.

"I look forward to seeing what's in the letter," Trump said yesterday as he left Joint Base Andrews for a trip to Houston.

Asked if a deal was taking shape, Trump said: "I think it will be very positive. The meetings have been very positive."

If the North Korean delegation goes to the White House, it would be the first visit by high-level officials from there since 2000 when Jo Myong-rok, a marshal, met President Bill Clinton.

Trump said he was hopeful his summit with Kim would take place on June 12 as originally scheduled but left open the possibility talks would fall through.

"I want it to be meaningful," he said.

"It doesn't mean it gets all done at one meeting, maybe you have to have a second or a third. And maybe we'll have none."

After decades of tension on the Korean peninsula and antagonism with the United States, Washington has been demanding North Korea abandon its nuclear weapons programme amid reports that it is close to being able to launch a nuclear-tipped missile capable of reaching the US mainland.

Pyongyang has long argued that it needed nuclear weapons for security.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and high-ranking North Korean official Kim Yong-chol entered a second day of meetings yesterday as they set the stage for the historic summit. - Reuters

122 pregnant minke whales killed in Japan's 'gruesome' whale hunt

JAPAN killed 122 pregnant minke whales during a highly controversial annual whaling expedition that Tokyo defends as scientific research but conservationists call gruesome and unnecessary.

The four-month expedition in the Antarctic ended in March after the fleet killed 333 minke whales, according to a report submitted by Japanese authorities to the International Whaling Commission last month. Of those, 122 were pregnant, according to the Japanese report.

Humane Society International, a conservationist group, called the figures "a shocking statistic and sad indictment of Japan's whale hunt".

"It is further demonstration, if needed, of the truly gruesome and unnecessary nature of whaling operations, especially when non-lethal surveys have been shown to be sufficient for scientific needs," it said. - AFP



HOT MESS: Lava flows from Fissure 8 of the erupting Kilauea volcano in Hawaii. The lava channel was estimated to be about 30m wide

New evacuation call as lava flow advances

AUTHORITIES have urged people in Hawaii to evacuate an area at risk of being cut off by a flood of lava from the erupting Kilauea volcano.

"Hawaiian Volcano Observatory reports that lava from several fissures continues to advance towards the Kapoho area," a Civil Defence message said on Wednesday, referencing an area that was devastated during a 1960 eruption.

"Residents of Kapoho Beach Lots and Vacationland are advised to evacuate. You are at risk of being isolated due to possible lava inundation."

Authorities had earlier advised that lava flow from Fissure 8 had blocked a major highway and caused an electricity blackout, and recommended evacuations of other nearby areas.

Meanwhile, a 4.5 magnitude earthquake with an epicentre at Kilauea itself was recorded on Wednesday at 11am. - AFP

Big rise in sales of electric vehicles

ELECTRIC car sales around the world rose by 54% last year, taking global stock across the three million threshold, the International Energy Agency said in a report.

In China, the world's biggest market for electric vehicles, sales also grew by about half - but their market share remained small at 2.2%.

In Norway, electric vehicles have by far the world's highest market share, with 39.2%, according to the energy agency.

The Paris-based agency was optimistic about the sector's prospects. "Supportive policies and cost reductions are likely to lead to significant growth in the mar-

ket uptake [of electric vehicles] in the outlook period to 2030," the report said.

Should policymakers honour their current commitments to the environment, "the number of electric light-duty vehicles on the road [would reach] 125 million by 2030," it said.

And should policy ambitions develop further, that number could become as high as 220 million in 2030, it said.

But the agency said for the cars of the future to overtake their petrol and diesel-powered competitors, governments will have to take the lead.

"The main markets by volume

[China] and sales share [Norway] have the strongest policy push," the energy agency said.

"Looking ahead, the strongest current policy signals emanate from electric car mandates in China and California, as well as the European Union's recent proposal on carbon dioxide emissions standards for 2030."

The EU has committed to cutting 40% of its greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels, and to boosting its use of renewable energy by at least 27%.

France has announced a plan to end sales of petrol and diesel vehicles by 2040. - AFP

Making Port Elizabeth the cleanest and best in Africa

Become part of the solution

By Liezl Cronjé

Our focus is to set a new, clean baseline for Port Elizabeth on September 15 and that means we all need to stand together, especially if we wish to reach our goal of the cleanest city in Africa by 2021.

So contact the Sustainable Seas Trust (SST) now to find out what you, your family, school, business or community can do to help.

Cleaning a beach, your neighbourhood, your estuary is valuable and does help, but the real target is to ensure that it does not get littered again a few days later.

That means we all need to be part of an education programme that encourages people to adopt the correct behaviour and to influence others.

So if you would like to help with education and capacity building or to guide us as we develop the Education Resource Book for Africa, then please let us at SST know.

This is a wonderful opportunity to build the right capacity in Africa to be able to share the knowledge, education programmes, training projects and skills-transfer opportunities.

To achieve this, you have the golden opportunity to locally help us develop the African Waste Academy which will interact throughout Africa.

Most people do not recognise that plastic, glass and tins have real value and that trash can turn into cash.

That is what keeps recycling businesses profitable. However, we are working towards developing economic enterprises and other value-added incentive schemes that will make it worthwhile for anyone to pick up trash and be rewarded financially.

Once again your ideas are welcome as we take small and big steps to make our city, our neighbourhoods and our tourist and recreational areas the cleanest in Africa.

Join us now and be sure to take part in the big clean-up of September 15.

Liezl is the events manager for the African Marine Waste Network, a collaborative effort to address the issue of marine waste at a pan-African level. The network is an initiative of the Sustainable Seas Trust, a Kenton-based charitable trust dedicated to harnessing the power of people everywhere to promote conservation, sustainability and habitat restoration. Find out how you can play a part at <https://africanwastenetwork.org.za>

DID YOU KNOW that Port Elizabeth, the Swartkops Estuary and Algoa Bay have been chosen to lead the way in getting rid of plastic and other debris?

Has your school, your business, your factory, your bank, your hotel and your home joined the movement to make our area the cleanest in Africa?

Not only that, the methods we develop in Port Elizabeth may then be used elsewhere in Africa as we shall, with your help, provide proof of concept and become a role model.

You can become part of the endeavour to pioneer new methods for finding out how much plastic litters areas where we live, work, study and play and then flows down our rivers and estuaries into the sea.

We are using satellites, drones and aeroplanes over the next few years.

You and your friends, your school or recreational group can join us testing mobile apps and other recording systems to help set baselines and then monitor where plastic, tins and bottles are accumulating and what routes they follow to the sea.

We need to know where the litter and debris originate from so we can cut it off at the source.

It is of utmost importance to develop a successful strategy to keep our areas clean.

If you wish to know more about this international project to clean our town, rivers and beaches then read on and do not hesitate to contact us.

If the research and measuring does not interest you, then you can become part of the biggest clean-up to date on September 15.

This is the date on which the Ocean Conservancy (oceanconservancy.org) has set as its 33rd Annual International Coastal Clean-up.

However, in our case, we, with your help, are not just planning on cleaning the beaches and other coastal areas.

We also aim to clean the estuaries, rivers, suburbs and towns as we shall all join the Let's Do It World (www.letsdoitworld.org) initiative to get a billion people around the globe to work together for a cleaner planet.

STOP!

THE USE OF PLASTIC BAGS

TOGETHER WE CAN CREATE A NEW FUTURE

SPAR