

SPAIN'S 'LOST' GEN STRUGGLES TO FIND PLACE

CADIZ, Spain: Sleeping in, hanging out in the park and slouching in front of the TV is how 18-year-old Carlos Cabilla, a member of Spain's so-called "lost" generation, fills his days. Like nearly three in ten Spanish youths, the tattooed and pierced 18-year-old is unemployed, not studying and not seeking work, the product of an education system that experts say fails to adequately prepare students for the job market. Their plight is a key concern for Spanish voters in a Dec 20 general election in which conservative Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy faces a hard-fought battle to retain power. Cabilla lives in Segunda Aguada, a working class neighborhood in the southwestern port of Cadiz, where the unemployment rate stands at a whopping 37 percent, compared to 21 percent at the national level. For those under the age of 25, the jobless rate surpasses 60 percent. Cabilla started studying hairdressing when he was 15 but dropped out after just one term. He has only had a few odd jobs since then. "I wake up at around noon, I spend the afternoon with friends in a park, we talk, we smoke (joints), until 10 or 11 pm," he said.

He then returns to the flat he shares with his father Ramon and his partner, as well as his 22-year-old brother and 13-year-old half-brother. He also spends hours watching TV or playing video games. When asked how he sees his son, Ramon, a who works for the local government, says: "Unmotivated". "I am worried but I have no other choice but to put up with it. I can't put him in the street," he added. His son is not alone. During Spain's decade-long building boom many young people dropped out of school to get well-paid work on building sites or in the services sector.

But when the property bubble collapsed in 2008, sending the Spanish economy into a tailspin, these jobs dried up, leaving thousands of youth out of work and without education. Just over 27 percent of Spaniards aged 15-29 were neither in school nor



CADIZ, Spain: Carlos Cabilla poses in the "parque de bomberos" (Fireman's Park) on Dec 4, 2015. —AFP

working in 2013, according to the OECD, compared to 15 percent for the entire 34 nations that make up the club of mostly rich nations. The situation has become so common in Spain there is even a new word for it - "NiNi", a colloquial Spanish contraction combining "neither" and "nor" referring to youth who are not studying and who don't even try to find a job.

'No Useful Training'

Part of the problem is that Spain does not offer high-quality apprenticeship schemes and short-term vocational training like those that exist in other European nations like Germany, said Anna Laborda from the ESADE business school in Barcelona. "There is no practically training that is really useful," she said. Vitor Rebola of Spain's Youth Council, which groups 76 youth organizations from across the country, said "there is a lack of ambition on the part of institutions" to help these youngsters.

The body calls for more professional training schemes to fight Spain's school drop-out rate of 22 percent, the highest in the European Union. "Before it was really easy to dream, today no," said Ramon. Today young people "are bitter and they don't talk about their future because they don't have one," he adds. His son Carlos agrees. "I don't know how my future is going to be, I don't even know what I am going to do this afternoon."

A fan of tattoos - his neck, chest, arm and hand are covered in them - Carlos dreams of becoming a tattoo artist. But he said he does not have the Euro 700 (\$760 dollars) to pay for the course and has missed the deadline to sign up this year. "I'm a slacker," he said. Carlos has not bothered to sign up at the local jobs centre. "It's useless," said his uncle Antonio Garcia, 38, who himself has been unemployed for the past three years. Both Antonio and his nephew Carlos plan to vote for new far-left party Podemos, which has made the fight against economic inequality a central part of its platform. —AFP

UKRAINIAN LAWMAKER MANHANDLES PREMIER

ROWDY SCENES IN PARLIAMENT

KIEV: Fighting broke out among members of Ukraine's ruling coalition yesterday after a member of President Petro Poroshenko's bloc physically picked up Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and pulled him from the podium. Yatsenyuk was defending his embattled government's record when lawmaker Oleh Barna walked over to him, presenting him sarcastically with a bunch of red roses. Barna then grabbed him around the waist and groin, lifting him off his feet and dragging him from the rostrum.

Members from Yatsenyuk's People Front party waded in, pushing Barna and throwing punches. Lawmakers from Poroshenko's bloc joined the fray and an angry brawl ensued for several minutes before deputies returned to their seats. The incident exposed deep divisions in the pro-Europe coalition that have fuelled speculation the government could fall even as Ukraine's Western backers warn that time is running out for Kiev to make good on its promises to root out endemic corruption and cronyism.

Yatsenyuk is, like Poroshenko, a pivotal player in the pro-Western leadership that emerged after the downfall of the Moscow-backed Viktor Yanukovich in Feb 2014. But support for him has fallen dramatically in the past year. "The atmosphere in the room provoked mentally unbalanced people. Oleh Barna served on the frontline and is therefore too impulsive, but that does not excuse his actions," the head of Poroshenko's bloc Yuriy Lutsenko told journalists.

The brawl interrupted a question-and-answer session with Yatsenyuk, 41, after he delivered a summary of the performance of his government, which after exactly one year in power is now no longer immune from being dismissed by parliament. "I told you a year ago that nobody is going to promise the moon," Yatsenyuk said, appear-



KIEV: A deputy from the Ukrainian President's political party attacks Ukrainian Prime minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk (right) during the annual report of the government in the Ukrainian parliament yesterday. —AFP

ing to defend his cabinet from accusations they have not made good on their reform promises. "You have full constitutional right to vote on the question of dismissing Ukraine's cabinet. Put it to the vote. I'll accept the decision of the Ukrainian parliament. I'm not clinging to this chair," he said.

Opposition parties are calling for a no-confidence motion to be tabled and commentators say enough votes could be gathered to dismiss the government, but a vote is not yet likely due to the lack of a candidate to replace Yatsenyuk. In an impassioned speech on Tuesday, US Vice President Joe Biden urged parliament to put their differences aside to approve reforms, including critical tax and budget bills and judicial changes, without which he said Ukraine would fail to rebuild itself

on transparent, democratic lines.

"The President, the Prime Minister, the members of this august body - all of you must put aside parochial differences ...If you fail, the experiment fails," he told parliament. A disagreement over proposed tax amendments and the draft 2016 budget has delayed the disbursement of up to \$4 billion in international loans which Ukraine had hoped to secure to boost its war-torn finances before the end of the year. Yatsenyuk said the government had submitted a "compromise" tax reform bill and urged lawmakers to approve the amendments before the turn of the year. Yatsenyuk's People's Front party triumphed in parliamentary elections in 2014, but the approval rating for the party is now around 1 percent. —Reuters

PROSECUTORS END BRITAIN'S PHONE HACKING PROBE

LONDON: Prosecutors announced yesterday they would take no further action in Britain's mammoth phone-hacking probe, ending a four-year investigation that rocked the political and media establishment to the core. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said it would take no further action against News Group Newspapers (NGN), global media baron Rupert Murdoch's British tabloid publisher. England's state prosecutors also said there would be no further action against 10 journalists from the rival Mirror Group Newspapers (MGN) stable - among them former Daily Mirror editor Piers Morgan. The phone hacking scandal, which first emerged in 2006 and resurfaced explosively in 2011, engulfed top newspaper executives, police chiefs and politicians. It swiftly sank the expose-led News of the World weekly tabloid, which was Britain's biggest-selling newspaper. The probes into voicemail interception and other alleged media crimes amounted to the biggest police investigation in British history.

Several journalists from Murdoch's publications have been individually convicted of voicemail interception offences. But since July, the CPS was also considering whether to prosecute NGN as a whole for corporate liability. It was further deciding whether to bring phone hacking charges against 10 MGN journalists. But Alison Saunders, the director of public prosecutions, announced the CPS was dropping both probes.

Insufficient Evidence

"We have decided there is insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of a conviction and therefore no further action will be taken in any of these cases," she said. "There has been considerable public concern about phone hacking and invasion of privacy. Over the past three years, we have brought 12 prosecutions and secured nine convictions for these serious offences. These decisions bring the CPS's involvement in current investigations into phone hacking to a close." The CPS said they had been considering potential corporate charges of phone hacking and perverting the course of justice against NGN. However, "the law on corporate liability in the United Kingdom makes it difficult to prove that a company is criminally liable if it benefits from the criminal activity of an employee," the CPS said. "There is no evidence to suggest that any member of the board of NGN had knowledge of phone hacking when it was taking place."

On perverting the course of justice, it said there was nothing NGN employees could have done between 2006 and 2011 which would have altered or affected the phone hacking prosecutions. Furthermore, "the fact that NGN decided to settle rather than resist civil proceedings cannot be considered to be actions which could pervert the course of justice". —AFP