

International

Trump renews war of words with London's Muslim mayor

US president links immigration to deadly wave of knife crime

LONDON: A baby-shaped blimp meets a thin-skinned president: cue the renewal of a war of words between Donald Trump and London's first Muslim mayor, encompassing terrorism, crime and good manners. Mayor Sadiq Khan has "done a very bad job on terrorism", Trump declared, linking immigration to a deadly wave of knife crime in London, as he began a contentious four-day trip to Britain this week.

"You have a mayor who has done a terrible job in London," he said in an interview with Friday's edition of The Sun newspaper. It was the latest potshot in a feud that began when Khan, the son of a bus driver who emigrated from Pakistan in the 1960s, criticized Trump's travel ban on people from certain Muslim countries. Khan responded Friday by saying terrorism was a global problem which also affected other European cities. "What is interesting is Trump is not criticizing mayors of those cities, but he is criticizing me," he told BBC radio. Trump's comments blaming immigration for crime in England were "preposterous", he said. The president ridiculed Khan in June last year following the latest in a spate of terror attacks in London.

Distorting a message from Khan, telling Londoners there was "no reason to be alarmed" by an increased police presence, Trump tweeted: "At least 7 dead and 48 wounded in terror attack and Mayor of London says there is 'no reason to be alarmed!'" At the time, Khan criticized Trump as "ill-informed" and on Friday,

lauded the "special relationship" between Britain and the United States. Asked if the new row could jeopardize that bond, he said: "It takes two to tango, and I'm not tweeting President Trump or saying beastly things about him."

Pigs and babies

Khan added: "I think our prime minister (Theresa May) should have the confidence to speak to the US

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president on equal terms and it's for President Trump to say what he wants about me: I'm not going to rise to President Trump's views." Khan is a member of the opposition Labour party. His predecessor as London mayor was the Conservative Boris Johnson, who resigned this week as foreign secretary in protest at

May's blueprint for Brexit.

In his Sun interview, Trump accused May of violating British voters' wishes with the plan and, for good measure, praised Johnson as an alternative prime minister. If Johnson and Trump are kindred spirits politically, Khan this week authorized a plan by protesters to float a six-metre (19-foot) inflatable of a distinctly orange nappy-clad baby bearing Trump's face above London's Parliament Square on Friday.

Trump's attack on May's Brexit plan drew scorn from across the political divide as being ill-mannered during a high-profile visit. But the president told The Sun that Khan himself had "not been hospitable to a government that is very important". "Now he might not like the current president, but I represent the United States," he said, insisting that "millions" of Britons supported his hard line on immigration. The London mayor has powers over policing and transport in the capital of eight million people, but does not control immigration policy, which is set nationally by the Home Office.

Khan's authorization for the "angry baby" stunt has infuriated Trump supporters in Britain such as Brexit champion Nigel Farage, who called it an "insult". Conservative MP Michael Fabricant was accused of Islamophobia after tweeting a cartoon showing the Muslim mayor's head on an inflatable balloon, engaged in a sex act with a pig. Fabricant later deleted the tweet and apologised. But the war



LONDON: This combination of files pictures shows Mayor of London Sadiq Khan (left) and US President Donald Trump. US President Donald Trump criticized London Mayor Sadiq Khan over recent terror attacks and knife crime in an interview published in the Sun on July 13, 2018. —AFP

of words escalated as Labour lawmaker David Lammy said Trump's real problem with Khan was not about policy but the mayor's faith. "He hates that London chose a Muslim mayor. The President is racist. He does not deserve to meet our Queen today #StopTrump," he tweeted. —AFP

Bad blood over golf course stalks Trump's Scotland trip

EDINBURGH: Discord over a golf course dating back over a decade means there is little love lost between Donald Trump and the pro-independence government in Scotland, where he will be teeing off over the weekend during his visit to Britain. Trump, whose mother was from Scotland, is expected to stay at his luxury golf resort at Turnberry. Most of the controversy has centered on his other course, known as Trump International Golf Links. In the run-up to his first visit as US president, Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has been celebrating the construction of a wind farm that the billionaire tycoon tried to stop because it spoiled the view from his resort. "A famous golf course owner from America who, I think, has now turned his hand to politics, decided to take the Scottish government to court to try to block these wind turbines," the Scottish National Party (SNP) leader said as the first turbine was switched on last week. "The Scottish government beat that American golf course owner in court... and these amazing wind turbines generated their first electricity," she said. Sturgeon has refused to meet Trump on his visit but has resisted pressure from some Scottish lawmakers to deny him landing rights at Glasgow's Prestwick Airport. He will be greeted by Scottish Secretary David Mundell, from the British Government, when he arrives north of the border on Friday.

Fierce opposition

For someone who claims extraordinary negotiation skills, Trump's forays into Scottish tourism and politics over the years have had mixed results. He bought 1,400 acres of land near Aberdeen in 2006 and promised to build "the world's best golf course". The proposal was welcomed by former first minister Jack McConnell—who named Trump a "Global Scot" business ambassador in 2006 shortly before his Labor Party lost power to the SNP. But local councilors



EDINBURGH: Protesters carry placards as they take part in the Scotland United Against Trump demonstration through the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland yesterday, on the third day of US President Donald Trump's four-day UK visit. —AFP

rejected the plan amid fierce opposition from conservationists and neighboring residents.

The SNP government overturned the councilors' decision shortly after golf-loving nationalist Alex Salmond took control, kicking off a short and tempestuous bromance with Trump who called Salmond "an amazing man". However, the relationship cooled when Trump's promise to create 6,000 jobs and invest £1 billion failed to materialize, and Trump began interfering with the SNP's flagship plan to make Scotland a renewable energy powerhouse. The Trump Organization has spent around £100 million on the course, known as Trump International Golf Links, and employed around 650 temporary and permanent staff—but the company insists the resort remains a work in progress.

'I am the evidence'

Three years later Trump visited the Scottish Parliament to complain about plans to build 11 "ugly" offshore wind turbines near his newly minted

Aberdeenshire resort, insisting the development would do "terrible damage" to Scottish tourism. Trump declared "I am the evidence" when Scottish lawmakers asked him to back up his assertion that the wind farm would "destroy the financial wellbeing of Scotland". Six years on, overseas visitors to Scotland have increased by nearly a quarter and renewable energy now powers over two-thirds of Scottish homes and rising.

Trump threatened to pull all of his investment in Scotland if the wind farm went ahead—but bought another golf course instead. With dramatic timing, Trump came to Scotland to open his second golf resort at Turnberry on June 24, 2016 - the day after Britain voted to leave the European Union. Protests are expected across Scotland over the weekend, including at his golf courses as well as at Glasgow's George Square and in the capital, Edinburgh. Demonstrators rallied for Trump's arrival in Britain Thursday, massing at several sites he visited, ahead of a mass protest expected to draw thousands on Friday. —AFP

Trump meeting Queen rankles with many Britons

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II welcomed US President Donald Trump for tea at Windsor Castle on Friday—a meeting which many Britons find the toughest part of his already contentious trip to swallow. Trump walked ahead of the 92-year-old while inspecting troops and did not bow when he met her—a couple of minor protocol breaches—but the meeting went smoothly. Trump was gracious about the British sovereign in a newspaper interview out Friday in which he attacked Prime Minister Theresa May's strategy on Brexit.

However, his previous comments about the royals have been less tactful, including boasting he would have slept with Diana, princess of Wales "without even hesitation", and saying "who wouldn't" photograph the Duchess of Cambridge topless. Some 1.86 million people signed a petition at the June 2017 general election, wanting to prevent Trump from making a state visit "because it would cause embarrassment to Her Majesty the Queen". His four-day trip to Britain is not a state visit—with the formal trappings of a carriage procession and certain banquets—but it bears many of the hallmarks, including time with the head of state.

A YouGov poll of 1,648 British adults conducted on Monday and Tuesday found that half thought Trump's working visit to Britain should go ahead, with just over a

third thinking it should be cancelled. However, the meeting with Queen Elizabeth on his first visit to Britain as US president still seems to rankle. Just one in three (35 percent) thought the monarch should meet Trump, as opposed to half (49 percent) who thought she should not.

'Great and beautiful grace'

Trump was treated with a guard of honor when he arrived at Windsor Castle, west of London. The Coldstream Guards gave a royal salute and played the US national anthem. The two heads of state inspected the guard before watching them march past, in the castle's quadrangle. The Trumps then went for tea with Queen Elizabeth. "For so many years she has represented her country, she has really never made a mistake. You don't see, like, anything embarrassing. She is just an incredible woman," Trump told The Sun newspaper. "My wife is a tremendous fan of hers. She has got a great and beautiful grace about her."

His previous comments about members of the royal family have not been so generous. Buckingham Palace said no other royals will be meeting him at Windsor. Trump has previously spoken about Prince William's wife Kate and his late mother Diana. William, second in line to the throne, is the monarch's grandson. In a 1997 interview, just weeks after Diana's death, US radio host Howard Stern asked Trump if he "could have nailed her". Trump replied: "I think I could have." In 2000, Stern asked Trump if he would have slept with Diana. The tycoon replied: "Without even hesitation." "She was crazy, but these are minor details."



WINDSOR: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II escorts US President Donald Trump into Windsor Castle in Windsor, west of London on the second day of Trump's UK visit. —AFP

'Only herself to blame'

In 2012, after Kate was photographed sunbathing topless in France, Trump weighed in on Twitter. "Who wouldn't take Kate's picture and make lots of money if she does the nude sunbathing thing. Come on Kate!" he wrote. "Kate Middleton is great—but she shouldn't be sunbathing in the nude—only herself to blame." Trump will not be meeting Queen Elizabeth's eldest son and William's father Prince Charles, the

heir to the throne. A January 2017 report in The Sunday Times newspaper said Trump and Charles would not meet during his visit to Britain due to their strongly divergent views on climate change. Prince Charles is a keen environmentalist. A source close to Trump was quoted as saying: "He won't put up with being lectured by anyone, even a member of the royal family. Frankly, they should think twice about putting him and Prince Charles in the same room." —AFP

Explosive thrown at house of Sinn Fein leader

BELFAST: An explosive device was thrown at the home of Gerry Adams in Belfast overnight, the former Sinn Fein leader said yesterday, saying the attack may have been carried out by Irish nationalist militants opposed to Northern Ireland's peace deal. A second device was thrown at the home of the party's former Northern Ireland Chairman Bobby Storey, he said.

Adams told journalists that no one was hurt in either attack, but that two of his grandchildren had been in his driveway 10 minutes before and could have been killed. A police spokesman said remnants of "large industrial, firework-type devices capable of causing serious damage or injury" were found at both locations after the attacks, which he said took place late on Friday. The Belfast attacks came after days of street violence in Northern Ireland's second city Londonderry, which police blamed on militant Irish nationalists opposed to a 1998 peace deal that Adams helped to broker.

Asked if dissident Irish nationalists were responsible for the attack on his home, Adams said that "there may be a connection with what is happening in Derry", referring to Londonderry. Adams later said he was willing to meet with dissident nationalists and pro-British groups involved in violence in east Belfast in a bid to end recent street violence. Northern Ireland's peace deal largely ended three decades of violence between Irish nationalists who wanted the region to join the Republic of Ireland and pro-British unionists who wanted it to remain British. More than 3,000 died in the violence. Several groups of dissident Irish nationalists remain active and carry out occasional attacks, but their capacity is tiny compared with the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which decommissioned its weapons after the 1998 deal. Many of the dissidents consider Adams and his Sinn Fein party - the former political wing of the IRA - as having betrayed the Irish nationalist cause by signing a peace agreement with the British government. Political leaders in Northern Ireland have warned that Britain's decision to leave the European Union and the possibility of infrastructure on the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish republic for the first time since 1998 could help dissident groups to recruit new members. —Reuters

France marks Bastille Day with military parade

PARIS: Fighter jets streaked over Paris yesterday as part of a massive military parade in a "demonstration of controlled force" on France's national day, due to be followed by a street party if "Les Bleus" win the World Cup. Thousands of people, many of them tourists, thronged the Champs Elysees avenue to watch the march past involving 4,290 soldiers, 220 vehicles, 250 horses, 64 jets and 30 helicopters.

Many of them waved little tricolor flags distributed by the French army. President Emmanuel Macron flagged off the two-hour spectacle and was joined by two guests of honor: Singapore Prime Minister Hsien Loong and Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono. The theme of this year's Bastille Day was "fraternity in arms" and featured Spanish gendarmes, Belgian armored vehicles and an Airbus A400M military transport plane from the German defense fleet.

"We have come here because we heard it's the best military parade in the world," gushed a 40-year-old Vietnamese man who gave his name as Koi. Japanese honeymooners Yoshi and Mika said they had come to witness an important French cultural event and also to see Japanese soldiers marching down the Champs Elysees. There were two minor glitches: one of the planes in the flypast supposed to be leaving the blue, white and red colors of the national flag in their trail spread a line of red instead of blue and two motorbike-riding gendarmes fell off after a minor collision. —AFP