



This handout photo made available by the marine conservation organization Sea Shepherd on Friday shows what they report to be a blue whale awaiting slaughter at the Hvalur hf whaling station in Hvalfjörður in Iceland on July 7, 2018. — AFP

WHO recognizes 'compulsive sexual behavior' as mental disorder

GENEVA: The World Health Organization has recognized "compulsive sexual behavior" as a mental disorder, but said yesterday it remained unclear if it was an addiction on a par with gambling or drug abuse. The contentious term "sex addiction" has been around for decades but experts disagree over whether the condition exists. In the latest update of its catalogue of diseases and injuries around the world, the WHO takes a step towards legitimizing the concept, by acknowledging "compulsive sexual behavior disorder", or CSBD, as a mental illness.

But the UN health body stops short of lumping the condition together with addictive behaviors like substance abuse or gambling, insisting more research is needed before describing the disorder as an addiction. "Conservatively speaking, we don't feel that the evidence is there yet... that the process is equivalent to the process with alcohol or heroin," WHO expert Geoffrey Reed told AFP yesterday.

In the update of its International Classification of Diseases (ICD), published last month, WHO said CSBD was "characterized by persistent failure to control intense, repetitive sexual impulses or urges... that cause marked distress or impairment". But it said the scientific debate was still ongoing as to "whether or not the compulsive sexual behavior disorder constitutes the manifestation of a behavioral addiction".

Reed said it was important that the ICD register, which is widely used as a benchmark for diagnosis and health insurers, includes a concise definition of compulsive

sexual behavior disorder to ensure those affected can get help. "There is a population of people who feel out of control with regards to their own sexual behavior and who suffer because of that," he said pointing out that their sexual behavior sometimes had "very severe consequences". "This is a genuine clinical population of people who have a legitimate health condition and who can be provided services in a legitimate way," he said.

It remains unclear how many people suffer from the disorder, but Reed said the ICD listing would likely prompt more research into the condition and its prevalence, as well as into determining the most effective treatments. "Maybe eventually we will say, yeah, it is an addiction, but that is just not where we are at this point," Reed said. But even without the addiction label, he said he believed the new categorization would be "reassuring", since it lets people know they have "a genuine condition" and can seek treatment.

Claims of "sex addiction" have increasingly been in the headlines in step with the #MeToo movement, which has seen people around the world coming forward with allegations sexual mistreatment. The uprising has led to the downfall of powerful men across industries, including disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein, who has reportedly spent months in treatment for sex addiction. Reed said he did not believe there was reason to worry that the new CSBD listing could be used by people like Weinstein to excuse alleged criminal behaviors. "It doesn't excuse sexual abuse or raping someone ... any more than being an alcoholic excuses you from driving a car when you are drunk. You have still made a decision to act," he said.

While it did not recognize sex addiction in the first update of its ICD catalogue since the 1990s, WHO did for the first time recognize video gaming as an addiction, listing it alongside addictions to gambling and drugs like cocaine. The document, which member states will be asked to approve during the World Health Assembly in Geneva next May, will take effect from Jan 1, 2022 if it is adopted. — AFP

governor of the oil-rich province and energy chiefs, protesters took to the streets of Basra city as well as other parts of the province and the unrest spread further afield. Overnight in Maysan, several protests were held outside the headquarters of various political parties - including Abadi's Dawa Party - and some were set on fire, Iraqi media reported. A small protest also took place after midnight in the northern Baghdad district of Al-Shula amid a heavy deployment of security forces, a security source told AFP.

The source said a few protesters were still out on the streets of Al-Shula yesterday morning, adding that the demonstration was peaceful. Unidentified calls were also posted on social media for massive demonstrations to take place yesterday in Baghdad. Some urged demonstrators to head for the fortified Green Zone, an area out of bounds for most Iraqis where the country's key institutions and embassies, including the US and British missions, are located.

Yesterday, dozens of protesters rallied in different parts of Basra, including at the West Qurna and Majnoon oil fields west of the city, an AFP correspondent said. Protesters were gathered at Basra's Umm Qasr port and outside the governor's office in the center of the city. A group of demonstrators also staged a brief protest at the Safwan border crossing with neighboring Kuwait.

On Friday, hundreds of people holding Iraqi flags gathered outside the governor's office in Basra while protests also took place in the provinces of Dhi Qar and Najaf. Shiite clerics, including Moqtada Sadr whose populist coalition triumphed in May elections, have backed the protesters but urged them to refrain from violence. Sadr has sought to form a broad coalition with rivals including Abadi, but the process has been complicated by the supreme court ordering manual recounts in areas where the election was disputed.

After visiting Basra, the prime minister chaired a security cabinet in Baghdad, his office said in a statement accusing "infiltrators" of feeding on "peaceful protests to attack public and private property". "Our forces will take all the necessary measures to counter those people," the statement said. Iraq's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, had expressed solidarity with protesters, saying they faced an "extreme lack of public services" such as electricity in the scorching summer heat. Sistani, who has millions of followers, rarely intervenes in politics, but has wide sway over public opinion. Officially, 10.8 percent of Iraqis are jobless, while youth unemployment is twice as high in a country where 60 percent of the population are aged under 24. — Agencies

Outrage as Iceland fishermen kill rare whale

REYKJAVIK: Is it a blue whale or not? The slaughter in Iceland of what is claimed was a member of the endangered species has triggered outrage and left experts puzzled about its true identity. "There has not been a blue whale harpooned by anyone for the last 50 years until this one," Sea Shepherd, an international non-profit marine conservation movement, said in a statement on Wednesday. The group, which published photos of the mammal being butchered for export at an Icelandic whaling station on the night of July 7, said the fishermen "posed for photos next to and even on top of the whale in a sign they knew very well this was a rare blue whale".

But Icelandic experts are not completely certain whether it is indeed the world's largest leviathan, which the International Whaling Commission has been protecting since 1966. They're also not sure if it could be the endangered fin whale, the second largest animal on the planet, which can only be legally hunted in Iceland despite an international moratorium on whaling. Kristjan Loftsson, CEO of Hvalur hf, the whaling station which slaughtered the animal, said they did so believing it was a fin whale. Most of the fin whales killed are exported as meat to Japan. "We see blue whales all the time and

identify them by their blowholes...but we leave them alone," he told AFP.

For Gisli Vikingsson, a scientist at the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute in Reykjavik, the butchered whale's characteristics are similar to both the blue and fin whale. "There is a large dorsal side with a small dorsal fin like a fin whale...this explains perhaps why it was hunted as such," he told AFP, adding its "size and markings on the side are like those of a blue whale." He added the whale could even be a hybrid species resulting from cross-breeding between the fin and blue whale, which is a rare phenomenon.

Since 1987, five such animals have been observed in Icelandic waters and they are known to be infertile. All killed whales in Iceland undergo DNA tests after the hunting season and the results are released during the fall. However, due to the controversy surrounding this particular case, a test will be done earlier than planned and the results are expected at the end of July. But Sea Shepherd said the fishing crew which butchered the animal mixed its parts with previously caught fin whales, making "it difficult or impossible to locate during potential inspections by the authorities".

"This shows how inaccurate and imperfect this hunting is and there is no need to continue it," Sigursteinn Masson, Iceland representative for the International Fund for Animal Welfare, told AFP. Should the killed whale be confirmed as a hybrid, then things could become even more complicated as there are no laws to protect them. "Hybrids are much more rarer than the blue whales," Masson said. — AFP

Eritrea president hails unity with...

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The move left Ethiopia landlocked, and the deterioration of relations after the outbreak of the war in 1998 forced Addis Ababa to channel its foreign trade through Djibouti. The two countries showed little sign of rapprochement since the signing of the Algiers peace agreement in 2000 after a conflict which left 80,000 people dead before settling into a bitter cold war.

Analysts say the surprisingly rapid burying of the hatchet was possible only because of Abiy's ascension to the post of prime minister in April. As part of a whirlwind set of reforms, Abiy announced last month that Ethiopia would abide by a 2002 UN-backed ruling and hand back disputed border territory to Eritrea, including the flash-point town of Badme. However Ethiopia has not announced the pullout of troops from the area. Abiy then paid a historic visit to Eritrea, where the two leaders announced the re-establishment of diplomatic and trade ties that could

mean big benefits for both nations, and the wider Horn of Africa region, plagued by conflict and poverty.

The emotional reunion between the two countries has allowed residents to speak to each other by telephone for the first time in two decades as communication lines were re-opened. Direct flights are due to start next week. "Can one find appropriate words to describe the intensity of popular emotions that has gripped both countries; the depth and significance of the promising changes underway in the region!" Eritrean Information Minister Yemane Gebremeskel said on Twitter after Isaias arrived. Ethiopia's state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate said Isaias would also re-open the Eritrean embassy during his three-day stay. A state dinner in his honor will be held today.

Eritrea and Ethiopia are both among Africa's poorest nations. However, Ethiopia has seen double-digit growth in recent years and is seeking wider options for importing goods and exporting from its nascent manufacturing industry by eyeing ports in Somalia and Eritrea. Meanwhile Eritrea, one of the world's most isolated nations, has pursued policies that have hamstrung the economy by scaring off investors, including an indefinite military conscription program the UN has likened to slavery. — AFP

Pak mourns bombing that...

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"It has never been more true that Pakistan's security establishment needs to focus on security, not politics," tweeted analyst Mosharaf Zaidi as mourners gathered to bury their dead in Mastung yesterday. More funerals were planned for the afternoon.

Hospitals in the area have been placed under "emergency" management after being overwhelmed in the hours after the attack, with around 150 also wounded in the blast - many still in critical condition. "I could hear voices screaming. I tried to get up and I saw people trying to run towards the gate. They were trampling over dead bodies," survivor Rustom Raisani told AFP from his hospital bed. "We have imposed emergency (management) in the hospitals and cancelled the vacations of the doctors and paramedics," Balochistan home minister Agha Umar Bungal said AFP.

The provincial home secretary Haider Shako added that extra security forces had been deployed in "sensitive areas" and warned politicians to remain "vigilant". A caretaker government has been installed ahead of the July 25 election, and prime minister Nasirul Mulik declared today would be a day of mourning. The attack was by far the deadliest of a series of blasts at various campaign events this week that have killed at least 154 people, including two local politicians, and underscored ongoing security challenges following years of optimism over improvements.

Security analyst Rahimullah Yusufzai termed the

blasts a "wave of terror" that indicated coordination between militant groups, and noted that security forces could not protect every single campaign event. But "they have been sidetracked," he added of the military, and "criticized for taking sides and focusing on politics". He predicted the bloodshed would continue "until the election and even after".

Violence has dropped significantly since the country's deadliest-ever militant attack, an assault on a school in the northwestern city of Peshawar in 2014 that left more than 150 people dead, mostly children. The military intensified operations against militants in the tribal areas along the border with Afghanistan in the wake of that attack, and security has improved dramatically.

But analysts have long warned that Pakistan is not getting to the root causes of extremism, and that militants retain the ability to carry out spectacular attacks like the blast in Mastung. "It has proved that the work that was required was not done," the head of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, said in televised comments yesterday. He warned that unless terrorism is wiped out "these incidents will continue to happen".

Lahore resident Shahzad Anwar told AFP yesterday that such an attack was the result of the "failure of security institutions". "It's wrong. It should not happen. The security institutions should work on this," he said. Sharif's return is set to increase political tensions as his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz seeks to fend off a challenge from the party of cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan at the polls. Sharif has been banned from holding political office, but analysts have said his return is aimed at reinvigorating support for his party, now led by younger brother Shahbaz, which is limping towards the vote after a lackluster campaign. The military has already warned of a security threat in the run-up to the vote, and said it will deploy more than 370,000 soldiers on polling day. —AFP

Kuwait security situation stable...

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brethren in Iraq would find a way to resolve their issues and bring stability back to their country.

The Kuwaiti embassy in Baghdad confirmed the safety of Kuwaiti nationals in Iraqi cities, calling for avoiding gathering places and roads. "At a time when we confirm the safety of all Kuwaiti citizens visiting Iraq, we are calling for avoiding gathering places and roads," Ambassador Salem Al-Zamanan told KUNA. He called for coordinating with the embassy in Baghdad in case of traveling to Kuwait by calling round the clock on 07802604123, 078300004444 and 078311112222.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Airways announced halting its flights to Najaf until further notice due to the current security conditions in the city. In a statement released yesterday, Kuwait Airways said that it will either divert existing bookings for Najaf to other aviation companies or return the airfare back to clients without fees. Iraqi authorities halted flights from Al-Najaf International Airport yesterday as demonstrators protesting against a lack of services in the country broke into the airport.

Two more demonstrators were killed in southern Iraq, officials said, as protests against unemployment spread yesterday from the port city of Basra to other parts of the country including Baghdad. The deaths overnight in Maysan province on the border with Iran brought to three the number of demonstrators killed since the protests erupted Sunday in neighboring Basra. A spokesman for the Maysan health authorities, Ahmad Al-Kanani, said the pair died from gunshot wounds in the provincial capital Amarah. It was not clear who killed them but Kanani said there had been "indiscriminate gunfire" in the city.

Dozens more have been wounded in the past week, including security forces, according to medical sources. The unrest comes as Iraq struggles to rebuild after a devastating three-year war against Islamic State group militants, and with the country in political limbo following May elections. The demonstrations over unemployment, the rising cost of living and a lack of basic services escalated after a protester was killed by security forces on Sunday in Basra. Demonstrators set tyres ablaze to block roads and tried to storm government installations.

On Friday, Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi flew to Basra from Brussels, where he had attended a NATO summit, to try to restore calm. But even as he met the