

CAN ITALY'S CLOWN-LED PARTY RUN THE CIRCUS?

TIPPED TO BECOME ROME'S FIRST FEMALE MAYOR

LIVORNO, ITALY: Their leader has been dubbed the clown prince of Italian politics. And now the Five Star Movement (M5S) looks set to be given the chance to run the circus by taking control of the country's capital. With Virginia Raggi tipped to become Rome's first female mayor after a run-off vote this weekend, the spotlight has turned to M5S's performance in smaller cities where it already holds power.

It is a record that is mixed in Parma (population: 200,000) and Livorno (160,000), both of which have had mayors elected on an M5S slate since the last set of local polls in 2014. "The impression is that the actions of these mayors have led to disappointment. They raised hopes so highly that they were impossible to be fulfill and inevitably a certain disillusionment set in afterwards," said Lorenzo De Sio, a professor of political

sociology at the Luiss university in Rome.

Founded by comedian Beppe Grillo, Five Star has established itself as the primary opposition force in Italian politics against a backdrop of deep divisions on the right between centrist allies of fading figurehead Silvio Berlusconi and a far right tendency led by the Northern League. Grillo's movement insists it belongs to neither left nor right, basing its appeal instead on a call for voters to throw out an established political class it depicts as chronically corrupt and incapable of change.

Legal headaches

That is why the problems encountered by mayors, Federico Pizzarotti, in Parma, and Filippo Nogarini, in Livorno, have presented M5S with a knotty presentational problem and highlighted the scale of the challenge involved in trying to be a "party unlike the others".

"The movement has a major problem, it does not have a stock of experienced people and the two mayors had problems finding officials to appoint to different sections of their respective administrations," said De Sio. M5S activists have split over the different treatment the two mayors have received from the party in reaction to relatively minor legal woes they have encountered. Nogarini is seen as having been let off lightly after prosecutors began looking at the recruitment of new staff at the city's near-bankrupt refuse collection company. — AFP



ROME: This combination of files pictures created on June 06, 2016 shows Virginia Raggi (L), Five Star Movement (M5S) candidate for the election of Rome's mayor, during a campaign meeting on June 3, 2016 at Piazza del Popolo in Rome and Democratic Party candidate Roberto Giachetti (PD) during a public debate on May 3, 2016 in Rome. — AFP

BRITISH MP SHOT AND INJURED

LONDON: A British lawmaker from the opposition Labor Party has been shot and injured in her constituency in northern England, media reported yesterday.

Jo Cox, 41, a mother of two, was left bleeding on the pavement after the incident in Birstall in Yorkshire, the Press Association cited an eyewitness as saying. "At 12.53 today, police were called to a report of an incident on Market Street, Birstall, where a woman in her 40s had suffered serious injuries and is in a critical condition," the police said in a statement.

"A man in his late 40s to early 50s nearby also suffered slight injuries. Armed officers attended and a 52-year-old man was arrested in the area," it said. Channel 4 News quoted Cox's office as saying that the pro-EU MP had been shot and stabbed. The BBC said she was flown by air ambulance to Leeds. Contacted by AFP, her offices in London and Yorkshire could not immediately be reached. "Very concerned about reports Jo Cox has been injured. Our thoughts and prayers are with Jo and her family," Prime Minister David Cameron tweeted. — AFP

KENYA: JUDGE UPHOLDS USE OF ANAL PROBES TO DEFINE SEXUALITY

MOMBASA, KENYA: A Kenyan court has upheld the use of anal examinations to determine a suspect's sexual orientation. Mombasa High Court Judge Mathew Emukule said Thursday he found no violation of rights or the law and dismissed the petition.

Two men had sought a court ruling to stop enforced anal examinations and HIV tests of men accused of being gay after they were subjected to the procedures. The two were arrested in a bar near Ukunda along Kenya's Indian Ocean coast in February 2015 on suspicion of engaging in gay sex, which is a criminal offense in Kenya.

In their petition, they said the anal examinations and HIV and hepatitis B tests they were forced to have amounted to being subjected to torture and degrading treatment. — AP

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