

Newslinks for Sunday 2nd April 2017

Brexit 1) What Easter Ministerial holiday? May team's trade tour.



"Mrs May has instructed her top team to spend the Easter break selling Britain abroad as a mecca for inward investment. Chancellor Philip Hammond is being posted to India with a "heavyweight delegation" which includes Bank of England governor Mark Carney. Mr Hammond said he'll be "banging the drum for British business" and promoting the best of what we have to offer. International Trade Secretary Liam Fox will tour Manila, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Dubai and Oman. He said: "It's nine months since we voted to leave the EU, and the signs are all positive. The economy is strong, as is inward investment, employment and consumer spending." – [Sun on Sunday](#)

Brexit 2) Gibraltar "lobbied to be named in May's letter, Foreign Office wanted it in, Downing Street and Dexu wanted it out"

A minister said: "Gibraltar lobbied very hard to have them specifically mentioned in our letter and it was rejected by Dexu, to the annoyance of the Foreign Office. The Gibraltar government is feeling very let down. The Spanish have gone behind our backs and got their side of the argument in the EU [draft negotiating guidelines]. They've put the issue up in lights and Gibraltar might be pivotal when it wasn't before. This is an illustration of how one issue can jeopardise the entire unanimous agreement we need to get any deal." – [Sunday Times \(£\)](#)

Brexit 3) Ministers pondered security negotiation gambit



"Leaked minutes of a Brexit cabinet committee meeting on March 7 show ministers identified the UK's "very strong hand" on defence as a key advantage in negotiations. Those present said security would be a "defining" issue for the EU and that Britain should not "underplay" its hand as it seeks to secure a favourable free trade deal. Michael Fallon, David Davis, Philip

Hammond and Boris Johnson are all understood to have spoken up about the importance of British security to the EU ahead of talks.” – [Sunday Telegraph](#)

- Robertson says military mustn't be used as a bargaining tool – [Observer](#)

Brexit 4) Labour, LibDems, Tory Remainers plan ways of shafting Great Repeal Bill

“Staff working for MPs from both parties have drawn up a battle plan as Lib Dem leader Tim Farron threatened to wage legislative warfare against the Government's Great Repeal Bill, described by critics as a “power grab”. The meeting last Friday came just days after Remainers hinted they could form a “centrist” party as Jeremy Corbyn dooms Labour to history. Tory MP Anna Soubry, Mr Farron and former Lib Dem chief Nick Clegg are among those said to be considering trying to create a viable force.” – [Sunday Express](#)

- Tory Leavers and Remainers will unite to oppose the Great Repeal Bill – Dan Hodges, [Daily Mail](#)

> Yesterday: ToryDiary – [If Britain needs a new party, we'll only find out after Brexit](#)

Brexit 5) Paterson backs an end to subsidies for British farming post-Brexit



“The shock forced a radical shake-up in the country, with sheep farms replaced by deer parks and vineyards. But critics claim it led to widespread economic distress and a sharp rise in suicides...Mr Paterson argued that there were ‘clear lessons to be learnt from the policy adopted by New Zealand... which demonstrated that food production can increase when farmers are given the freedom to react to the market’...A source close to Ms Leadsom said yesterday that Ministers were unlikely to follow the New Zealand precedent directly because ‘the rug had been pulled away too abruptly’, although the way in which subsidies are applied would be looked at closely.” – [Mail on Sunday](#)

Brexit news in brief

- Write-up of the Brexit week – Tim Shipman, [Sunday Times \(£\)](#)
- Swedish MEP says his country will be the next to leave – [Sun on Sunday](#)
- Mervyn King pro-Leave interview – Bryan Appleyard, [Sunday Times \(£\)](#)
- Cabinet member briefs that aim of cutting immigration to tens of thousands is dead – [Sunday Express](#)
- Post-Brexit passport redesign – [Sun on Sunday](#)
- Britain won't pay £60 billion, says Iain Duncan Smith – [Sunday Express](#)

- We are not obliged to pay a penny – John Redwood, [Sunday Express](#)
- Poulter wants NHS staff to have special Brexit passports – [Sun on Sunday](#)
- Martin Selymayr, the Eurocrat determined to punish Britain – [Mail on Sunday](#)
- Joseph Muscat, the Maltese leader determined to punish Britain – [Mail on Sunday](#)
- Two thirds of students want a second referendum – [Independent](#)
- New Trade Department Permanent Secretary “bungled Probation Service privatisation” – [Mail on Sunday](#)

Brexit 6) Charlie Elphicke: May must call an election if necessary



“And it’s not just the EU the Prime Minister must face down. She will be assailed by Labour, Lib Dem and SNP MPs who long for things to go wrong. They will always put party before country. For them, nothing her Government does will ever be good enough. Yet the British people know this is a Government that wants Britain and her people to succeed and prosper. A Government that believes Britain’s best days are yet to come. That’s why if MPs fail to back her she shouldn’t hesitate to take it to the country – and win.” – [Sun on Sunday](#)

Brexit comment in brief:

> Today: ToryDiary – [The Brexit negotiation. Don’t believe everything you read in the media. \(Not that you would anyway.\)](#)

Leadsom to unveil toxins tax

“Leadsom’s plan is expected to extend pollution payments to several more cities, including Birmingham, Leeds, Southampton, Nottingham and Derby, which are already planning to impose toxin taxes on older lorries, coaches and taxis from 2019. Under the new proposals this could be extended to diesel cars too. Under the plans, a network of “clean air zones” will be set up,

with councils mandated to impose bans or charges on polluting vehicles that enter them. They will be enforced with camera networks similar to those used in London. Punitive taxes on new diesel vehicles are expected to follow in the chancellor's autumn budget. This will fit with longer-term plans to make all new cars and vans "zero emission" – that is, electric – by 2040 – [Sunday Times \(f\)](#)

Adam Bolton: Forget UKIP – and Labour as a potential Government. The Liberal Democrats will become the third force in Britain and the real opposition at Westminster



"The latest analysis of council voting patterns by Professor Michael Thrasher ahead of this year's local elections finds the Lib Dems well up. National equivalent vote share compared with four years ago is Conservatives 31% (+5), Labour 29% (no change), Lib Dems 22% (+9) and Ukip 10% (-12). If the votes are cast that way on May 4 the Lib Dem party will reclaim its place as the third force in English politics from Ukip while Labour will have another poor set of results. The next crucial vote on Britain in the EU will come if and when the May government and Michel Barnier's EU team agree a Brexit deal. That gives the Lib Dems two years to harry the government on an issue that matters to them profoundly" – [Sunday Times \(f\)](#)

> Today: Andrew Mitchell on Comment – [Lippy, serious, funny – and right about women. Meet my Labour neighbour, Jess Phillips.](#)

News in Brief

- Airports and nuclear power stations on terror alert as government officials warn of 'credible' cyber threat – [Sunday Telegraph](#)
- Terror taskforce set up to tackle prisoner extremism – [Sunday Express](#)
- The Prince of Wales donates to Aid to the Church in Need – [Mail on Sunday](#)
- Harvey Proctor sues "Nick" – [Sunday Times \(f\)](#)
- Tax and benefit changes could hit hard-working families the hardest – [Sun on Sunday](#)
- Study reveals Scotland's sectarian equality gap – [Scotland on Sunday](#)
- Academics claim online campaigning in general elections is out of control – [Observer](#)
- Karl McCartney says IPSA boss must stand down following leak – [Sun on Sunday](#)
- Amnesty criticises Johnson over mother held in Iran – [Sunday Telegraph](#)
- Bob Dylan finally accepts Nobel Prize – [Independent](#)

[6 dead, 3 missing in north China house blast](#)



CCTV News.

A house explosion on Saturday night killed six people, with another three missing, in north China's Shanxi Province, local authorities said Sunday.

Seven people were pulled out of debris after the blast happened around 10:30 p.m. Saturday at the Nanhuan West Road in Tiantan Town in the city of Linfen, said an official with the city's publicity department.

Six of them died, and rescuers are searching for the other three missing.

Another six people at the blast spot are slightly injured.

Cause of the case is being investigated.

The EU sets out its stall

The bark of the EU was less aggressive than the spin prior to the formal document. Mr Tusk tells us "The Union will be constructive throughout and will strive to find an Agreement". He sees the UK as a "close partner in the future". He welcomes the UK's understanding that you cannot belong to the single market without accepting all the four freedoms.

It is also clear that the EU would like a free trade agreement, and an agreement on intelligence, counter terrorism, defence and security co-operation. Indeed, why wouldn't they, when you see how it is so strongly in their interests. The Union is worried that the UK might seek to negotiate and talk to individual member states likely to be sympathetic, so the document seeks to ban any talks by the EU 27 individually with the UK about Brexit. The Union has moved its language a bit on the rights of UK citizens living on the continent and EU citizens living in the UK, in recognition that they need to reassure and secure the position of all involved. It still falls short of the full guarantee that should be offered.

So what are the catches? There are three main obstacles to an agreement latent in this proposal. The first is the continued provision for a "divorce bill". The language is less inflammatory and there is some understanding that any payment has to be based on "legal and budgetary commitments". So maybe they will see there are no financial obligations beyond our continuing budget contributions up to the date of departure.

The second is wish to delay work on a future trade relationship and other matters concerning our future co-operation until a second phase. This is reinforced by saying that any free trade agreement has to be "finalised and concluded once the UK is no longer a member state". If by this they mean the day after we leave we can register a free trade agreement already sorted out then this is fine, but if they mean we sit down and sort one out after departure they will have to adjust to high tariffs against their strong agricultural exports to the UK from Day One.

The third is the mantra that "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed". This could delay necessary agreements over matters like citizens rights, and makes the likelihood of all the EU member states and the other EU institutions agreeing that much more difficult.

The UK in response to this should continue with warm words and friendly intent, but also should inject some pace and energy into the timetable. Uncertainty helps neither side. It will be no easier to agree these things in 2019 than now. Lets flush out whether they are serious about wanting a deal. If they are not, lets just leave.

Tibetan communities embrace new funeral customs

Rinchen, 40, works at a crematorium in a Tibetan community in northwest China.

For Tibetans, sky and water burials have traditionally been the most common funerary customs. Cremation has only been used in the modern age.

The Chabcha town funeral management house, where Rinchen and his wife work, was founded in 1982. It was one of the first crematoriums in Qinghai province, home to over 1.37 million ethnic Tibetan people.

“It took a very long process of consulting high monks before establishing the crematorium. The site for the cremation house was chosen by the tenth Panchen Lama,” said Duraga, deputy director of the civil affairs bureau of Gonghe County, which administers Chabcha Town. Chabcha is the seat of the government of Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai.

“In less developed Tibetan communities, such as herding areas, people still favor sky burials. But in the city, more Tibetan people now choose cremation,” said Duraga.

There are four cremation houses at the crematorium.

“In the 1980s, only a few dozen people were cremated here each year,” said Rinchen, whose father-in-law was the first person to run the crematorium.

Last year, 352 people were cremated there, and most of them were Tibetans from Qinghai, Gansu and northwest Sichuan.

Families usually put the ashes in bags made of white cloth and scatter them at sacred mountains and lakes.

“People scatter the ashes at sky burial sites at Qinghai Lake and the Yellow River, which flows through the county,” said Rinchen.

“Before each cremation, families of the deceased invite monks from nearby monasteries, such as Khyamru Monastery, to give sermons and preside over the ceremonies,” he said.

Rinchen and his wife Tsering make sure the lamps are always lit. Their family now lives at the crematorium.

“When I started living here, I often felt scared. Now I light lamps every day, touching the prayer wheels. It is a job to keep me busy,” said Tsering.

“I use my hands to help the deceased finish their last step in the world. I feel it is the natural thing to do,” she said.

About a few hundred miles to the southwest, Chindo County, in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, is an area where sky burials are more common. Most of the people in the county are herders.

Tashi, who performs sky burials, often has to get up early to prepare for the rituals.

In sky burials, bodies are fed to vultures and other predatory birds. Buddhists believe in a cycle of rebirth and advocate kindness and charity. The spirit of the dead is believed to leave the body the moment a person dies and the dead should be fed to hungry vultures as a last token of charity.

Tashi is a monk at Lab Monastery. He started performing sky burial rituals in 2011. The Serkhang sky burial site, located about 3,800 meters above sea level at the foot of a snow-capped mountain, receives over 30 bodies every year.

"A burial starts at four in the morning and lasts about seven hours. I make sure every detail is right for the ritual," he said.

However, sometimes sky burial rituals do not go so smoothly. Environmental drives to kill rats on grasslands have led to a decline in the number of vultures and eagles.

"Some people may still honor tradition, but others may want the modern methods of burial. The people will choose on their own," said Wang Fayu, director of social affairs office of the Qinghai Provincial Civil Affairs Department.

A crematorium has been set up in every Tibetan autonomous county in Qinghai to provide diverse choices for the people, said Wang.

"The living buddhas said in the end, humans return their bodies to nature. No matter which method chosen, it is to show respect to the deceased and give solace to the living," said Rinchen.

[Nation calls for greater poverty relief effort](#)

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee held a meeting Friday, calling for greater effort on poverty alleviation.

Members of the bureau heard reports on provincial Party committees and governments' achievements and evaluation work on poverty relief in 2016 during the meeting, presided over by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee.

China has set 2020 as the target year to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all aspects, and “the hardest part is to lift poor rural population and counties out of poverty and eradicate poverty on a regional basis,” said a statement issued after the meeting.

The meeting agreed that achievements made during the past years showed that the goal could be accomplished as long as practical and solid effort was made and current policy and work intensity maintained.

Salient problems, however, remain, including low quality poverty relief, a lack of targeted measures and lax supervision of funds, according to the statement.

Stressing strict requirements during poverty elimination, the CPC leadership said the work report system and responsibility system for poverty elimination must be effectively enforced.

In addition, strict evaluation and inspection of poverty alleviation must be carried out to ensure goals are achieved.

The people’s interests should be put in first place in advancing poverty relief, while leading officials at various levels should strengthen their sense of mission and responsibility and synergize efforts, the statement said.

Poverty relief is the historical mission of the CPC and the responsibilities of heads of Party committees, governments and departments at various levels, it said.

The meeting also called for effort to consolidate the foundations of precise poverty alleviation, take corresponding measures and inspire officials and people in areas with poverty.

The requirements of strict Party governance should be implemented comprehensively and responsibilities on poverty elimination should be fulfilled faithfully, the statement said.

Evaluation of poverty relief should play its role and pragmatic work styles be followed, it noted.

China aims to reduce the number of rural residents living in poverty by over 10 million in 2017, including 3.4 million relocated from inhospitable areas.