

Bell tolls for Big Ben as four-year silence begins



The face of the Great Clock of the Elizabeth Tower, commonly referred to as Big Ben

London
London landmark Big Ben fell silent for four years in front of a reverential crowd yesterday amid an outcry over the temporary loss of a cherished symbol of stability at a time of national uncertainty.

At midday, 12 bongs from the famous bell rang out in front of around 1,000 local residents, tourists and MPs who came out to mark Big Ben's longest silence in its 157-year history for extensive repair work.

The atmosphere was sombre as the hour chimes heralded the final bongs.

The 12th and final bong was followed by sustained applause and cheering.

"I can see it from where I live. I do live my life by it," said Denise Wiand, one of the spectators, who lives across

the River Thames.

"I'm 72 and I'm worried it might be the last time I actually hear them!" she said.

Thomas Moser, a 54-year-old German tourist, said: "The crowd were really listening. We are here, we want to hear every single sound."

The bongs are a venerated marker of British life, used at the start of radio and television newscasts, and a focus for national occasions and the midnight countdown to New Year's Day.

The sound is also familiar beyond Britain, as it is broadcast on the BBC World Service.

The bell is housed in the Elizabeth Tower, which looms over the Houses of Parliament and is one of Britain's most popular tourist attractions.

The bells are being stopped

due to fears that prolonged exposure to the 118-decibel bongs from the 13.7-tonne Big Ben could damage the hearing of renovation workers.

But the decision has silenced an emblem of continuity as Britain grapples with Brexit negotiations.

Politicians have claimed that when they agreed to the work, they did not know the chimes would be silenced for four years.

Prime Minister Theresa May is among those unhappy at the shutdown and the House of Commons has now said it will reconsider how long the bells will stay silent.

MP Stephen Pound led some 300 people who came out of parliament to mourn the midday chimes.

"It was like it was saying goodbye to us," he said. (AFP)

#PollToday



Do you think people fleeing conflict zones should be given "temporary visas" by neighbouring countries?

Yes No Cant Say



"Special temporary visas should be granted to people fleeing conflicts in neighbouring countries"

Pope Francis

Rest in sight

Sailors missing after US destroyer collision



Ten US sailors were missing and five injured after their destroyer collided with a tanker near Singapore.

Hackers hit Malaysian sites over Indonesia flag gaffe

Indonesian hackers claimed responsibility for attacking more than 30 Malaysian websites following a gaffe that saw Indonesia's flag printed upside-down in a magazine.

HK leader defends jailing of activists

Hong Kong's leader defended a court's decision to jail three leading democracy activists.

Van hits people at Marseille bus stops

One person was killed and another seriously injured in Marseille after a van ploughed into people at two bus stops.

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India says China stand off will end soon

New Delhi

India's home minister said yesterday he believed a border standoff with China would end soon, after new footage emerged showing border guards from both countries fighting on a disputed patch of land in the Himalayan region of Ladakh.

Indian and Chinese soldiers have for more than two months been facing off over a separate territorial dispute in the Doklam

plateau, which India says is Bhutanese territory and which China claims for itself.

Some analysts have said the dispute amounts to the worst crisis in relations between the two nuclear-armed neighbours for decades.

Yesterday Home Minister Rajnath Singh said India wanted peaceful relations with its neighbours as he addressed a unit of border guards in the capital Delhi.

DIY sub inventor dumped journalist's body in sea



Volunteers as they search for the missing Swedish journalist Kim Wall, by the coast of Sweden in Oeresund near Malmoe

Stockholm

The Danish inventor of a do-it-yourself submarine has said that a Swedish journalist missing since August 11 died in an accident on board the vessel, and that he dumped her body in the sea, Danish police said yesterday.

The inventor, Peter Madsen, had initially claimed that he last saw Kim Wall when he dropped her off on the tip of an island in Copenhagen late on August 10.

But Madsen, who has been accused of negligent manslaughter, "told police and the court that there was an accident on board the sub that led to the death

of Kim Wall, and that he subsequently buried her at sea in an undefined location of the Koge Bay" south of Copenhagen, police said in a statement.

Madsen's appearance before a judge on August 12 was held behind closed doors and the investigation has been classified, so it is not known exactly when he made his statement.

Danish and Swedish authorities have been searching for Wall, a 30-year-old reporter who had been writing a feature story about Madsen, after she failed to return from an interview with him aboard the 60-foot (18-metre) Nautilus on August 10.

Teacher forced us to drink sewer water: B'desh pupils

Dhaka

Bangladeshi authorities have ordered an investigation after a primary school teacher was accused of forcing more than two dozen students to drink sewer water as a punishment, officials said yesterday.

Parents lodged a complaint against Shahnaz Parvin, a teacher from Jajira south of Dhaka, after several students fell ill.

Jajira's government administrator, Rahela Rahmatullah, said an investigation was underway into allegations 28 children

had been force-fed drain water.

"We will take necessary legal steps if she is found to have breached rules," she said.

The 25-year-old teacher denied forcing the children to drink the water, saying she was only trying to scare them after they failed to prepare for class.

Administrators at Gangaprasad Primary School described the teacher's actions as "reprehensible" and said they would await the outcome of the investigation.

Online rhino horn auction delayed

Johannesburg

A controversial online auction of rhino horn set to open yesterday has been delayed by two days after a legal challenge delayed the South African permit for the sale, the organisers announced.

Outraged conservationists say the three-day auction could undermine the global ban on rhino products, and the South African authorities had moved to ban the sale.

But in an 11th-hour decision on Sunday, the High Court in Pretoria ruled in favour of the auction's South African

organiser, John Hume, who runs the world's biggest rhino farm.

His lawyer had argued that the seller's permit had been approved but not issued by the authorities in South Africa, where a ban on domestic rhino horn trade was lifted three months ago.

The permit was handed over yesterday morning, and the homepage of the website for the sale -- which is in English but offers versions in Chinese and Vietnamese -- was changed to say that bidding would start on Wednesday at 2:00 pm.



Cut off rhino horns being weighed and stored at John Hume's Rhino Ranch