

Starmmer warns successor he will have to stay on international stage

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AFP | London, United Kingdom

Britain's outgoing prime minister Keir Starmer warned his probable successor Andy Burnham in an interview released Saturday that he cannot ignore international

moil and just concentrate on the country's domestic problems.

In his first interview since announcing his resignation on June 22, Starmer said his successor as leader of the ruling Labour party could not spend less time on turbulent international affairs.

So far, former Manchester mayor Burnham is the only candidate to take over the centre-left party. He could be in office by mid-July.

"Whoever's my successor is going to face the same global conflict. We keep saying, and it's true, we're in a more dangerous and volatile world than we've been in for probably most of my lifetime. That's not just a phrase, that's reality," Starmer told the BBC.

Burnham's supporters have said he should put more focus on domestic issues, such as the cost of living, and Burnham said this week that decentralisation of government would be a priority.

But in a social media question-and-answer session Friday, he discussed international topics and said he would "100 percent" give the same sup-

Andy Burnham

port to Ukraine as Starmer.

Asked by the BBC, Starmer said his successor would not be able to spend less time on diplomacy.

"There's often this discussion -- what's the right balance between dealing with international affairs and dealing with domestic affairs? They're one and the same thing," Starmer said.

"If you're prime minister and you care what bills are going to be like in any household around the country, you have to care about finding a lasting solution to the situation in Ukraine, you have to care about what happens in the Strait of Hormuz."

Starmer said he had "never had any personal animosity" towards Burnham and that he would "do everything I possibly can to make sure" that the next government succeeds.

Starmer, who led Labour to a spectacular win in the 2024 general election, has said he will remain in parliament at least until the next nationwide vote, but told the BBC he would be "keeping my

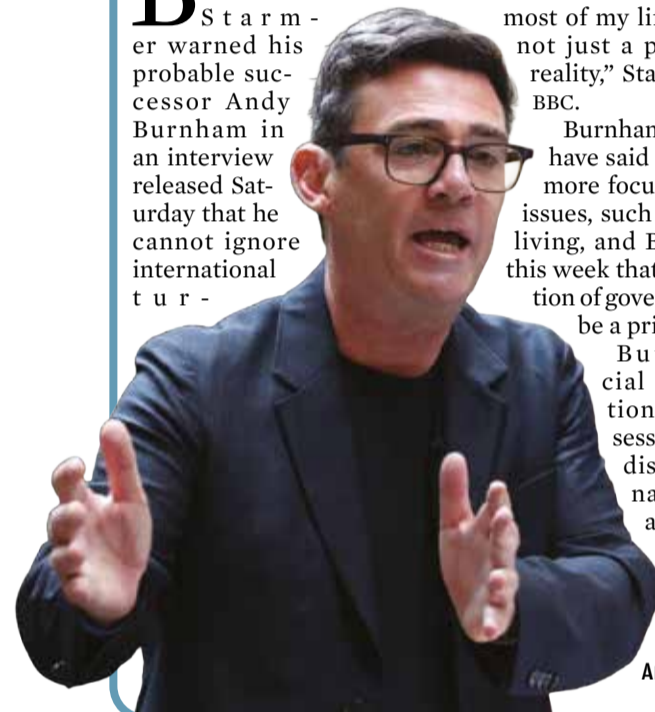
mouth shut, rather than giving constant advice to

my successor about what they should be doing".

Starmer had vowed to fight any challenge to his leadership, but gave in to intense pressure from his party. "In the end it became an intensely personal decision," he said, one taken with his wife and children at the British prime minister's country retreat.

"We went to Chequers and just spent two days together as a family. And that's when I came to my final decision," he said.

Keir Starmer



Tens of thousands rally in France against sexual violence

AFP | Paris, France

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in several French cities Saturday to protest against sexual violence, the latest manifestation of outrage that has been sparked by the rape and killing of an 11-year-old girl.

The body of the girl, named as Lyhanna, was found last month after she went missing on May 29 in the southwestern town of Fleurance.

The suspect, a 41-year-old father of a school friend of the victim, had twice before been formally accused of raping a child, but investigations had been dropped or had stalled.

The death has sparked outrage and calls for the resignation of Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin who has refused to step down but apologised for what he called a "huge failure".

On Saturday people marched in Paris shouting slogans such as "Truth emerges from the mouths of children!" and "160,000 children, what are you doing?"

Organisers said 100,000 people were participating in the Paris march and called it a "historic mobilisation against sexual violence".



Holding the line from above

A Dash Q400-MR Fireguard aircraft of the civil security drops retardant mixed with water during a demonstration of firefighting capacity by the Gironde's Fire and Rescue Departmental Service in Saint-Aubin-de-Medoc, south-western France. Hundreds of firefighters are battling wildfires in southern France that are being fuelled by wind, drought, and heat. The largest fire has been raging for two days in the Aude department, where France's Interior Minister is set to visit the disaster zone

Lebanese president urges US to 'keep standing' by country

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on Saturday urged the United States to stand by his country after a recent US-backed framework deal with Israel aiming to permanently end hostilities after the latest Israel-Hezbollah war.

The deal reached in Washington calls for the disarmament of Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah, a gradual Israeli withdrawal from southern Leb-

anon and the deployment of the Lebanese army there, starting with two "pilot" areas.

Hezbollah has rejected the deal, which does not set a timetable for an Israeli withdrawal.

In a congratulatory message to President

Donald Trump marking the United States' 250th anniversary of independence, Aoun urged Washington to "keep always standing beside Lebanon's right and just causes, its institutions, army and people".

Aoun expressed hope that Lebanon could "turn the page on wars... and open a new page of hope, peace and stability".



German defence giant laments 'setback' after warship debacle

AFP | Frankfurt, Germany

The boss of German defence giant Rheinmetall said the group's failure to secure a contract from Berlin to build next-generation warships was a "setback", in an interview published yesterday.

The German government unexpectedly announced last month that it was abandoning the multi-billion-euro project, sending Rheinmetall's shares tumbling around 20 percent as the company had been expected to take on the work.

"The cancellation of the F126 project was a setback for us, and it caught us completely off guard," Rheinmetall boss Armin Papperger told news outlet Der Spiegel.

The project to build the frigates was originally awarded to a Dutch shipyard. But after years of delays and problems, Berlin was expected to hand the work to Rheinmetall, already a

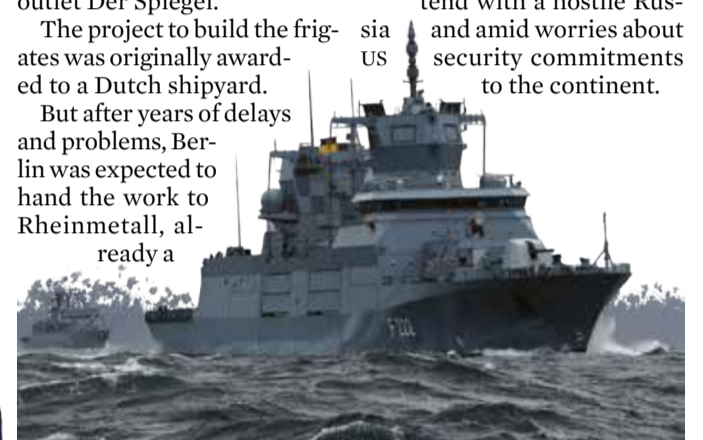
major supplier of armaments to the German military.

Instead of moving ahead with the F126 project however, the German defence ministry decided to purchase eight smaller warships from German group TKMS.

Papperger also defended Rheinmetall's recent acquisition of shipyard NDL, which was supposed to take on the F126 project.

"Rheinmetall moving into the maritime sector was the right decision, because demand is high, not just from the Germany military," he said.

Germany, like other European countries, is spending huge sums to rebuild its long-neglected armed forces to contend with a hostile Russia and amid worries about US security commitments to the continent.



France Ebola patient recovers

Paris, France

A doctor who had tested positive for Ebola in the first such case on French territory has recovered and left the hospital, France's health minister said on Saturday.

The doctor tested positive after flying to France on June 23 from the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is fighting a major outbreak of the deadly haemorrhagic fever.

The physician "today left the medical establishment" and returned home, Health Minister Stephanie Rist said in a statement.

The case was the first time France has detected Ebola. In

2014, during an outbreak in west Africa, two patients were transported to France, but they had been diagnosed abroad.

The doctor flew to France on an Air France flight and except for headaches was "almost asymptomatic." Five other passengers on the flight had been identified as possible contacts and put in isolation as a precaution.

DR Congo's latest Ebola outbreak was declared on May 15 and has since killed at least 438 people among the 1,406 people confirmed to have been infected, according to the latest government figures released on July 2.

Mali hit by new wave of coordinated rebel attacks



A general view shows traffic moving along a main road in Bamako

AFP | Bamako, Mali

Jihadists and their separatist Tuareg allies hit Mali with fresh coordinated attacks Saturday, striking multiple towns and a prison just months after hobbling the country's military junta with a similar wave of assaults.

The fighting comes after the Al-Qaeda-linked JNIM jihadists and Tuareg FLA separatists in late April captured the strategic northern town of Kidal and killed Mali's defence

minister.

On Saturday, they carried out their latest offensive in the northern towns of Gao, Anefis and Aguelhok, plus the central town of Sevare and at a prison in Kenieroba near the west African nation's capital.

Since coups in 2020 and 2021, Mali has been led by the military. Its junta leaders had promised to restore calm in the vast desert nation that has been grappling with a security crisis since 2012, but so far have mostly failed to deliver.