

French President under fire

● Security aide detained in assault inquiry

● Videos emerged showing him strike a young man during a demonstration

● Scandal erupted this week when a French daily published the video

AFP | Paris, France

French President Emmanuel Macron, trying to curb what has become the most damaging scandal of his presidency, yesterday fired a top security aide who has been taken into custody after videos emerged showing him strike a young man during a demonstration in Paris in May.

The Elysee Palace said that Alexandre Benalla would be dismissed after “new elements” emerged in the case, namely that he is suspected of unlawfully receiving police surveillance footage in a bid to clear his name.

A source close to the inquiry



a man identified as Elysee Chief Security Officer Alexandre Benalla wearing a police visor as he drags away a demonstrator during May 1 protests in Paris.



French President Emmanuel Macron

said that three police officers, including two high-ranking officials, have been suspended on suspicion of providing the footage to Benalla.

He is facing charges of violence by a public official, impersonating a police officer and the illegal use of police insignia, and complicity in unauthorised use of surveillance footage, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

Macron and his government are facing fierce criticism over the affair, with some opposition lawmakers saying Interior Min-

ister Gerard Collomb's job is on the line if he knew about the incident but kept quiet about it.

A source close to the inquiry said Friday that Macron's cabinet chief, Patrick Strzoda, had been questioned by investigators on Thursday.

“The very core of the state has been tainted. Our work must stop immediately and the prime minister must come and explain this,” said Christian Jacob of the rightwing Republicains party.

The scandal erupted this week when French daily Le Monde published a video taken by smartphone showing Benalla, wearing a police helmet, manhandling and striking a protester during a May 1 demonstration.

In a second video published by the newspaper late Thursday, Benalla -- who has never been a policeman -- is also seen violently wrestling a young woman to the ground.

It was not clear who informed Benalla's superiors of the incident, but a few days later he was suspended without pay for two weeks and transferred to an administrative role instead of organising security for Macron's trips.

But the incident was not reported to prosecutors.

US proposes roll back of endangered species protections

Washington

The US administration of President Donald Trump on Thursday proposed sweeping changes to the 45-year-old Endangered Species Act which would roll back protections for threatened animals, sparking alarm by environmentalists.

The 1973 federal law is considered the gold standard for global environmental protection, and is credited with saving dozens of key species from extinction, including bald eagles, manatees, humpback whales and American alligators.

One proposed change, announced by the Interior and Commerce Departments, would remove a sentence that aims to separate economic impacts from decisions about animal protection. Other provisions would vary protections for animals on a case-by-case basis. Meanwhile, another suggested change would remove a clause that automatically conveys the same protections to threatened species as endangered species.

WhatsApp limits forwarding

Facebook will remove the “quick forward button” next to media messages, making sending on messages more cumbersome

New Delhi, India

WhatsApp announced limits yesterday on the forwarding of messages by its 200 million Indian users in an effort to stop a spate of horrific lynchings and to assuage government threats of legal action in its biggest market.

More than 20 people have been butchered by crazed mobs in the past two months across India after being accused of child kidnapping and other crimes in viral messages circulated wildly on WhatsApp.

Late Thursday India's government, scrambling to find a response, threatened to take WhatsApp to court, saying the “medium” for spreading malicious rumours “cannot evade

responsibility and accountability”.

“If (WhatsApp) remain mute spectators they are liable to be treated as abettors and thereafter face consequent legal action,” the information technology ministry said.

The Facebook-owned firm responded on Friday with an announcement it will test limiting the ability to forward messages and cap at five the number of contacts or groups that messages can be forwarded to.

In addition, it said it will remove the “quick forward button” next to media messages, making sending on messages more cumbersome.

“We believe that these changes -- which we'll continue to

evaluate -- will help keep WhatsApp the way it was designed to be: a private messaging app,” a statement said.

Worldwide, the company will limit the number of forwards to 20 other groups, a spokesman said.

The firm had already announced new features to help users identify messages that have been forwarded.

It bought full-page adverts in Indian newspapers with tips on how to spot misinformation.

The ministry also called on WhatsApp to enable the “traceability” of messages when an official request is made.

But the platform on Friday said its messages would stay “end-to-end encrypted”.

Italy, Libya reject EU's migrant policy

Brussels, Belgium

The European Union's migrant strategy suffered a major new setback yesterday with Italy refusing to freely accept people rescued at sea and Libya spurning a proposal for asylum processing centres.

The salvos follow a fractious EU summit in June which agreed to set up “disembarkation platforms” outside the bloc to process migrants after Italy's new populist government said it was closing its

ports.

“Italy does not want to be the only country where migrants saved at sea by its own naval units disembark,” Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi said in a letter to EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini.

The Italian position and its implications will be discussed at a meeting later Friday by member states in Brussels, EU sources said.

Libyan Prime Minister Fayeze al-Sarraj meanwhile rejected the EU proposal for asylum processing centres in his country, saying: “We are strictly against Europe officially placing illegal migrants who are no longer wanted in the EU in our country.”

Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia were also approached by the EU but have already refused to host such centres.

“Italy does not want to be the only country where migrants saved at sea by its own naval units disembark”
MOAVERO MILANESI

Russia raids space research centre in ‘treason probe’

Moscow, Russia

Russia's FSB security services yesterday raided a top space research centre in a probe into staff alleged to be spying for the West, the Kommersant daily reported, citing sources.

“This morning, the FSB raided offices of staff at the Central Research Institute of Machine-Building,” which is a subsidiary of Roscosmos, the Russian space agency, Kommersant reported, citing sources in law enforcement agencies.

It reported that the FSB carried out raids in the town of Korolyov outside Moscow after finding out that Western security services had information on “secret hypersonic developments by Russian industry.”

World's loneliest man: Last known survivor of Amazonian tribe

Daily Mail

Captivating footage has emerged of the last known survivor of an Amazonian tribe who has wandered the rainforest alone for 22 years - after the rest of his people were wiped out by murderous land-grabbing cattle ranchers two decades ago.

The half-naked man in his fifties uses an axe to chop down a tree in the footage taken by Brazilian government officials in the remote state of Rondonia.

There are believed to be 113 uncontacted tribes living in the Amazon, 27 of which have been sighted by experts who attempt to track their movements.

This tribesman is known as ‘the indigenous man in the hole’ and was first caught on camera

in 1998. He spends most of his time hunting forest pigs, birds and monkeys with a bow and arrow, and lives in a hut surrounded by papaya and corn



Aerial shots in 2016, captured the confusion of an uncontacted tribe in Brazil as they watched an aircraft flying overhead

plantations.

Experts from the Brazilian agency for native tribes, called FUNAI, believe the man belonged to a tribe of six - five of whom



There are believed to be 113 uncontacted tribes living in the Amazon

were murdered by farmers in the 90s.

Survivors of other indigenous groups have told how invading farmers shot them in the back while taking their land during the period. And Funai has publicly blamed cattle ranchers for



In 2008, an incredible set of pictures emerged of tribesmen hurling spears and firing bow and arrows at an aircraft buzzing overhead

the deaths of his fellow tribespeople.

It is thought that he managed to survive when farmers and land grabbers killed and expelled indigenous Amazonians throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

They do not know his name or

the name of his tribe, but have worked to extend the area of his jungle home to 8,070 hectares so he can maintain his lifestyle.

An indigenous reserve known as Tanara was set up in the 1990s as part of moves to protect his territory.