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What makes grown men cry

Baby penguins. Yes, really

INSIDE TIMES2



New ways to tackle the nut allergy crisis

Unionists fire warning shot at May by voting against budget

Kate Devlin Chief Political Correspondent
Sam Coates Deputy Political Editor

Theresa May was abandoned by her Commons partners last night in a move that all but killed off the deal with the Democratic Unionist Party to keep her in power.

The Northern Irish party breached the terms of the confidence and supply

agreement with the Conservative Party by lining up behind Labour MPs to vote against the Finance Bill.

The DUP declined to vote alongside the Conservatives on four parts of the bill, abstaining on three, and voting with Labour on a fourth to review the impact of the increases to the personal tax allowance on child poverty.

The confidence and supply agree-

ment signed last year states the 'DUP agrees to support the government on all motions of confidence, and on the Queen's Speech, the budget, finance bills, money bills, supply and appropriation legislation and estimates.'

Last night's move means the government can no longer rely on the DUP and its ten MPs in critical votes.

The government did not comment

on whether the arrangement, necessary to secure the passage of a Brexit agreement through Parliament and keep Mrs May in office, was still alive.

The DUP said the deal was not dead, because it did not kill off a specific budget measure. However, sources within the party linked last night's votes to their fury at Mrs May's Brexit deal.

The party has said it cannot vote for

her deal with Brussels and accused the prime minister of not listening. A DUP source said: 'Nemo me impune lacessit', or 'no-one provokes me with impunity'. The source added that the final nail in the coffin of the arrangement would be if Mrs May's Brexit deal passed the Commons.

Earlier the DUP had tested the

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Boots travel insurer faces investigation over deaths

Customers denied emergency flights home

Andrew Elson
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

The company behind Boots travel insurance is being investigated for medical negligence and fraud after the death of customers who were denied emergency flights home, The Times can reveal.

Doctors working for Travel Insurance Facilities, which operates claims for the high street pharmacist, are being investigated by the General Medical Council after accusations that they had denied suitable care to policyholders.

The multimillion-pound business, which trades under brands including HolidaySafe and Alpha, is also being investigated by the Financial Conduct Authority after the watchdog received allegations that policyholders were being misled.

In one case, a customer who broke her neck in a riding accident in Spain said that she was denied a medical flight home, forcing her to travel back over land. In total the medical council is examining at least five cases involving two doctors at the insurer.

A 40,000-word dossier sent to the Financial Conduct Authority details allegations of fraud by Travel Insurance Facilities. It alleges a pattern of practice to delay, avoid or minimise payouts.

These alleged tactics include:

- Going against the treating doctor's advice to fly patients home;
- Denying recovering patients suitable aftercare;
- Deliberately avoiding contact with treating doctors;

• Making patients pay upfront for treatment.

The dossier includes testimony from a former claims handler at the company. The whistleblower says: 'I remember patients needing life-saving or life-changing operations and [the doctor] just wouldn't pick up the phone for weeks, knowing full well they were waiting for his call.'

'Patients were left without contact and I was the one stuck in the middle. It was horrendous. Patients would say, and I agree, [the doctor's] general practice was to frustrate the patient's family so much that they would either give up or pay for the treatment themselves therefore saving the company money.'

Travel Insurance Facilities 'strongly refutes' that financial considerations influence its clinical decisions and sources close to the company deny that the conduct authority has opened a formal investigation.

This newspaper has established, however, that allegations against the company go beyond the complaints in the dossier. The insurer has also been accused of failing to pay foreign hospital bills for treatments, with one policyholder being chased for tens of thousands of pounds by a Singapore clinic.

Last year a state hospital in the Turkish destination of Antalya became so fed up with non-payment that it refused to treat Travel Insurance Facilities policyholders, including Boots customers, unless they paid upfront. It is now accepting policyholders again

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Love bird An erotic fresco depicting the seduction of the Spartan queen Leda by Zeus disguised as a swan has been found at Pompeii by archaeologists digging through the layers of pumice left by the eruption of Vesuvius in AD79. Page 17

Worst year in history puts our problems in the shade

Rhys Blakely Science Correspondent

The Queen once identified 1992 as her 'annus horribilis'. Others have suggested that 1349, when the Black Death was wiping out half of Europe, marked something of a low point in our history.

Now, though, historians and scientists believe that they have found the worst year to have been alive: AD536. Analysis of atmospheric pollutants trapped in ice extracted from a glacier in the Swiss-Italian Alps suggests that this was the start of a cataclysmic run of global misfortune. 'It was the beginning of one of the worst periods to be alive, if not the worst year,' Professor Michael McCormick of Harvard University said in the journal *Science*.

The analysis suggests that early in 536 a volcanic eruption in Iceland spread ash across the northern hemisphere, Europe, the Middle East and parts of Asia fell into darkness. 'For the sun gave forth its light without brightness, like the moon, during the whole year,' wrote the historian Procopius.

Crops failed from Scandinavia to Mesopotamia. 'It would have made places very cold very quickly and would have been most felt in Britain and northwestern Europe,' said Professor Christopher Loveluck of the University of Nottingham. This was only the start.

Two more climate-cooling eruptions followed, in 540 and 542. In 541 an outbreak of bubonic plague emerged in the port of Pelusium in Egypt and went on to kill as much as half of the population of the Byzantine — or Eastern Roman — Empire, according to Dr Kyle Harper of the University of Oklahoma. The Western Roman Empire had fallen less than a century earlier. 'In Britain the cities, the administrative support, they come apart,' he said. 'It was the first Brexit and it was not entirely peaceful.'

This blend of volcanoes, pestilence and climate change helps to explain a century of economic stagnation. The malaise appears to end in about 640. The ice then shows a spike of airborne lead, signalling large-scale silver smelting and rising hopes of prosperity. Leading article, page 31.



'Sensual' Pompeii fresco unearthed

Archaeologists in Pompeii have discovered an erotically charged fresco depicting a mythical encounter between the Spartan queen Leda and a swan (Tom Kingston writes).

Discovered during a new wave of excavations at the Roman city, the fresco was described as "explicit and sensual" and "of the highest quality" by Massimo Osanna, director of the site.

Digging through layers of pumice left by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79AD, archaeologists found the image of Leda glancing coyly at them as she lifts up her robe for the swan.

The fresco is inspired by the legend in which Leda was seduced or raped, depending on the interpretation, by the Greek god Zeus, who

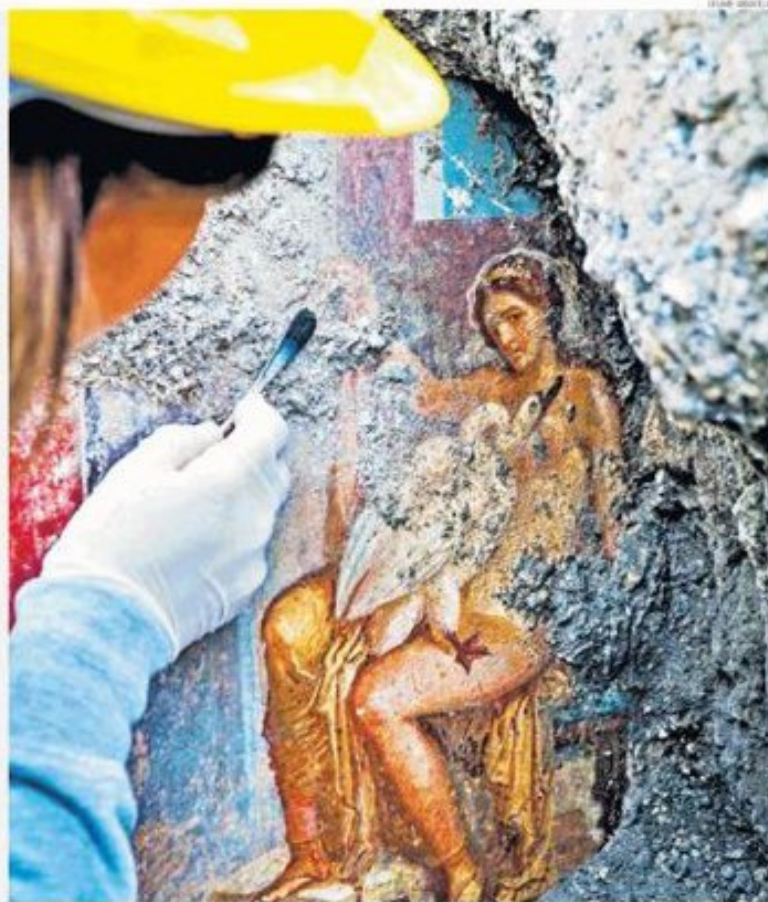
had disguised himself as the swan.

The story was taken up by WB Yeats in his 1923 sonnet *Leda and the Swan*.

Experts at Pompeii told *The Times* that the image appeared to be based on a 4th century BC statue of Leda by the Greek sculptor Timotheus that was widely copied in Roman times. "It's about the tenth image of Leda found at Pompeii, although usually she is on her feet. This one is more explicit," one archaeologist said.

The fresco was discovered in the bedroom of a house where there is an image in the front hall of Priapus, a god of fertility who is depicted, as per Roman custom, weighing his oversized penis in a scale.

The many depictions of Priapus found in the buried city, combined with explicit



The fresco of Leda and the swan at Pompeii was buried in pumice left by Mount Vesuvius, which erupted again in 1771.

imagery of sexual positions found in ancient brothels there, has given Pompeii the reputation of being obsessed with sex. Mr Osanna, however,

claims that libidos there were normal. "Priapus was associated with wealth, not sex, and is always pictured like this," he said. "As for the other images, all Roman towns had them. The difference is that at Pompeii they are preserved and we can still see them."

Worboys to stay jailed in new ruling

Gurpreet Narwan

John Worboys, the serial sex offender known as the black cab rapist, will remain in prison after the Parole Board reversed a decision to release him.

Worboys, 61, was jailed in 2009 for a minimum of eight years under an indeterminate sentence for public protection after being convicted of 19 sexual offences against 12 women, one of whom he raped, while working as a taxi driver in London.

In January the Parole Board accepted that he did not pose a risk to the public. After a legal challenge by two of his victims the High Court ruled in March that "the credibility and reliability of [Worboys] account was not probed to



John Worboys will be eligible for a further review within two years

any extent, if at all" and ordered a "fresh determination" on the case. The chairman of the Parole Board, Professor Nick Hardwick, was forced to resign.

In its reassessment the board considered a 1,255-page dossier on Worboys, who goes by the name John Radford, and personal statements from seven victims. Its summary, published yesterday, said that Worboys "submitted that he had worked very hard to accept and understand his offending... However, the panel considered there to be a need to further understand risk factors and triggers to his offending". Witnesses described "positive behaviour" in custody since the last parole review but did not support release or progression to open conditions, the summary added.

The Parole Board said that Worboys would be eligible for another review within two years and that the date would be set by the Ministry of Justice. Kim Harrison of Slater and Gordon, which represents some of the victims, said: "It is outrageous that victims had to go to court, and be put through further distress, to receive this outcome."

Nurse is arrested on suspicion of poisoning patients in stroke ward

Gabriella Swerling
Northern Correspondent
Kat Lay Health Correspondent

A nurse has been arrested on suspicion of poisoning patients on the stroke unit at a hospital in Blackpool.

The woman has been suspended and bailed until December 6. The nursing standards watchdog said that it was "urgently considering" whether to take action.

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS foundation trust contacted Lancashire police this month after a member of staff raised concerns.

The nurse, who worked at Blackpool Victoria Hospital, was arrested "on suspicion of administering any poison or noxious thing with the intent to injure and [cause] ill treatment or wilful neglect", the police force said. A source close to the investigation said that the arrest was related to the "incorrect administration of drugs". It is not

known whether this is linked to patients potentially being given too many drugs or the wrong kind. Detectives believe that the alleged poisoning took place over weeks rather than months. The case has not been linked to any deaths.

Detective Chief Inspector Jill Johnston said: "This arrest is part of an ongoing investigation into allegations of mistreatment of patients by a healthcare professional at Blackpool Victoria Hospital. The inquiry is complicated and we have a team of specialist detectives working on this case who are also offering support to those families who have had loved ones identified as potentially being involved."

"Our priority and the priority of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS foundation trust is to ensure the safety of patients. We are working closely with the trust as part of the investigation."

A spokesman for the Nursing and Midwifery Council said: "We can con-

firm that we have received a referral and we are urgently considering whether we need to take any sort of interim action."

Staff at the hospital were stunned to hear of the allegations yesterday. "Anyone doing something like this is going against everything we stand for," said one staff member, who asked not to be named.

Another nurse said outside the hospital: "I haven't been told a thing about this and no one I have spoken to seems to know anything either. But it is not surprising given the size of the hospital. It's like a city in there."

Patients and relatives also expressed surprise. Carole Prince, whose husband, Pete, was recently discharged after spending three months on the stroke unit, said: "He had quite good care when he was on the ward. It was all great care from the nurses."

"I was quite shocked when I heard about the arrest because we have not

had any bad care. I don't really know what's gone on. It's all in the hands of the police."

Wendy Swift, chief executive of the hospital trust, said: "We can confirm a healthcare professional has been suspended in line with trust policy following allegations of mistreatment against patients on the stroke unit."

"We take all allegations of this type extremely seriously and when the concerns were raised we immediately contacted the police. The trust is working with the police and co-operating fully with their investigation."

"We would like to reassure all our patients that all necessary actions are being taken. The hospital remains a safe and caring environment for patients and the provision of services will continue as usual."

The Care Quality Commission said that the trust required improvement after an inspection this time last year, which included the stroke ward.

Cold snap on way with risk of some snow

The unseasonably warm weather that has shielded Britain from the worst of the autumn will vanish this week as temperatures plummet.

Forecasters have not ruled out the chance of sleet, ice and some light snowfall in parts of the country. Temperatures across the UK will drop to about 5C by tomorrow, although the winds will give the feel of it being much cooler, the Met Office said. Showers are likely across the country.

Steven Keates, a meteorologist at the Met Office, said: "There's going to be a day-by-day cooling off, with each day getting cooler than the previous. There will be some cloud and showers, but the biting wind will make it feel even colder than it is, particularly in the east."

"West is best in terms of the weather this week. There could be some snow-fall in the more mountainous areas, the peaks, but we shouldn't expect too much disruption."

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