

TODAY'S EDITION

Binge watch on BBC iPlayer

The BBC will allow iPlayer viewers to download entire drama series before they are broadcast as it aims to double weekly users to 20 million. **Page 4**



'Stabbing' victim aged 7 is named

A girl aged seven who died after an incident that led to the arrest of a girl of 15 has been named. She had two stab wounds, according to reports. **Page 5**

COMMENT

'The truth is, there isn't some "fair" number of Tube staff ... The very idea is ridiculous'

DANIEL FINKELSTEIN, PAGE 23

Rough ride for Trump law chief

Jeff Sessions, Donald Trump's choice to lead the justice department, was accused of racism by activists before tough questioning at a Senate hearing. **Page 28**

Bovis accused over handouts

Bovis Homes offered customers up to £3,000 to complete on unfinished properties, in what analysts said was an attempt to hit City targets. **Page 35**

Boss lashes out in Wiggins row

Sir David Brailsford, boss of Team Sky, has attacked the head of UK Anti-Doping as the row over medications taken by Sir Bradley Wiggins grows. **Page 68**

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DINNER TONIGHT

Chump chops with spinach polenta and roast tomatoes

This is a lovely mix of flavours and textures: soft, cheesy spinach-laced polenta, crusty, juicy chops and succulent roast tomatoes.
Serves 6 Prep 15 min Cook 25 min
Ingredients: 500g baby spinach; 6 vine tomatoes; 6 lamb chump chops; 1 tbsp olive oil; 100g finely grated parmesan plus 2 tbsps; 75g butter; 300g 1-minute polenta; 300ml crème fraîche
 Heat the oven to 200C/gas mark 6. Halve the tomatoes round their middles



and arrange, cut-side up, on a small, foil-lined roasting tin. Smear the tops with olive oil and put in the oven. Boil a large pan of water, add 1 tsp salt and the spinach. Boil for 1 minute. Drain and leave to cool. Trim excess fat from the chops. Smear both sides with olive oil and set aside.

Check the tomatoes: remove when soft and weeping. Squeeze the spinach to remove excess water. Heat the griddle and when very

hot cook 2 seasoned chops at a time for 2-4 minutes a side. Transfer to a warmed plate, season and cover with clingfilm.

When ready to serve, pour 1.2 litres boiling water into a spacious pan. Add 1 tsp salt then add the polenta in a steady stream, immediately reducing the heat while stirring for a minute as it instantly thickens. Stir in the butter, 100g parmesan and then the spinach.

Divide between six warmed dinner plates, add a dollop of crème fraîche, dust with extra grated parmesan before adding a chop, two tomato halves and a lemon wedge.
Lindsey Bareham

May faces conflict of interest over investments, claim MPs

Michael Savage
 Chief Political Correspondent

Theresa May is facing calls to reveal her financial interests after it emerged that she has set up a blind trust of shares potentially worth tens of thousands of pounds.

The prime minister is the latest senior minister to use such a trust, which allows them to keep investments while giving up managing them.

The trusts are controlled by a third party, meaning that Mrs May will not know when shares are traded and replaced. However, opposition MPs said there was a potential conflict of interest because she would know what her investments were when the trust was created. Mrs May did not have a blind trust during her time as home secretary.

Last summer, she revealed that she had received £5,419 in dividends in 2014-15, a return that suggests the amount invested in her blind trust could run into six figures.

No 10 did not reveal what sharehold-

ings had been placed into the trust or the identity of the third party overseeing it. "Blind trusts are a well-established mechanism for protecting ministers in the handling of their interests, as they are not involved in any decisions on the management, acquisition or disposal of items in the trust," a spokeswoman said. "[Mrs May] set it up when she became prime minister."

Blind trusts have become a relatively common vehicle for ministers wanting to retain their investment in stocks and shares while in office. More than a dozen ministers have used one since 2011. Tony Blair was criticised by the Tories for using a blind trust to fund his office in opposition, while Donald Trump's plan to use one has been criticised as a potential conflict of interest. David Cameron sold all his shares in June 2010 so he did not have a blind trust while he was prime minister.

Tim Farron, the Liberal Democrat leader, said that calls for Mrs May to publish the shares placed into the trust marked an important test. "The public

have legitimate questions about what companies the prime minister has invested in and who is running it," he told *The Guardian*. "Theresa May promised the most transparent government in the world. This is an early test to see if her deeds match her words."

Andrew Gwynne, the shadow cabinet office minister, said: "Theresa May's government is starting to be defined by its secrecy and complete lack of transparency. If the prime minister has nothing to hide then she needs to reveal immediately where she has existing financial interests."

Under the last Labour government, the ministerial code was altered to remove a suggestion that blind trusts would not necessarily avoid a conflict of interest for ministers. The previous code read: "It should also be remembered that even with a trust the minister could be assumed to know the contents of the portfolio for at least a period after its creation, so the protection a trust offers against a conflict of interest is not complete."

Press crackdown could cost £100m a year

Jill Sherman Media Editor

Pressing ahead with "draconian" laws to force newspapers to join an approved regulator could cost the industry £100 million a year, it was claimed, as the *Financial Times* and *The Guardian* called for the legislation to be dropped.

In its submission on the last day of the government's consultation on press regulation, the News Media Association argued that Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 would have

a "chilling effect" on public interest reporting. Under Section 40 publishers that are being sued would have to pay the legal costs of complainants, even if they won the case, unless they joined Impress, the only approved regulator.

"Section 40 is designed to force newspapers into a system of state-backed regulation which the industry views as entirely unacceptable and incompatible with the principles of free speech," Ashley Highfield, the association's chairman, said. An analysis of

figures showed that Section 40 would cost national newspapers £52 million a year in additional legal costs, and local papers £48 million a year, based on the average number of legal actions.

The Guardian and the *Financial Times* each said that Section 40 should be repealed rather than remaining in law but not in force. This gave ministers unacceptable leverage, said the *Financial Times*, adding: "It is, for the press, a legislative sword of Damocles."

Letters, page 26

Continued from page 1

Signs good for US-UK trade deal

Boris Johnson has claimed that US Republicans want a free trade deal with Britain and that "they want to do it fast". Crucially, his comments passed without censure from the cheesemakers of Wisconsin (Marcus Leroux writes).

Of the myriad sticking points that ensnare trade talks, agriculture and food are among the most contentious. One of the snags holding up an EU-US deal was the cheesemakers of Italy and Greece refusing to

yield in their demand that American cheese is not sold as parmesan or feta. The problem is emblematic of how US interests may be more closely aligned to Britain's than to the EU's.

"A US-UK deal would likely be much easier to reach in terms of time and a few less stumbling blocks," Allie Renison, head of trade policy at the Institute of Directors, said.

Wendy Cutler, a former US trade representative, said that the service-based nature of the British economy may shape any agreement. While free trade agreements have traditionally focused on goods, services have proven more difficult because of differences in regulation and

qualifications.

Yesterday the government whetted speculation that it intended to start exploratory talks about a US trade deal by confirming that Antonia Romeo, Britain's consul-general in New York, would be appointed as the Department for International Trade's top mandarin, partly based in the US until the summer.

But there is concern that US trade negotiators will have their hands full. Donald Trump has pledged to renegotiate the trade deal with Mexico and Canada, and there is an uncertain future for America's deal with the EU and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Bisto costs more after pound falls, page 12

Trump's transition team on a visit to New York this week. Mr Johnson, however, warned against making an enemy of Moscow. "It would be folly further to demonise Russia or to push Russia into a corner," he said.

British spies were among the first to pick up evidence of Moscow's hacking of the Democratic National Committee. The information fed into a report by US intelligence agencies, published last week, which concluded that Mr Putin personally ordered the hacking.

CNN reported last night that classified documents shown to Mr Trump and President Obama revealed keen Russian interest in Mr Trump's activities. The information came from a former MI6 agent hired by anti-Trump Republicans to find embarrassing material on the tycoon. Many of the sources were Russian and much of the information unverifiable.

The content was so sensitive that only Mr Trump, Mr Obama and eight senior members of Congress were given the summary in their briefings with top intelligence officials last week.

The document, seen by *The Times*, alleges that Mr Putin has been cultivating Mr Trump for at least five years and that his campaign team had regular contact with Russian officials last summer. There was no response from Moscow to the latest claims.

Russia's embassy in London, led by Alexander Yakovenko, questioned yesterday whether Britain was seeking a re-run of last year's EU referendum by suggesting that the Kremlin had influenced the Brexit vote in the same way as it allegedly meddled with the US election.

"Why now?" the statement asked,

referring to the supposed witch-hunt. "Is it, like in the US, to provide grounds for a re-run of the June referendum, now assumed to be tainted by 'Russian influence'? Or is it to help save the status quo in Europe, under siege by the electorate demanding change?"

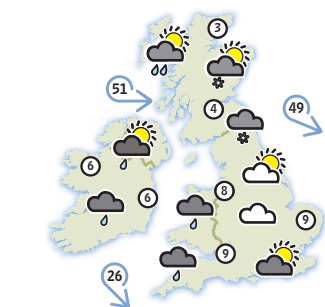
The piece appears to have been partly in response to an article in *The Times* last month about government officials acknowledging that Russia is

waging a propaganda campaign against Britain.

The Russian embassy accused "western elites" of going to great lengths to save their world order. "This panic and hysteria is a response to the overall loss of control, which brought about war 100 years ago," the embassy said.

A Foreign and Commonwealth Office source said that the Russian statement did not merit a response.

THE WEATHER



Scattered showers in northern and western areas. Drier in the southeast. **Full forecast, page 57**

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