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BUSINESS WITH PERSONALITY



PIECE BY PIECE CAN A FREE TRADE DEAL DRIVE AFRICA TO THE GROWTH IT NEEDS? **P14**

BRIGHT SPOT MOUNT SHINES BUT BLUES DROP POINTS AGAIN **P20**



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FREE

NUMBER 10 REBUFFS NO-DEAL CHAOS DOC

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DOWNING Street insisted yesterday that Whitehall reports predicting chaos and disruption in the event of a no-deal Brexit were outdated, as Boris Johnson dashes to meet EU leaders for last-minute talks this week.

Claims made within the leaked dossier, codenamed Operation Yellowhammer, predicted food, fuel and medicine shortages in a no-deal exit.

The document, leaked to the Sunday Times, also said there would be a return of a hard border in Ireland – the main sticking point in the Brexit ne-

gotiations – leading to the possibility of civil unrest.

But a Number 10 source said the document pre-dated Boris Johnson's premiership, when ministers were not seriously preparing for a no-deal Brexit.

"This document is from when ministers were blocking what needed to be done to get ready to leave and the funds were not available," the source said. "It has been deliberately leaked by a former minister in an attempt to influence discussions with EU leaders."

"Those obstructing preparation are no longer in government, £2bn of extra funding has already been made

available and Whitehall has been stood up to actually do the work through the daily ministerial meetings. The entire posture of government has changed."

The claims were also played down by Michael Gove, who is now the minister in charge of the government's no-deal preparations.

He said the UK would experience "bumps in the road" if it leaves the EU without an agreement at the end of

October, but that government was "far more prepared now than it was in the past".

The revelations come ahead of the Prime Minister's visit to the continent this week, in a last-dash hope of securing a deal. He will meet German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin on Wednesday and French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday in Paris.

Yesterday, Merkel said Germany was

prepared for a disorderly Brexit, but that she would "make an effort to find solutions – up until the last day of negotiations".

Both meetings precede the G7 summit in Biarritz on Saturday, in which Johnson will make his first international appearance as PM.

Business groups last night warned many companies are not yet prepared for a no-deal exit.

A CBI spokesperson said businesses "remain hampered by unclear advice, timelines and costs", while the Institute of Directors' Allie Renison said many smaller firms were unconvinced such planning was necessary.



UMBRELLA PROTEST Hong Kong demonstrators rally amid deluge



HUNDREDS of thousands of protesters filled the streets of Hong Kong yesterday in the 11th week of anti-government demonstrations.

The peaceful rally followed violent scenes last week after protesters occupied Hong Kong's airport, clashing with riot police.

It was the calmest weekend of protests since the demonstrations against the growing influence of Beijing in Hong Kong life began.

"They've been telling everyone we're rioters. The march today is to show everyone we are not," Chris, 23, told news agency Reuters.

Bank of England governor Carney withdraws from UK-China dinner

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BANK of England governor Mark Carney has pulled out of a dinner in the Square Mile designed to foster relations between London and China.

The City of London Corporation is holding the event at Guildhall on 3 September. It will be attended by China's ambassador to the UK Liu Xiaoming, the Corporation's policy chief Catherine McGuinness and lord mayor Peter Estlin.

Some City councillors are unhappy at the timing of the event, as police in Hong Kong continue to clash with pro-democracy protesters. The protests were originally sparked by a proposed bill that would have allowed extraditions to mainland China. Councillor Richard Crossan said:

"As the situation in Hong Kong develops, the City must remember that it is not just a financial services lobbying group. It has moral responsibilities, whether it wants them or not."

Another councillor told City A.M.: "There's a question of whether we should even hold a knees-up on the date of 70 years of the founding of the communist dictatorship that has cost millions of lives."

"If the Red Army rolls into Hong Kong, it would be unthinkable to hold this event." Carney was originally due to speak at the event but a source said he had since pulled out, citing a "diary issue".

The Chinese military has so far stayed out of the conflict, but in the

past few days tanks have amassed on Hong Kong's border.

Ambassador Liu also warned last week that Beijing would "not sit on its hands and watch" if the situation became "uncontrollable".

A Corporation spokesperson said:

Mark Carney will not be attending the UK-China event in the Square Mile

"We host a number of events throughout the year designed to support the government's efforts to strengthen relationships with key trading partners around the globe for the benefit of the City, London and the UK."

The Bank of England did not respond to requests for comment.



TRAVEL

ESCAPE TO THE COUNTRY

Siobhan Grogan skips overcrowded Tuscany and discovers unspoilt Umbria instead



48 HOURS IN...

MINSTER LOVELL, OXFORDSHIRE



WHERE TO STAY

Check yourself in to **Minster Mill**, a glamorous Cotswolds hotel set in 65 acres of idyllic grounds with a relaxing garden spa. Masterchef semi-finalist Tom Moody heads up the restaurant. Visit minstermill.co.uk



WHAT TO DO

Get your boots on and take a walking tour around the village. We recommend visiting the old ruins of Minster Lovell Hall followed by a walk past the dog-friendly Old Swan pub, and then up the hill towards Crawley.



WHERE TO DRINK

The **Lamb Inn** is your typical cosy and charming English inn, decked out with modern comforts and flagstone floors. We recommend the local ales, which you can enjoy by the fire if you can nab a seat. Visit cotswold-inns-hotels.co.uk



WHERE TO EAT

Get a table at the charming **Swan Inn** and enjoy seasonal dishes all sourced locally. Highlights of the menu include the prime Swinbrook beef as well as the selection of local Cotswold cheeses. Visit theswanwinbrook.co.uk

Over Tuscany but still smitten by Italy? Umbria offers the ultimate rural Italian idyll with medieval hilltop towns and pretty hamlets nestled amongst miles of olive groves, vineyards and forest-cloaked mountains. Better yet, it has the same fresh rustic food, fantastic local wine and laid-back lifestyle as its more famous neighbour without any of the crowds.

WHERE:

One of the most exclusive private estates in Italy, the sprawling **Tenuta di Murlo** has been owned by the same aristocratic family for generations and stretches over thousands of tranquil hectares of rivers, hills, forests and sun-dappled valleys alive with birds of prey, deer, wild boar, pheasants and even wolves. Hidden throughout are the original stone buildings once home to tenant farmers and now transformed into six luxury villas, three apartments and two cottages. All are utterly secluded – reachable only by a steep, bumpy track – and so remote, you won't see another soul during your time there. Hardly surprising former visitors are rumored to include Elton John, George Lucas and Hugh Grant.

THE STAY:

The villas are the rural sanctuary dreams are made of, but given an ele-



TENUTA DI MURLO UMBRIA, ITALY

gant five star makeover, I stayed in the beautiful Santa Croce, perched in the clouds on the very top of Monte Santa Croce with breath-taking 360° views over the Umbrian countryside to Assisi in the distance. Beyond its gated entrance, an immaculate landscaped garden packed with wild flowers and lavender hosts a giant hammock, a BBQ terrace with panoramic views over the mountains, two further furnished terraces, a pergola and a large private infinity pool with sunloungers and an outdoor shower. Inside, there's three huge

double bedrooms all with their own en-suites, a fully equipped kitchen with obligatory Nespresso machine, a laundry room and a commanding stone fireplace crackling with an open fire when I arrive.

THE FOOD:

The winding roads mean you definitely won't want to pop out for milk later so stop in the nearest village on the way and pick up the requisite fresh pasta, bread and wine. If that sounds like too much trouble, send a shopping list in advance to find the kitchen stocked on arrival or opt for meals cooked in your villa by a private chef. Murlo also delivers unmissable breakfasts, with staff arriving each morning laden with pastries, cheese, yoghurts and exquisite fruit tarts, cooking eggs and pancetta to order and cleaning it all up afterwards. In the evening, head to the estate's own restaurant **Il Caldaro**, a cosy restored farmhouse with views of the 12th century **Antognolia Castle** and some of the best homemade pasta you will ever eat.

ASK ABOUT:

Whether you want a yoga lesson and spa treatment in your villa or a gourmet picnic on the top of Monte Tezio, Murlo's dedicated concierge will make it all happen. Truffle hunting, fishing, biking, hot air ballooning and horse riding are all available on the estate or you can try wine tasting in nearby Montefalco and Orvieto, home to a mysterious underground city. They can also arrange day trips to any of Umbria's charming towns, including medieval Gubbio, Perugia with its famous chocolate factory and art treasures and stunning Assisi, the 12th century birthplace of St. Francis.

AND AFTER THAT:

A cookery class in your villa is a must-do. Under the watchful eye of **Il Caldaro's** patient chef, I made fresh tagliatelle and mezzelune filled with ricotta and pecorino, then enjoyed it for lunch on my sunny terrace knowing life doesn't get much better.

NEED TO KNOW

Seven nights at Villa Santa Croce at Tenuta di Murlo start from 4,800 Euros for six people. Visit murlo.com

