



BREXIT VOTE Britain's EU envoy steps down

Britain's European Commission Jonathan Hill yesterday announced that he will stand down following his country's decision to leave the EU, saying he was "very disappointed" but "what is done cannot be undone."

EU Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said Hill's position as financial services chief would be taken by Valdis Dombrovskis, the commission vice president for the euro, but that he was open to taking a new British commissioner.

"As we move to a new phase, I don't believe it is right that I should carry on as the British Commissioner as though nothing had happened," said a statement by Hill, a former member of Britain's House of Lords.

"In line with what I discussed with the President of the Commission some weeks ago, I have therefore told him that I shall stand down," he said.

Hill's appointment in 2014 to the important financial services job was seen as an olive branch to a eurosceptic British government, due to the importance of the City of London financial centre to the British and European economy.

Hill said he had come to Brussels despite being "sceptical about Europe" but had become convinced that "despite its frustrations" membership benefited Britain.

Juncker said he had tried to persuade Hill to stay on. The question now is whether London will appoint a new commissioner in order to have an official in the tent during Britain's divorce negotiations from the EU, which are likely to take at least two years.



From left, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault, Belgium's Minister of Foreign Affairs Didier Reynders and Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders attend a press conference. PHOTO: REUTERS

Too late now! Britons are frantically Googling what the EU is, a day after vote

The whole world is reeling after a milestone referendum in Britain to leave the European Union. And although leaders of the campaign to exit Europe are crowing over their victory, it seems many Britons may not even know what they had actually voted for.

Awakening to a stock market plunge and a precipitous decline in the value of the pound that Britain hasn't seen in more than 30 years, voters now face a series of economic shocks that analysts say will only worsen before they improve. The consequences of the leave vote will be felt worldwide and some British voters say they now regret casting a ballot in favor of Brexit.

Google reported sharp upticks in searches not only related to the ballot measure but also about basic questions concerning the implications of the vote. At about 1 a.m. Eastern time, about eight hours after the polls closed, Google reported that searches for "what happens if we leave the EU" had more than tripled.

The run-up to the vote was marked by a bitterly divided campaign, one that was as much about immigration fears as it was about the global economy. But despite the all-out attempts by either side to court voters, Britons were not only mystified by what would happen if they left the EU—many seemed not to even know what the European Union is.

What is the EU? To be fair, that question will now take on a much deeper significance than perhaps Google's users realized when they typed that into their browsers.



"Europe cannot only take care of the banks. We are stabilising them and will continue to do so, but we also have to look after our citizens."
-Pier Carlo Padoa-Schioppa, Italy finance minister



"I do not understand why the British government needs until October to decide whether to send the divorce letter to Brussels. It is not an amicable divorce but it was also not an intimate love affair."
-Jean-Claude Juncker, European Commission chief



"We have to accept the decision that was made, and not go looking for revenge."
-Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German foreign minister

Slovak far-right party petitions for 'Slovexit'

A far-right party in the Slovak parliament yesterday said it would petition for a vote on the country's exit from the EU, following Britain's historic vote to leave. "It is high time Slovakia left this sinking Titanic too," said Marian Kotleba, head of the People's Party Our Slovakia, in a Facebook post. "Therefore we will start making good on our election promise on Monday -- we will start collecting signatures to call a referendum on Slovakia's departure from the EU," he added. Slovakia, a nation of 5.4 million people which joined the EU in 2004 is due to take over the rotating EU presidency from the Netherlands on July 1.

'Not in my name' Grey Brexit vote angers younger Britons

Young people vented their anger yesterday against more eurosceptic older voters as they came to terms with a momentous referendum to pull Britain out of the EU, with the hashtag #NotInMyName trending on Twitter. "I feel angry. Those who voted leave, they're not going to fight the future," said Mary Treinen, 23, a technological consultant who lives in London's trendy Shoreditch district. A 12,000-strong survey of referendum voters published by pollster Michael Ashcroft found that 73 percent of 18-24-year-olds and 62 percent of 25-34-year-olds had voted "Remain", while 60 percent of people aged over 65 had voted "Leave". Within hours of the results, there was a small demonstration outside Downing Street. Richie Xavier, a 21-year-old barman, said: "I don't feel it is right for the old people to speak for us. Not to be insensitive, but we have a lot longer to go than they do. So I do feel a little bit robbed of my future." Paddy Baker, 21, agreed saying: "Older people voted for this - but we are the ones who are going to feel the ramifications." At a meeting of the opposition Labour Party in central London yesterday, many also voiced concern about the generational fault-line exposed by the vote, between those who cannot remember a Britain without the European Union and those who can. "The young people that voted overwhelmingly to remain must not be short-changed," Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn

Scotland starts drive to stay in EU after Brexit

Seeks immediate talks; Ireland won't seek unity vote now

Scotland's devolved government will start a drive to protect its European Union membership and will prepare for a possible fresh independence vote after Britain voted to exit the bloc, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said yesterday.

"We are determined to act decisively in a way that builds unity across Scotland," Sturgeon told reporters, adding that might include a vote on Scottish secession from the United Kingdom.

Scots rejected independence in a 2014 referendum by 55-45 percent and at the time the vote was considered a decisive verdict for a generation. Since then support for independence has not shifted significantly, according to polls.

On Thursday Britain as a whole voted to leave the EU, but Scotland voted by 62 to 38 percent to remain. The SNP argues that many Scots opted to remain part of the United Kingdom in 2014 because they believed that was the only way to guarantee EU membership.

She reiterated that an independence vote could be offered. "A second (Scottish) independence referendum is clearly an option that requires to be on the table, and it is very much on the table," she said.

Meanwhile, the future unification of Ireland would be in the best interests of its citizens, but holding a referendum while the British government is negotiating its exit from the EU would only cause division, Irish Foreign Minister Charlie Flanagan said on Saturday.

Northern Ireland's deputy leader Martin McGuinness called on Friday for a vote to unite Ireland with the British-run province to the north. But his demands were rebuffed by pro-British First Minister Arlene Foster as well as by Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny.

Under a 1998 peace deal that ended 30 years of sectarian violence, Britain's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland can call a referendum if it appears likely a majority of those voting would seek to form part of a united Ireland.



told the audience. Many young people took to social media to vent their frustration after the shock result from Thursday's vote, in which "Leave" won by 52 percent to 48 percent.

"This vote doesn't represent the younger generation who will have to live with the consequences," Luke Tansley wrote on Twitter under the handle @rams_luke.

Eleanor on @PrettiestStar_ wrote: "I refuse to hide my anger, fear and sadness at a decision that will change my future to one I never wanted".

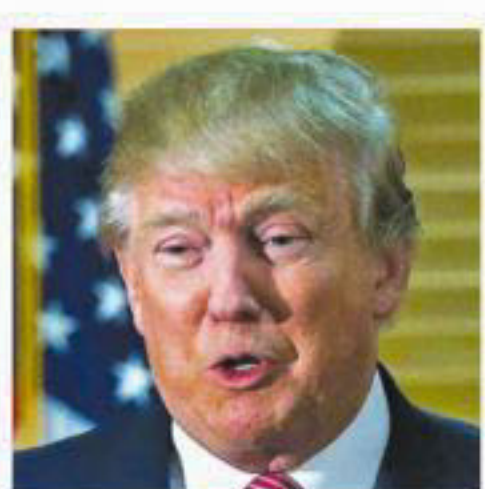
Rebecca, tweeting at @ReallyRew said: "Our country's fate has been decided by people longing for a past that never existed and they've created a future that's bleak".

Matthew van der Merwe wrote to the Financial Times newspaper describing how his great-grandparents fled violent nationalism in Europe in the 1930s for South Africa and how his parents fled apartheid.

"My brothers and I were the first in four generations to be born into an open, liberal democracy, and in a world that had moved towards co-operation," the Cambridge University student said.

"On Thursday we moved backwards, and it's not clear quite how far. A great deal of the optimism I shared with most of my generation in this country, is gone," he said.

An anonymous young letter writer in the FT also complained about the vote, raising the burden of paying to bail out banks and fund pensions for older people.



Indian leaders funded Clinton for nuke deal

Accuses Trump

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has alleged that his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton received funds from Indian political leaders and institutions in return for supporting the India-US civil nuclear deal. The Trump campaign has published these allegations in a 35-page booklet, but none of them are new and they have been in the public domain for several years now. Clinton, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, has refuted these allegations several times in the past.

Citing a New York Times report, the Trump campaign alleged that as early as 2008, Indian politician Amar Singh had donated between \$1,000,001 and \$5,000,000 to the Clinton Foundation.

"Singh visited the US in September 2008 to lobby for a deal allowing India to obtain civilian nuclear technology; then-Senator Clinton assured him Democrats would not block the deal," the Trump campaign alleged.

It also alleged that Indian-American Raj Fernando was appointed to the State Department's International Security Advisory Board by Clinton's chief of staff Cheryl Mills at her "insistence". Fernando, the alleged, has donated between \$1 million and \$5 million to the Clinton Foundation.

Russia, regime strikes kill 47 in east Syria

BEIRUT

Russian and regime air strikes killed 47 people, most of them civilians, and wounded dozens more yesterday in a jihadist-held town in eastern Syria, a monitor said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the raids hit the town of Al-Quriyah, controlled by the Islamic State group in Syria's oil-rich Deir Ezzor province.

Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said 31 civilians were identified among those killed, but that it was not immediately clear whether the 16 others were civilians or IS fighters.

"IS fighters have now set up a security perimeter around the residential area, where the town's mosque is located," said Abdel Rahman.

The Britain-based monitor -- which relies on a network of sources inside Syria for its information -- says it determines what planes carried out raids according to their type, location, flight patterns and the munitions involved.

Russian warplanes have been carrying out an air war in support of President Bashar al-Assad since September 2015.

More than 280,000 people have been killed since Syria's conflict erupted in March 2011, after a widespread protest movement evolved into a complex, multi-front war that has drawn in global powers.



Chinese President Xi Jinping shakes hands with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin during a welcoming ceremony in Beijing, China, yesterday. Xi and Putin promised ever-closer cooperation and oversaw a series of deals yesterday, as the two countries deepen ties in the face of growing tensions with the West. PHOTO: AFP

STALLED NSG BID AFTER CHINA OPPOSITION India says Paris climate deal's ratification may be delayed

TNN, New Delhi

India's high energy, high profile campaign to get into the NSG failed Friday morning, as China remained adamantly opposed to even considering the issue.

After a plenary meeting in Seoul, which saw Chinese diplomats attempt to block even a discussion, the 48-member nuclear cartel could not take a decision on India's membership.

A last minute diplomatic outreach by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chinese president Xi Jinping also failed to cut any ice.

A big outcome of the NSG failure is that India will now not ratify the Paris Agreement anytime soon. That agreement is a key element of US President Barack Obama's legacy.

The Indian statement says clearly, "An early positive decision by the NSG would have allowed us to move forward on the Paris Agreement." This will be a big blow to the Obama administration which wanted India to ratify the pact so it could enter into force.

It was understood that an NSG membership would help India clear the Paris Agreement.

In the end, diplomats said 38 countries declared outright support for India's accession, while nine others held out questions on procedure. China however maintained its line against India which helped to sway fence-sitters like Ireland, New Zealand and Austria, who pushed for a process and criteria to determine entry of non-NPT countries.

Others like Switzerland spoke about rules of entry but supported India, said sources in the room. China's closest ally was Turkey, they said.

The NSG non-decision on India's membership will have implications for India's bilateral relations with China. While no one was willing to go public, China's open hostility to India's global aspirations is now out in the open, which will make it difficult, coming as it does after China's refusal to sanction terror leader Masood Azhar.

Floods in West Virginia kill 23

AFP, Washington

Flooding in the US state of West Virginia killed 23 people and stranded others who had to be plucked from rooftops and rescued from fast-moving waters, state officials said Friday.

"The damage is widespread and devastating. Our focus remains on search and rescue," Governor Earl Ray Tomblin told a news conference after floods caused by a day of heavy rains.

Tomblin gave a death toll of 14 from the disaster, but later Friday Jessica Tice, with the state's Homeland Security and Emergency Management office, told AFP that the toll had reached 23.

At least six counties have extensive structural damage and about 66,000 people were without power, the governor said.

Enough signatures for Maduro recall vote Claims Venezuela opposition

AFP, Caracas/maracay

Opposition leaders in Venezuela said Friday they have finished the process of authenticating signatures on a petition to recall President Nicolas Maduro, and have enough to hold a referendum on removing him.

"The number of signatures has clearly exceeded the minimum needed," said Vicente Bello, coordinator for the referendum effort.

Government election authorities now have 20 days to review and affirm that finding.

Opponents of the regime finished giving their fingerprints to electoral authorities earlier Friday, wrapping up a key stage in their drive for a referendum to remove Maduro.

Already used to queuing for hours to buy food in an economic crisis, this week they lined up at electoral offices for a sometimes frustrating process. Officials took their electronic fingerprints to authenticate signatures on a petition calling for a recall referendum. That is just one stage in a months-long bureaucratic procedure. Friday was the fifth and last day of the fingerprinting process, which could make or break the bid to hold a recall vote on Maduro.

NEWS IN brief

33 killed in clashes across Yemen

AFP, Aden

Clashes in several areas across Yemen on Friday killed 22 Shiite rebels and 11 members of pro-government forces, military officials said, after peace talks hit a new barrier. Fierce battles erupted in the northern Jawf province where Huthi rebels attacked loyalists in al-Motoon district, triggering a counter attack by government forces backed by warplanes from the Saudi-led coalition, a military official said.

Pope visits Armenian genocide memorial

AFP, Gyumri

Pope Francis yesterday issued a rallying cry to protect memory at the Armenian genocide memorial in Yerevan, on day two of a trip likely to stir tensions with Turkey. Accompanied by President Serzh Sarkisian, Francis laid a wreath and prayed at the Tsitsernakaberd site where 12 giant stars represent the regions where Armenians says Ottoman forces killed some 1.5 million of their people between 1915 to 1917.

US military to lift transgender ban

AFP, Washington

The Pentagon is set to lift its ban on transgender troops within the coming weeks, US media reported Friday. The move would be another major milestone for America's vast military, which up until five years ago still banned gay troops from openly discussing their sexuality under a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.