



(From left, clockwise) Demonstrators (picture 1 & 2) take part in a protest aimed at showing London's solidarity with the European Union, in Trafalgar Square, central London, Britain yesterday; Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron (L) and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker arrive at the EU Summit in Brussels, Belgium, yesterday.

EU could drop English as official tongue

English, the world's second language and the main working tongue of EU institutions, may no longer be an official language of the European Union once Britain leaves the bloc, a senior EU lawmaker said on Monday. The symbolic, if impractical, move would further reduce London's influence on the continent. Although English is the most spoken language in Europe, and an official language in three member states, only Britain legally chose it in Brussels. "English is our official language because it has been notified by the UK. If we don't have the UK, we don't have English," Danuta Hubner, chair of the European Parliament's constitutional affairs committee told a news conference on the legal consequences of the British referendum to leave the EU. English might remain a working language, even if it were no longer an official one, Hubner said, adding that keeping it an official language would require agreement by all member states.

There could be a 2nd referendum UK minister suggests new vote to set terms of EU break-up

British health minister Jeremy Hunt yesterday raised the possibility of holding a second referendum on the terms of Britain's departure from the European Union, but stressed Britain "must" leave the bloc. The minister, who said he was considering running for the leadership of the Conservative party following the resignation of Prime Minister David Cameron, insisted that Britain must maintain access to the EU's free-trade zone, but that a deal needed to be struck to limit the free movement of people. Free trade "is not just at the heart of our economic success -- it is also at the heart of our identity as one of the most open, liberal, outward-looking societies anywhere," he wrote in the Daily Telegraph. "But... it is clear that the country has rejected the free movement of people as it currently operates. The EU faces collapse unless they reform free movement rules," he said. The minister called for a "Norway plus" option, comprising "full access to the single market with a sensible compromise on free movement rules". This could then be put it to the British public, via a referendum or in the Conservative Party's manifesto ahead of a general election, he said. Prominent Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage responded that another poll "would be a betrayal" of voters. The minister also asked other potential Conservative leaders to pledge that full permanent residence be granted to all European citizens living in Britain on the day of the referendum in order to reassure EU citizens concerned about "disgusting examples of anti-Polish xenophobia" seen after Thursday's vote.



EU 'strong enough' to survive Brexit: Merkel Warns UK will not be allowed to dictate terms; Obama warns against 'hysteria'

German Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday said that the EU could survive a Brexit and warned Britain the union would not tolerate "cherry-picking" in upcoming negotiations on their future relations. "The EU is strong enough to withstand Britain's withdrawal," she told the German parliament ahead of a crisis summit of the 28 member states in Brussels. "It is also strong enough to successfully defend its interests in the world in future." Merkel, who is expected to take a leading role in future negotiations with London, again voiced her regret that Britain had voted in a referendum last week to quit the bloc. She said both sides had a "strong interest" in maintaining "close and friendly relations". But she stressed Britain would not be able to dictate the terms of its ties to the EU. "We will ensure there are no negotiations based on the principle of cherry-picking," she said to applause. "There must be and will be a noticeable difference between whether a country wants to be a member of the European Union

family or not." She added: "Anyone wishing to leave this family cannot expect to lose all the obligations but keep the privileges." A non-EU country can join the common market if it accepts the free movement of people, goods, services and capital, she added, mentioning the example of Norway. Her warning came as US President Barack Obama yesterday warned against international "hysteria" following last week's vote. In an interview with National Public Radio, the US president said that he respected the results of the referendum. However for Obama, the vote means that "a pause button has been pressed on the project of full European integration." "I would not overstate it," he added. "There's been a little bit of hysteria post-Brexit vote, as if somehow Nato's gone, the trans-Atlantic alliance is dissolving, and every country is rushing off to its own corner. That's not what's happening." He described the results as a reaction to a rapidly growing European Union "that was probably moving faster and without as much consensus as it should have."



Clashes, Saudi-led air strikes kill 80 people

Intensified fighting and air strikes over the past 24 hours in Yemen have left 80 people dead, including 37 civilians, as lengthy peace talks in Kuwait made no headway, officials said. In the largest toll, warplanes from the pro-government Saudi-led coalition killed 34 people, including 19 civilians when they targeted Shia rebels in the southwestern region of Taz, a Yemeni military official said. The pre-dawn air strike hit a lorry transporting weapons for the Huthi rebels as it crossed a busy road, a provincial official said, adding that four women were among the dead, as well as 15 rebels. In the flashpoint city of Taz, 11 civilians and a soldier were killed when rebels bombed a residential area, a military official said. Meanwhile, 12 rebels and three loyalist soldiers were killed in clashes in Nahm, northeast of Sanaa, while six other rebels were killed in fighting in Marib, east of the capital, the official said. In the same province, a coalition warplane hit a vehicle carrying pro-government forces "by mistake", killing four soldiers and wounding four others, another military official said. In the south, at least seven civilians including two children were killed in air strikes "probably by drones" on jihadists which mistakenly hit a nearby house in Mahfed, between the provinces of Abyan and Shabwa in Yemen's south, a local official told AFP. The Huthis overran the capital in late 2014 before moving into other parts of Yemen, prompting a Saudi-led coalition to intervene in March last year. The United Nations says more than 6,400 people have been killed in Yemen since then, mostly civilians. The fighting has also driven 2.8 million people from their homes and left more than 80 percent of the population in need of humanitarian aid.

YEMEN CRISIS



French anti-riot police officers hold a man during a demonstration against controversial labour reforms on Bastille Square in Paris yesterday. Unions have called repeated strikes and marches in opposition to the law, which seeks to bring down France's intractable 10-percent unemployment rate by making it easier to hire and fire workers.

NEWSIN brief

- 130 in hospital after China plant leak**
More than 130 people were taken to hospital after chemicals leaked from a plant in eastern China, state media reported yesterday. The compound diketene, which is used to make paper and pharmaceuticals, leaked from a plant in Shandong province, Xinhua news agency reported. It cited local officials who blamed negligence for the leak.
- France charges Assad's uncle with graft**
Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's uncle, suspected of using ill-gotten gains to build a real estate empire in France, has been charged with corruption, a judicial source said yesterday. Rifaat al-Assad, 78, who commanded Syria's notorious internal security forces in the 1970s and early 1980s, was charged on June 9 with receiving embezzled funds and tax fraud, the source told AFP.
- Suicide bomber kills 9 at Iraq Sunni mosque**
A suicide bomber detonated explosives at a Sunni mosque near Baghdad where worshippers were gathered for prayers, killing at least nine people, officials said yesterday. The attack on the mosque in Abu Ghraib, which also wounded at least 28 people, took place during evening prayers on Monday as Muslims mark the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

Pakistan transgender fatwa a 'good step'

A religious decree declaring transgender marriage to be legal has been cautiously welcomed in Pakistan, but activists say attitudes still need to change. The decree, or fatwa, was passed on Sunday by a group of clerics. It said that according to Islam transgender people with "visible signs" of being male or female may marry someone of the opposite sex. But those with "visible signs of both genders" may not marry, it said. The 50 clerics, part of the little-known Tanzeem Ittehad-i-Ummat body based in Lahore, also said any act intended to "humiliate, insult or tease" transgender individuals should be considered a crime under Islam. The fatwa is not legally binding in any way. "We are glad that somebody's talked about us too," transgender rights worker Almas Bobby told BBC Urdu. "By Sharia we already had the right [to marry], but without measures are taken to remove the misconceptions about us in society, the condition of our community will not be changed." Another social worker for gender issues told BBC Urdu that it was a "good step", but that issues would remain until transgender marriage was officially legitimised.

Trump driven by greed

Says Senator Warren in campaign trail debut with Clinton team. She repeatedly accused Trump of looking out for himself instead of for average Americans. "When Donald Trump says he'll make America great, he means make it even greater for rich guys just like Donald Trump," Warren said, standing shoulder to shoulder with a cheering Clinton. Warren, who has vigorously attacked Trump in recent weeks, called him "a small, insecure money grubber who fights for no one but himself" and warned: "He will crush you into the dirt to get whatever he wants. That's who he is." The capacity crowd repeatedly roared its approval, and a line of supporters who could not get inside stretched out the door and down the street. At one point, Warren stopped her speech to turn and applaud Clinton, a former secretary of state.



Sri Lanka must rein in its military forces

Says UN, urges govt to prosecute war crimes. Sri Lanka must rein in its military forces, prosecute war crimes committed during the long civil war with Tamil rebels and win the confidence of the Tamil minority, the United Nations said yesterday. Witnesses must be protected under an effective transitional justice mechanism that should include international judges, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in an annual report. The military and Tamil Tiger rebels - who were fighting for an independent Tamil state in the north and east of the Indian Ocean island - are both likely to have committed war crimes during the 26-year conflict that ended in 2009, the UN said last year. President Maithripala Sirisena's government, formed in March 2015, has "consolidated its position, creating a political environment conducive to reforms", but governance reform and transitional justice had lagged, the report said. Deputy Foreign Minister Harsha de Silva said the foreign minister would respond today. "But overall, Zeid's report is positive," he said. Sirisena has said that foreign participation is not needed for an impartial inquiry.