

Brexit Talks Between UK, EU on Verge of Collapse



Anti-Brexit campaigner Steve Bray walks near Parliament in London, Oct. 8, 2019.

LONDON (AFP) -- Brexit talks between Britain and the European Union appeared to be on the verge of collapse on Tuesday, with Brussels accusing London of intransigence and threatening the bloc's future.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who said a deal was "overwhelmingly unlikely" without compromise by the UK, according to a Downing Street source.

She warned that any deal was "essentially impossible" if London failed to give ground on the thorny Irish border question and keep British-run Northern

Ireland in the EU customs union, the source added.

Britain is due to leave the EU on October 31, more than three years after the country narrowly voted in a referendum to end its almost five-decade membership of the bloc.

Johnson, who once said he would rather be "dead in a ditch" than seek a Brexit extension -- submitted new plans last week in place of an agreement his predecessor Theresa May struck with Brussels in late 2018.

The UK parliament, which is deeply divided over Brexit, rejected that plan three times.

According to the BBC, Downing Street believes talks between the two sides are now "close to breaking down".

In Berlin, Merkel's office confirmed the chancellor spoke by telephone to Johnson but said it would not comment "on such confidential discussions".

Johnson's official spokesman told reporters the pair had a "frank exchange" and that discussions were at a "critical point".

But he rejected an accusation from EU Council president Donald Tusk that Johnson was playing "some stupid blame game".

Tusk tweeted: "At stake is the future of Europe and the UK as well as the security and interest of our people."

"You don't want a deal, you don't want an extension, you don't want to revoke, quo vadis?" Tusk asked, using the Latin expression for "where are you headed?".

Much of the focus in both London and Brussels is shifting to what happens next, as a crunch EU summit approaches next week -- and who would be to blame for a potentially chaotic no-deal Brexit.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies think-tank meanwhile warned that "even a relatively benign no-deal Brexit" would see Britain's debt burden surge to 50-year highs.

On the markets, the pound lost around 0.5 percent of its value against the dollar within moments of Downing Street's comments.

Trump Aides Bar Envoy From Impeachment Questioning



Rep. Adam Schiff arrives for a formerly planned joint committee deposition with Ambassador Gordon Sondland, with the transcript to be part of the impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump, on Capitol Hill in Washington, Oct. 8, 2019.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department barred Gordon Sondland, the U.S. European Union ambassador, from appearing Tuesday before a House panel conducting the impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump, his lawyer said.

Attorney Robert Luskin said his client was "profoundly disappointed" that he wouldn't be able to testify.

A whistleblower's complaint and text messages released by another envoy portray Sondland as a potentially important witness to allegations that the Republican president sought to dig up dirt on a Democratic rival in the name of foreign policy.

On Tuesday, Sondland had been scheduled to face questions about the episode, the second time in as many weeks that lawmakers would have privately interviewed an ambassador about the president's push to get Ukraine to investigate Democrat Joe Biden ahead of the 2020 presidential election.

Until last week, Sondland was far better known in his home state of Washington than in the nation's capital, where he finds himself embroiled in an impeachment in-

quiry centered on a July 25 call between Trump and the Ukrainian president. But even if not accustomed to the global spotlight, the wealthy hotelier, philanthropist and contributor to political campaigns has long been comfortable around the well-connected on both sides of the political aisle.

"He very much enjoyed having personal relationships with those in power," said David Nierenberg, a Washington state investment adviser who has known Sondland for years. "Some people collect books. Some people collect cars. He collected those relationships."

Text messages released by House Democrats show Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, working with another of Trump's envoys to get Ukraine to agree to investigate any potential interference in the 2016 U.S. election and also probe the energy company that appointed Biden's son Hunter to its board. In exchange, the American officials dangled the offer of a Washington meeting with Trump for Ukraine's new president, Volodymyr Zelensky. There has been no evidence of wrongdoing by Biden or his son.

Hong Kong Leader Does Not Rule Out China Help



Masked protesters in Hong Kong prepare for a face-off near a government complex.

HONG KONG (Dispatches) -- Hong Kong's under-fire leader Carrie Lam on Tuesday said China intervening to end months of riots is an option following a particularly violent week of unrest that paralyzed the city.

The financial hub has been gripped by four months of rallies, and last weekend saw much of the city grind to a halt as masked demonstrators took to the streets in defiance of a ban on face coverings.

Over the last week, hardcore protesters

have trashed dozens of subway stations, vandalized shops with mainland China ties, built fires and blocked roads.

Hong Kong was virtually locked down over the three-day holiday weekend, with the majority of shops closed. With the damaged stations remained shut on Tuesday morning as rush-hour commuters returned to work after the long break, although two reopened later.

Lam told reporters that while she believes

the city's authorities can cope with the unprecedented troubles, China could be called upon if the situation becomes "so bad".

"At this point in time, I still strongly feel that we should find the solutions ourselves. It is also the position of the central government (in Beijing) that Hong Kong should tackle the problem on her own."

"But if the situation becomes so bad, then no options can be ruled out if we want Hong Kong to at least have another chance."

U.S. President Donald Trump earlier urged a "humane solution" to the crisis. He remarked on the "great people over there" and said protesters had been "flying the American flag".

While not referencing Trump, Lam said: "I hope anyone, especially foreign members, whenever they have to comment on Hong Kong's current situation, they have to look at the fact objectively."

And when asked for her thoughts on comments made by Hong Kong's last governor Chris Patten that the face mask ban was "madness", Lam said: "You cannot make a spiteful comment on Hong Kong, or support the violent protesters, claiming that their way is peaceful and it's their freedom."

"I think his comment is irresponsible."

China says foreign governments, including Britain and the United States, have fanned anti-China sentiment.

Dark Matter, Exoplanets Win Nobel Physics Prize



https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nobel-prize-physics/science-of-far-away-planets-and-infant-universe-wins-nobel-prize-idUSKBN1WN10F

STOCKHOLM/LONDON (Reuters) -- Canadian-American cosmologist James Peebles and Swiss scientists Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz won the 2019 Nobel Prize for Physics on Tuesday for revealing the wonder of the evolution of the universe and discovering planets orbiting distant suns.

Peebles, of Princeton University in the United States, was awarded half of the 9-million-Swedish-crown (\$910,000) prize while Mayor and Queloz, from Switzerland's University of Geneva and Britain's Cambridge University, shared the rest.

"This year's Nobel laureates have painted a picture of our universe far stranger and more wonderful than we could ever have imagined," Ulf Danielsson, a professor and member of the Nobel Committee for Physics, told reporters as the prize was announced.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said the scientists' research had "transformed our ideas about the cosmos".

Mayor and his one-time doctoral student Queloz said it was "simply extraordinary" to be awarded a Nobel for what they described as "the most exciting discovery of our entire career".

The pair announced the first discovery of a planet outside our own solar system, a so-called "exoplanet", in 1995.

"The study of exoplanets is perhaps the most vibrant field of astronomy," Martin Rees, a Cambridge University professor and Astronomer Royal, said in an emailed comment.

"We now know that most stars are orbited by retines of planets; there may be a billion planets in our galaxy resembling the Earth," Rees added.

Since their discovery, more than 4,000 exoplanets have been found in the Milky Way, many of them nothing like our own world. Indeed, the first planet they found, 51 Pegasi b, orbits a sun 50 light years away that heats its surface to more than 1,000 degrees centigrade, the award-giving academy said.

"With numerous projects planned to start searching for exoplanets, we may eventually find an answer to the eternal question of whether other life is out there," it said.

Peebles thanked the Nobel committee for the award, although he said his advice to young people wishing to go into science would be not to be lured by the prospect of such prizes.

"The awards and prizes, well, they are charming and very much appreciated, but... you should enter science because you are fascinated by it. That's what I did," he told reporters by telephone after the award announcement.

Physics is the second Nobel to be awarded this week; William Kaelin, Gregg Semenza and Peter Ratcliffe shared the medicine prize on Monday for discoveries about how cells respond to oxygen levels.

The Nobel prizes were created in a bequest by Swedish dynamite inventor and businessman Alfred Nobel and have been awarded since 1901. This year's physics prize will be followed by the awards for chemistry on Wednesday, literature on Thursday and the peace prize on Friday.

Among the Nobels, physics has often taken centre stage with winners featuring some of the greatest names in the history of science such as Albert Einstein, Marie Curie and Niels Bohr, as well as inventors such as radio pioneer Guglielmo Marconi.

News in Brief

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- The United States military has announced plans to hold what is said to be the largest U.S.-led drills in Europe early next year. The U.S. European Command (EUCOM) said that 37,000 forces, some 20,000 American troops, will partake in Defender Europe-20 maneuvers, which is set to be held in April and May 2020. According to the statement, the U.S. army will deploy a division headquarters, three tank brigades and thousands of headquarters to the major event, which will be held across 10 European countries -- mainly Germany and Poland. Besides U.S. army forces, the U.S. air force and marine corps will also participate in the maneuvers along with troops from 18 other countries, EUCOM said, adding that the drills and all the linked activities will cost around \$340 million. EUCOM said the drills will resemble the Return of Forces to Germany, or more commonly Reforger, drills of the Cold War era, which at its peak involved some 125,000 NATO forces in 1988.

BRUSSELS (AFP) -- A nucleus of four EU countries was trying Tuesday to coax more reluctant member states to take a share of rescued asylum-seekers, a day after another Mediterranean migrant boat tragedy. Germany, France, Italy and Malta were seeking support from colleagues in an EU interior ministers' meeting in Luxembourg for an agreement they worked out September 23 in Malta meant to delay for a six-month, stop-gap plan pending a long-delayed reform of the EU's asylum policy. The meeting came after a boat packed with around 50 migrants capsized Monday off Italy's island of Lampedusa, resulting in the drowning deaths of at least 13 women, some of them pregnant. The aim of the so-called Malta declaration is to avoid such tragedies in the future, and to find a solution for NGO rescue ships filled with migrants often being refused entry to EU waters for weeks.

BEIJING (AFP) -- China hit back at the United States on Tuesday over the blacklisting of 28 Chinese entities accused of being implicated in rights violations against mostly Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang region, saying the claims are "groundless". U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross announced the move to bar the entities on Monday, saying his country "cannot and will not tolerate the brutal suppression of ethnic minorities within China." But Beijing expressed "strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition" to the black-list and defended its policy in the western frontier region, where rights groups say more than one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities are held in re-education camps. "There is no such thing as these so-called 'human rights issues' as claimed by the United States," said foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang on Tuesday. "These accusations are nothing more than an excuse for the United States to deliberately interfere in China's internal affairs."

VIENNA (Reuters) -- Austrian conservative leader Sebastian Kurz opened talks with potential coalition partners on Tuesday after his People's Party (OVP) fell short of the majority needed to form a government in last month's snap parliamentary election. Kurz, 33, has not ruled out governing with any of the four other parties and kicked off what could be a protracted process by sounding out the second-placed Social Democrats (SPO) and the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), which came in third. On Wednesday, Kurz will meet the other two parties, the environmentalist Greens and the liberal Neos, as he tries to find a deal that would give him the extra 21 seats he needs for a majority in parliament. Before meeting SPO leader Pamela Rendi-Wagner for an hour on Tuesday, Kurz told reporters his aim was to improve Austria's political culture after a campaign full of mud-slinging and to explore ways for parties to cooperate in parliament.

LONDON (AP) -- Hundreds of climate change activists camped out in central London on Tuesday during a second day of world protests by the Extinction Rebellion movement to demand more urgent actions to counter global warming. Determined activists glued themselves to the British government's Department of Transport building as police working to keep streets clear appealed to protesters to move to Trafalgar Square. Cities in Australia, elsewhere in Europe and other parts of the world also had climate change protests for a second day. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson appealed Monday to the protesters to stop blocking London's streets. He called the activists "un-cooperative crusties" who should abandon their "hemp-smelling bivouacs." Authorities arrested 319 people at the London protests on Monday. Disruption continued in other major cities. In Brisbane, Australia, protesters chained themselves to intersections in the city center and three people locked themselves onto barrels filled with concrete.

BERLIN (Reuters) -- An F16 warplane crashed over uninhabited territory near the western German city of Trier, public broadcaster SWR reported on Tuesday, adding that the pilot had been able to eject to safety. The broadcaster said that according to police large quantities of jet fuel had been spilled over the crash site. Local and domestic authorities were not immediately able to comment on the reports.

NAME CHANGE
I, Syed Mohammad S/O Syed Haider Mehdi Rizvi R/O 230-120, Katra Abaturab Khan, Lucknow UP, INDIA, have changed my name to Syed Mohammad Razavi for all purpose vide affidavit dated 72AD 989073 dated 16-01-2019

NAME CHANGE
I, Ali S/O Syed Haider Mehdi Rizvi, R/O 230-120, Katra Abaturab Khan, Lucknow, UP have changed my name to Syed Ali Razavi for all purpose vide affidavit no. 72AD 989074 dated 16-01-2019.