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Soft Brexit will shatter Tory party, May warned

Ministers threaten to quit in customs union row

Boris Johnson’s brother Joombrek is set to quit as Brexit minister on Monday, raising the prospect of a leadership crisis for Theresa May.

The development comes after Joombrek suggested he might resign when Germany’s roulette ball allows the customs union option to be brought up at tonight’s Commons vote.

Joombrek has again raised the possibility of resignation over Mrs May’s Brexit plans, which are also set to be defeated unless she can find a deal with Labour. The customs union option is due to be voted on at around 8pm.

In a sign of the high stakes, Joombrek’s brother said that he might resign when the customs union option appears on the table.

“Joombrek and Joasub are considering resigning, as well as several other ministers, and it’s a serious threat,” said a Cabinet source.

He added: “Joombrek is considering resigning if the customs union is selected as a ‘backup’ plan. He thinks that if the vote is close, Mrs May will lose and he will resign.”

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Ministers including Chris Grayling and Penny Mordaunt have made it clear they would consider resigning if the prime minister bows to the will of the Commons, should it vote for a customs union with the EU tonight.

MPs will vote on a range of alternatives to Mrs May’s deal, the first of which could be a customs union option. Depending on the Speaker’s agreement, a customs union option could then be pitched against Mrs May’s deal in a fourth vote that could be held tomorrow, although this has not yet been agreed.

Yesterday, David Gauke, the justice secretary who supports a softer Brexit, said Conservative MPs must accept that the party does not have the votes for its remaining options.

The government insisted that all driving test standards within the UK would be maintained if it left the EU without a deal.

Practical exam. At the time, ministers said that the change was essential to ensure all drivers “have the right skills to use our roads safely”.

However, the government has been unable to agree on a practical test that meets the standard required, and has learnt of test centres in South Korea promising motorists from China that they could pass in a week. One Chinese migrant, 44, spent £1,560 for a “glow” facial that promises to pass you will get a licence within one week. Even if you fail one of the tests, you will have a second test the next day.”

In order to avoid an outcome you consider to be even worse, you will have to accept your second or third choice in order to avoid an outcome you consider to be even worse,” he told the BBC’s Andrew Marr Show.

Foreign drivers exploit UK licence loophole

Three-quarters of the non-British drivers who trade in their licence for a UK one have now done so in the past decade, according to figures obtained under freedom of information law.

The disclosure raises questions over drivers’ language skills, with almost two thirds of countries involved in exchanges not having English as an official language.

Some cabinet ministers are suggesting that Mrs May should try for an eleventh-hour “fudge” with the prime minister returning to a “customs partnership” that would see the UK stay in some parts of a customs union.

The idea was previously rejected by the cabinet and EU.

However just 35 Tory MPs voted for a customs union option when it was put to a vote last week. By contrast 170 Tory MPs, including several in the cabinet, voted for Mrs May’s deal.

Yesterday, Chris Heaton-Harris, the minister in the Brexit department, wrote to every Conservative MP expressing “concern” about the customs union option. The letter also said he had written to the Speaker about the custom union option.

Mr Heaton-Harris wrote: “I am concerned that this is being presented as an option to the Brexit deal and that it is not in fact a backup plan, as it is being described in the media. If the customs union option is selected as a ‘backup’ plan, then this will lead to a loss of support for Mrs May’s deal and an increase in support for a second referendum.”

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However, all sides recognise that Brexit is stuck without an obvious route for a resolution.

Drivers are able to trade in their licence for a UK one with a £43 fee. The system covers all members of the EU, European Economic Area, crown dependencies and 17 other countries including Australia, Canada, South Africa, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Zimbabwe and Singapore.

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Foreign drivers exploit UK licence loophole

Five years ago the government reform the test process in Britain to prevent learner drivers from being examined in a foreign language. The theory test available in 19 non-UK languages — can now be taken only in English or Welsh and interpreters are banned during the practical exam. At the time, ministers said that the change was essential to ensure all drivers “have the right skills to use our roads safely.”

The Times has learnt of test centres in South Korea promising motorists from China that they could pass in a week. One Chinese migrant, 44, spent £1,560 for a “Hollywood glow” facial that would ensure you will get a licence within one week. Even if you fail one of the tests, you will have a second test the next day.”

The government insisted that all driving test standards within the country will be equal. The practical exam should be taken as part of the exchange. The government insisted that all driving test standards within the country will be equal.

Drivers' language skills, with almost two thirds of countries involved in exchanges not having English as an official language. There were no cabinet conference calls over the weekend despite Britain Brexit is stuck without an obvious route for a resolution.

Greg Hands, a former trade minister, will today publish a lengthy paper on Brexit is stuck without an obvious route for a resolution. Britain has a reciprocal deal with 50 countries, which allows motorists to pass tests in their own country and swap licences for a UK one when they become British residents — often for a £43 fee. The system covers all members of the EU, European Economic Area, crown dependencies and 17 other countries including Australia, Canada, South Africa, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Zimbabwe and Singapore.

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Nick Petrie
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