



SUPPORT Jeremy Hunt
Businesses angry over Brexit plan

BY **NICOLA BARTLETT**
Political Correspondent

BRITAIN'S business leaders have criticised the Government's handling of Brexit.

The British Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses are among the groups who have written to Theresa May and EU leaders, to express concern about the sluggish negotiations.

It follows a warning from Airbus that a no-deal Brexit could force it to quit the country, putting up to 100,000 jobs at risk.

But Jeremy Hunt, Health and Social Care Secretary, yesterday dismissed the "siren voices" and told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show: "The more we undermine Theresa May, the more likely we are to end up with a fudge, which would be a disaster for everyone."



RUNAWAY Boris Johnson
'No-runway' Johnson will avoid voting

BY **NICOLA BARTLETT**

BORIS Johnson will today miss a crucial vote on a third runway at London's Heathrow airport.

The Foreign Secretary had originally promised his constituents in Uxbridge and South Ruislip, which is close to Heathrow, to "lie down in front of those bulldozers" as he fought expansion of the airport.

Mr Johnson had been due at the EU Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg which would have given him enough time to return to vote.

It is now understood he will be further afield.

Tory MPs are on a three-line whip to back a new runway after the Government accepted the recommendation of the Davies commission.

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MIRROR INVESTIGATION: UK PLASTIC SHAME EXPOSED

For 12 hours a day, barefoot Mahfuz, 7, sifts through sewage and rubbish to dig out bits of our plastic ... he gets paid £3.60



FILTHY WORK
Mahfuz, 7, at a dump site in Dhaka
Pictures: **ANDREW STENNING**



DANGER Mahfuz and others go unsupervised



POLLUTED The river which runs past landfill site in Kamrangirchar

“ Instead of moving our plastic scrap around the globe, we should be turning off the tap ”
FIONA NICHOLLS, GREENPEACE UK, ON OUR PLASTIC CRISIS



TOIL Rithoy, 12, typically works 12-hour shifts sorting plastic bottles by colour



LABOUR Man carries sacks in Kamrangirchar

EXCLUSIVE
BY **TOM PARRY** Special Correspondent in Bangladesh

BAREFOOT and dressed in shorts and a vest, seven-year-old Mahfuz digs through sewage, food wrapping, building materials and foam packaging for scraps of plastic.

He is one of many children working in squalid conditions in Bangladesh, where Britain sends plastic waste for recycling, earning less than 30p an hour and often working 12-hour days.

Coca-Cola, Sprite and Fanta bottles discarded in our bins are among those being sorted some 5,000 miles away.

And critics say UK firms involved in exporting household plastic rubbish have no way of checking whether youngsters will be involved in processing it in such countries.

Fiona Nicholls of Greenpeace UK said: "Sweeping our waste under someone else's carpet is not the solution to Britain's plastic problem."

"Instead of just moving our plastic scrap around the globe, we should turn off the tap at the source."

"The industry is churning out single-use plastic at an alarming rate,

with global production set to quadruple by 2050. That's clearly more than our recycling system can cope with."

Britain shipped more than 110,000kg of household plastic waste for recycling to Bangladesh in the first four months of this year.

Earlier this month, an International Labour Organisation report found 1.2 million youngsters aged under 14 were trapped in poorly paid jobs in the densely populated Asian country.

On a visit to the capital Dhaka, the Mirror encountered children sifting through mountains of bottles in tips.

At Matuail's dump site on the edge of the city, next to a highway choked with diesel fumes and open sewers, hundreds of motorised rickshaws are piled with crates of plastic bottles.

There I meet Rithoy, 12, who should be at school but instead works full-time at a roadside recycling factory.

He talks to me from the top of a 16ft-high hill of bottles, about as large as a tennis court. I spot familiar brands such as Fanta, Sprite, Coca-Cola, Evian and 7Up.

Rithoy scrambles nimbly across the unsafe mound, which is filled up with truckloads of bottles every day. He

says he is paid less than 30p an hour to separate bottles by colour alongside his mother and other family members.

An unofficial worker since he was 10, Rithoy's typical shift lasts 12 hours. Inside a gloomy unit under the bottle mountain, boss Monir Mumtaz says he employs 10 people, including Rithoy and several other children.

Bottles are chopped up then thrown into a huge metal centrifuge with water. They come out as flakes, which are dried and then packaged in sacks.

Each 25kg sack is sold on to dealers, then exported to China. The flakes are transformed into polyester fibres to make clothes, bed sheets and carpets.

Monir tells me he is paid £30 for each sack of white or green flakes. He gets less for brown.

Crouched on the ground is 25-year-old mum Rabia Rabi, whose son Ahnaf, two, sits at her side. He spends

most of the day wrapped in a cloth tied to his mother's back.

Later I travel to Kamrangirchar, another outlying district of Dhaka, where the squalor is even greater.

The whole suburb is an open-air landfill, an end-of-the-world place where everything thrown out ends up.

Getting out of a taxi into the sweltering street, the reek from the rancid food, discarded human waste and noxious fumes is overpowering.

The scene is chaotic. Thousands of people are shifting waste materials over a bridge that crosses a river so polluted it is soot-black.

Waste water and sewage flow out of a pipe yet, incredibly, there are lily pads growing in this disgusting stagnant soup, in which optimistic fish-

ermen punt. Men push carts loaded up with old rubber inner tubes. Others are stacked with giant sacks of quicklime to speed up decomposition.

Women in saris wade through fields of plastic bags next to the river, beating the rubbish with sticks to dry it out in the morning heat.

Mahfuz is one of dozens of children playing unsupervised in this dangerous location as they wait for the plastic to dry, exposed to disease from bacteria, mosquitoes, rats and dogs. They are barefoot and filthy.

Although Bangladesh's burgeoning plastic recycling industry provides

Morrisons bring back paper bags

SUPERMARKET chain Morrisons is reintroducing brown paper bags for fruit and vegetables to save on plastic.

The bags - once a staple of greengrocers - will be available in all of the firm's stores from today.

The 100 per cent recyclable bags will

stop around 150million plastic versions from being used each year.

Customers taking their own containers to Morrisons' butchers and fishmongers counters will also be able to earn 100 loyalty card points - the equivalent of 10p - every time.

Factbox

22,000,000 tonnes of waste is generated by British households a year, of which **44%** is recycled

11% of household waste is plastic, of which **40%** is plastic bottles

Between January 2012 and September 2017, nearly **two-thirds** of the UK's total waste plastic exports went to China and Hong Kong

9,000,000 tonnes of plastic end up in the ocean every year

Over 40% of plastic is used just once in the UK, and then thrown away

15 minutes is the average working life of a plastic bag, globally

our household recycling bins is sent abroad to be processed. And though what is shipped to Bangladesh represents just a small proportion of the total, the appalling conditions in Dhaka show urgent action is needed.

Also on the list for worst ocean plastic pollution were Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia, all to which Britain has started shipping a lot more plastic scrap since the China ban in January.

In the first four months of 2018, UK plastic waste exports to Poland soared by 31% compared with the same time last year, and by 51% to Vietnam.

Those countries are now restricting imports, too, meaning we could soon be struggling to deal with a build-up.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove is spearheading a campaign to cut Britain's plastic waste, but experts warn actions so far are falling short.

In December Mr Gove said Britain had to "stop offshoring our dirt". But in a statement to Greenpeace investigations unit Unearthed, his department said we will keep sending plastic scrap abroad in the short-term.

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