
BRITAIN LOSES SEAT ON INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE FOR FIRST TIME EVER

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British has pulled its candidate for a seat on the International Court of Justice, allowing a judge from India to fill the final place. Some analysts say the decision is proof of the UK's waning international influence.

Britain on Monday lost a seat on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for the first time since the tribunal was created in 1946 following a bitter battle with India.

The UK withdrew its candidate, Christopher Greenwood, who was vying against Indian judge Dalveer Bhandari for the place in the court, based in The Hague in the Netherlands.

The ICJ's judges are picked by the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly.

Dalveer Bhandari, a former Mumbai and Delhi high court judge, also sat on India's Supreme Court before his ICJ election

Britain withdraws

The election had turned into a stalemate between Greenwood, who enjoyed support in the Security Council, and Bhandari, who garnered more strength in the General Assembly.

Greenwood has already served one nine-year term at the ICJ and was seeking to serve a second. Bhandari has served on the tribunal since 2012.

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While judges from Brazil, Lebanon, France and Somalia were elected during voting last Thursday, the remaining pair of judges were forced into a runoff for the fifth seat.

Following the UK's withdrawal, Bhandari was re-elected by the assembly and council.

"We are naturally disappointed, but it was a competitive field with six strong candidates," said British Ambassador to the UN Matthew Rycroft, who said the country concluded that it would be wrong to take up further time with additional rounds of elections.

Status damaged

Britain's Guardian newspaper described the defeat as a "humiliating blow to British international prestige and an acceptance of a diminished status in international affairs."

It said that the UK had faced resentment by some UN member states over the dominance of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, on which Britain has held a place since its inception in 1945.

The ICJ is the UN's top judicial body, whose role is to settle disputes between countries. Some 15 judges sit on the tribunal and are elected in batches of five, every three years, to serve nine year terms.

Some diplomats attributed Britain's failure to rally support for its candidate at the General Assembly to a loss of influence following London's decision to leave the European Union.

The Independent said that country's Brexit plans were evidence of the country turning inward, and that Britain would no longer command the respect it once did. India on the other hand is seen as in the ascendancy, the paper said.

Brexit timeline: Charting Britain's turbulent exodus from Europe
June 2016: 'The will of the British people'

After a shrill referendum campaign, nearly 52 percent of British voters opted to leave the EU on June 24. Polls had shown a close race before the vote with a slight lead for those favoring remaining in the EU. Conservative British Prime Minister David Cameron, who had campaigned for Britain to stay, acknowledged the 'will of the British people' and resigned the following morning.

mm/cmk (AFP, AP)

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