

Gulf Today

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Virat Kohli's boys have pride at stake

P32



Parliament votes down Brexit deal by 391 to 242



People take part in a protest demanding immediate change in Algeria, Algeria, on Tuesday.

Britain's parliament rejected Prime Minister Theresa May's deal to quit the European Union for a second time on Tuesday, deepening the country's worst political crisis for generations. 17 days before the planned departure date.

Lawmakers voted against May's amended Brexit deal by 391 to 242 in her last-minute talks with EU chiefs on Monday to assuage her critics' concerns ultimately proved fruitless.

The vote puts the world's fifth largest economy in uncharted territory with no obvious way forward, exiting the EU without a deal, delaying the March 29 divorce date, or snap elections, or even another referendum are all now possible.

May might even try a third time to get parliamentary support in the hope that hardline eurosceptic lawmakers in her Conservative Party, the most vocal critics of her withdrawal treaty, might change their minds if it becomes more likely that Britain might stay in the EU after all.

While she lost, the margin of defeat was smaller than the record 330-vote loss her deal suffered in January.

"If this vote is not passed tonight, if this deal is not passed, then Brexit could be fast," a hoarse-voiced May told lawmakers before her deal was defeated.

"Sterling, which had earlier in the day fallen by two percent to \$1.3005, was trading at around \$1.3088 shortly after the vote.

Lawmakers are now due to vote on Wednesday on whether Britain should exit the world's biggest trading bloc without a deal, a scenario that business leaders warn would bring chaos to markets and supply chains, and other critics say could cause shortages of food and medicines. Opposition to May's deal among members of the Conservative Party derives from a belief

that it does not offer the clean break from the European Union that many voted for.

The main pro-Brexit faction in May's party, the European Research Group, had said that it did not recommend voting for her deal.

Former foreign minister Boris Johnson, one of the leaders of the Brexit campaign, said May's deal was dead and Britain should now leave the EU without an agreement to cushion the effects.

"This deal has now reached the end of the road. If it is rejected tonight, I hope that it will be put to bed," he told parliament.

Conservative eurosceptic spokesman Jacob Rees-Mogg said he did not believe the position of May as Britain's prime minister was endangered by the prospect of a likely loss in Tuesday evening's key Brexit vote.

In January, May lost in a parliamentary vote on her EU exit deal by 330 votes.

Asked what would happen if she lost by more than 100 votes this time, Rees-Mogg told Sky News: "I think that if the deal is by less than 230 votes, she will be able to say 'we've made some progress' and I wouldn't worry about the prime minister's position."

He added: "There isn't an mechanism for an early election which is likely to be successful."

The marplotting point in the so-called Irish border backstop, an insurance policy aimed at avoiding controls on the border between the British province of Northern Ireland and EU-member Ireland after Brexit.

LONDON

The vote puts the world's fifth largest economy in uncharted territory with no obvious way forward: exiting the EU without a deal



Obrador is dismantling democracy in Mexico

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GCAA joins Ethiopian crash investigation

Venezuela gives US 72 hours to leave country

CARACAS: Venezuela ordered American diplomats to leave the country within 72 hours on Tuesday after President Nicolas Maduro accused US counterpart Donald Trump of cyber "sabotage" that plunged the OPEC nation into its worst blackout on record.

Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza said US diplomats on Venezuela soil must leave within three days, after talks broke down over maintaining diplomatic "interest sections" in the two countries.

"The presence on Venezuelan soil of these officials represents a risk for the peace, unity and stability of the country," the government said in a statement.

The US State Department had announced on Monday it will withdraw its staff from Venezuela this week, saying their presence had become "a constraint on US policy."

Washington has taken the lead in recognising opposition leader Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's rightful president after the 35-year-old Congress chief announced an interim presidency in January after declaring Maduro's 2018 re-election a fraud. Most countries in Europe and Latin America have followed suit.

Maduro, who retains control of the military and other state institutions as well as the backing of Russia and China, has denounced Guaidó as a puppet of the United States.

Separately, Venezuela's state prosecutor said on Tuesday that he would investigate opposition leader Juan Guaidó for "sabotage" as a nationwide power blackout entered its fifth day.

Public prosecutor Tarek William Saab told reporters in Caracas an investigation was being opened "against the citizen Juan Guaidó for his alleged involvement in the sabotage of the Venezuelan electricity system."

Jairo Castro, of nongovernmental organisation Doctors for Health, said on Twitter on Monday night that 24 people have died in public hospitals since the start of the blackout.

With the blackout in its sixth day, hospitals struggled to keep equipment running, food rotted in the tropical heat and exports from the country's main oil terminal were shut down.

Venezuela's opposition-controlled Congress on Monday declared a symbolic "state of alarm" on Monday.

Power returned to many parts of the country on Tuesday, including some areas that had not

had electricity since last Thursday, according to witnesses and social media.

Power was still out in parts of the capital of Caracas and the western region near the border with Colombia.

Maduro blamed Washington for organising what he said was a sophisticated cyber attack on Venezuela's hydroelectric power operations.

"Donald Trump is most responsible for the cyber attack on the Venezuelan electricity system," Maduro said in a broadcast from the Miraflores presidential palace on Monday night.

"This is a technology that only the government of the United States possesses."

Maduro, elected in 2013 following the death of his political mentor Hugo Chavez, officially broke diplomatic relations with the United States on Jan. 23 when it recognised Guaidó.

Washington evacuated most of its diplomatic staff two days later.

The blackout was likely caused by technical problem with transmission lines linking the Guri hydroelectric plant in southeastern Venezuela to the national power grid, experts told reporters.

Venezuela's electricity network has suffered

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