

Business

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2020

Britain faces major challenges after last-minute post-Brexit trade deal

EU officials promise to support their fishing sector through painful cuts

LONDON: Britain is set for a new chapter Friday after securing a hard-fought post-Brexit trade deal with the European Union as EU envoys gave the accord, reached only after months of tortuous negotiations, a sober welcome. "There was no great joy because a divorce is not really good news," one EU diplomat told AFP.

Member state envoys to the EU were "sober enough" in their response, the diplomat said, and the text—all 1,200 pages and in English—"will now be examined to make sure there are no hidden details which could cause a problem".

The envoys are expected to meet again tomorrow to get the ratification process started, the diplomat added. As for Britain, the accord means the country will now not tumble off a trade "cliff-edge" come January 1, avoiding a mountain of harmful tariffs and quotas.

But major changes are inevitable as London definitively quits the EU single market and free movement with the bloc comes to an end after nearly half a century of integration. "We shouldn't underestimate the economic shock Britain will experience," another European diplomat said.

Britain has been in a standstill transition period still subject to the bloc's rules since

formally leaving the EU on January 31. Standing in front of a Downing Street Christmas tree in a video message late Thursday, Prime Minister Boris Johnson vaulted the hundreds of pages of text as "a good deal for the whole of Europe" and a "present" for Britain.

The address was "a victory speech", Anand Menon, director of the UK in a Changing Europe think-tank, told AFP. "Boris Johnson was elected Prime minister to get Brexit done, he has now definitively got Brexit done," Menon said.

Johnson has come under fierce criticism for his management of the country's coronavirus outbreak, which has so far left almost 70,000 dead, the heaviest toll in Europe. In recent days, thousands of trucks have been backed up at Channel ports, after France and other European partners blocked crossings over rising cases of a new virus variant believed to spread faster. With ferry and tunnel crossings unusually staying open on Christmas Day and British soldiers carrying out virus tests, there were signs of the logjam clearing on Friday.

Some had pointed out that the transport chaos, which raised fears of shortages of fresh produce, could be a glimpse of what awaited the country if it crashed out of the EU single market without a deal.

Fishermen's fears

The EU has offered Britain unprecedented tariff- and quota-free access to its single market of 450 million consumers. But it has in return secured London's commitment to respect its always-evolving rules in some areas such as environmental protection, labor regulation and tax, aiming to avoid Britain undercutting companies inside the bloc. The UK has also signed up to guarantees that it will not abuse state aid to firms to seek an unfair advantage. It was the question of fish that emerged as the last stumbling block this week when London pushed to reduce EU fishing fleets' share of the estimated 650-million-euro (£586 million, \$790 million) annual haul by more than a third. The final agreement settled on a 25-percent cut to be phased in over a five-and-a-half year period.

EU officials have promised to support their fishing sector through the painful cuts, a major downside of a deal European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen called "fair and balanced" overall.

For Britain, "that a deal has been agreed at all is in many respects a remarkable achievement," the Times newspaper said. Nevertheless, the final package is "a source of relief rather than celebration", it added, with new restrictions including an end to



BRUSSELS: EU Chief Negotiator for Brexit Michel Barnier (center) is watched by a Greek representative carrying a folder containing the 2000 page 'Brexit Trade Deal' as he arrives ahead of a special meeting of The Committee of the Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union (Coreper) at the European Council in Brussels on Friday. — AFP

free movement into the UK for European workers and into the EU for Britons.

Young people will be hit by Britain's withdrawal from the continent-spanning Erasmus student exchange program, to be replaced by a home-grown scheme named

after pioneering computer scientist Alan Turing. "The deal is hardly the end of the process. Now that (Johnson) has delivered on his promise to get Brexit done, his challenge is to make a success of it," the Times warned. — AFP

DHAMAN opens third Primary Healthcare Center in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) yesterday inaugurated its Primary Healthcare (PHC) Center in Dhajeej that will serve residents of Farwaniya Governorate and other governorates. The healthcare facility is the third center to be inaugurated by DHAMAN and is part of its network of PHC Centers covering all governorates in Kuwait. This inauguration is a significant step towards achieving the company's strategy to serve areas with high population density to facilitate beneficiary access to healthcare services.

Today, DHAMAN already operates two other PHC Centers in Hawalli and Farwaniya, and plans to open two additional PHC Centers in Ahmedi and Jahra, which results in covering all governorates in Kuwait during the first phase with a total of five main PHC Centers. The new health center in Dhajeej will offer primary healthcare services to citizens and expatriates residing in Kuwait starting during the beginning of January 2021. Spanning over 2,770 sqm, the center features 16 Family Medicine Clinics, 6 Dental Clinics and a Panoramic Dental X-Ray Room, 5 Pediatric Clinics, 5 Procedure Rooms, 3 Observation Rooms, a Laboratory and a Pharmacy.

DHAMAN Board Chairman Mutlaq Al-Sanea said: "Established by a Ministerial Decree, DHAMAN is the first Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) healthcare organization in the Middle East and a key component of Kuwait's National Development Plan (New Kuwait 2035). As an integral part of Kuwait's national healthcare strategy, we are pleased to announce the opening of our third healthcare facility in the country to meet the growing healthcare needs of the population. We are also currently developing a network of hospitals, three in total, in addition to 15 healthcare centers to provide healthcare services to residents across all of Kuwait's six governorates to achieve Kuwait's national strategy for healthcare."

On his part, DHAMAN Acting CEO Dr. Mohammad Al-Qenai: "The inauguration of Dhajeej Center is a positive addition to Kuwait's PHC services as DHAMAN's strategy revolves around focusing on and investing in primary healthcare due to our role in enhancing the quality of healthcare services and managing the health system. To ensure this, DHAMAN paid special attention to recruiting professionals in medical, administrative, and technical fields who have the relevant experience and notable qualifications to ensure the provision of high-quality services. This center in Dhajeej is our third PHC Center as part of a network of healthcare facilities that will be inaugurated soon. We have dedicated effort to the selection of locations that have high density of population in terms of the targeted group of individuals to facilitate access to healthcare services. Along those lines, DHAMAN is working to ensure that all our centers obtain the necessary international accreditations for quality service while our



DHAMAN celebrates opening of PHC Center in Dhajeej.



DHAMAN Board Chairman Mutlaq Al-Sanea and DHAMAN Acting CEO Dr Mohammad Al-Qenai with the Board members.

medical and technical staff are under continuous development through constant training courses. In conclusion, I would like to express appreciation to the Licensing Department at the Ministry of Health (MOH) for their cooperation in this national initiative that will contribute to developing the level and quality of health services in Kuwait, as well as alleviate MOH from administrative and financial burdens by transferring over two million individuals from the Ministry's facilities to DHAMAN's centers without placing any cost on the MOH for their primary and secondary medical treatment."

In full compliance with the COVID-19 regulations set by the Ministry of Health and official

government bodies in Kuwait, the inauguration of the DHAMAN PHC Center in Dhajeej was attended by DHAMAN board members and executive management.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Measures

DHAMAN's healthcare facilities remained operational during all stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Company is taking various measures to continue to provide safe healthcare services to residents throughout Kuwait. During December 2020, DHAMAN introduced an alternative to invasive COVID-19 tests and provides the saliva COVID-19 test in Kuwait.

US Congress fails to agree to boost stimulus checks

WASHINGTON: Republicans blocked an effort to amend the hard-won pandemic relief package to more than triple direct payments to struggling Americans, something demanded by President Donald Trump. After months of partisan bickering, legislators late Monday finally approved a \$900 billion stimulus package to help families and businesses struggling to survive the hit to the economy from the coronavirus before millions lose their benefits.

The legislation includes one-time payments of \$600 to most taxpayers, but Trump dropped a bombshell on the celebrations this week, hinting he might veto the bill unless the amount was increased to \$2,000. Democrats, who have been pushing for months to increase pandemic support, cheered his statement, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi challenged Republicans to support an amendment to boost the dollar amount.

The Democratic-controlled House of Representatives held a Christmas Eve "pro forma" session, normally a brief affair with little business, in an effort to win bipartisan approval to send the revised payments to Trump's desk for signature. But Republicans refused to agree to the change.

"So we do not have unanimous consent," said Michigan Democrat Debbie Dingell, who was acting as speaker pro tempore. Pelosi immediately lambasted Republicans and vowed to call the House back on Monday to approve the amendment in a regular session. "Today, on Christmas Eve morning, House Republicans cruelly deprived the American people of the \$2,000 that the President agreed to support. If the President is serious about the \$2,000 direct payments, he must call on House Republicans to end their obstruction," she said in a statement.

Later Thursday, Pelosi said the bill has been sent to the White House and called on Trump to sign. "The House & Senate are now sending this important legislation #ForThePeople to the White House for the President's signature. We urge him to sign this bill into law to give immediate relief to hard-working families!," Pelosi tweeted.

The stakes are high, especially if Trump vetoes the bill: About 14 million jobless workers will lose their pandemic unemployment benefits right after Christmas, and millions more face losing their homes when an eviction moratorium expires at the end of the year. And the stimulus measure is wrapped up with a \$1.4 trillion funding bill, meaning the government will be forced to shut down at midnight Monday if Trump does not sign the bill. The chaos comes in the final weeks of Trump's presidency, as he continues to insist without evidence that the election of President-elect Joe Biden was fraudulent, attacking Republicans who refuse to back his false claims. —AFP