

International

Wounded May seeks EU compromise to save Brexit deal

May to meet EU's Tusk last-minute talks

BRUSSELS: Bloodied but not yet beaten, Prime Minister Theresa May holds last-ditch talks with EU leaders yesterday as she battles to save both her Brexit deal and her career. The British leader, who survived a confidence vote staged by her own party's MPs late on Wednesday, needs to turn a narrow victory on home turf into an unlikely away win.

May will meet EU President Donald Tusk for what he called "last-minute talks" before being joined by her 27 counterparts for a European Union summit less than three weeks after they approved the Brexit divorce papers. The other EU members have drawn up a six-paragraph statement they hope will appease concerns about the "Irish backstop" measure in the Brexit withdrawal agreement and help get the deal through the British parliament.

Last month the withdrawal accord was hailed as the end to a 17-month negotiation, and leaders dared hope they had saved Britain from crashing out of the union on March 29 without a deal. But when May brought the hard-fought deal back to Britain she ran into renewed opposition from hardline Brexiteers in her own party and balked at putting it to a vote in parliament on Tuesday, fearing a crushing defeat.

Now, with the vote delayed till January, she

wants Europe to sweeten the offer with "reassurances" that the so-called "backstop" measures to prevent the return of a hard border with Ireland will not last indefinitely. Negotiators said the leaders would listen to May and see what they can offer her in terms of a statement, but insist the 585-page withdrawal agreement itself cannot be renegotiated.

Two-stage offer

According to European diplomats, the proposed summit statement would declare that any backstop "would only be in place for a short period and only as long as strictly necessary." And it will add: "The union stands ready to examine whether any further assurances can be provided. Such assurances will not change or contradict the withdrawal agreement."

This would not be the legally binding promise, sought by Brexiteers, that the measure to keep the Irish border open would not be used to bind the UK into a customs union indefinitely. "This is incredibly innocent language. Nothing of this is new. There is no end date for the backstop," one European source said. "Not even the wording is different. There is the word temporary, but this is already in the withdrawal agreement," he noted. The diplomat said that, in the likely event that the

statement does not assuage the concerns of May's parliamentary opponents, then a legal "interpretation" of the deal could be produced. But he said this would only be published in January as, if it were released too soon, Brexiteers might immediately seek more concessions, pushing approval of the plan still further back. Brexit will once again dominate an EU summit which had been planned to deal with the thorny issues of migration, budgets and eurozone.

"The discussions in Britain... do not make the situation any easier, but we should nevertheless do everything we can to avoid a hard Brexit," said Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who holds the rotating EU presidency.

Backstop sell-by date?

After May made a desperate three-capital European tour on Tuesday to seek assistance from fellow leaders, Tusk had said he would love to help her, but "the question is how". On Wednesday, Kurz suggested the secret may lie in the question of the backstop, indicating there may be room for compromise. But determined to remain loyal to continuing member Ireland, European officials insist in public and in private that the backstop must stay. "The idea of a sell-by date won't stand," one said.



BRUSSELS: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May gestures as she arrives in Brussels for a European Summit aimed at discussing the Brexit deal, the long-term budget and the single market. — AFP

May was also to meet Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar individually yesterday before the summit. Anything May does come away with must convince her own party, its angry Northern Irish allies and a majority of British MPs to back the deal when it returns to Westminster. If the agreement is still found wanting not only would Britain and its main trading partners face economic chaos, but May could be finished off by a parliamentary vote of no confidence. —AFP

Kuwait Times

Premier Brands

To see your ad here, call:
+965 248 35 616 / 617
 E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
ads@kuwaittimes.net
 Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Year End Sale

ZENTALITY C-701-BLK

10 SAR / 14 QAR

8 GB

hp 15DA0007-17 8th Gen.

259 QAR / 299 QAR

Intel Core i7-8550
 - 16GB RAM - 1TB Storage
 - 4GB Dedicated Nvidia Graphics
 - 15.6" HD Display

MacBook Air MRE2-E MRE2-E

384 QAR / 414 QAR

Touch ID

Intel Core i5
 - 128 SSD
 - 8GB RAM
 - 13.3" Display

XBOX ONE S XBI-PAL-1TB-S-W

79 QAR / 94 QAR

1 TB

[@BestKuwait](#) [@BestKuwait](#) [@BestKuwait](#) [@BestKuwait](#)

Credit: Start from 500 - Up to 48 month - Interest approval

Shop Online www.best.com.kw Free Delivery

1809 809

• Kuwait 1 (The New str.) • Kuwait 2 (Panasonic Tower) • Kuwait 3 (Souq Sharq) • Hawalli 1 (Tunis str.) • Hawalli 2 (Bin Khalid str.) • Shuwaikh (4th Ring road) • Al-Rai (4th Ring road) • Salmiya (Salim Al-Mubarak str.) • Salmiya (Boulevard Mall) • Farwaniya (Behind police station) • Fahaheel (Opp. General Parking) • Jahra (Opp. Main Co-op.) • Al-Rai (Departure Hall) • Souq Sharq (Mezzanine)