

# May postpones key vote on Brexit deal

U.K. Prime Minister under pressure from party to resign

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON

The British government on Thursday postponed a crucial Brexit vote scheduled for the first week of June, following an outcry from hard-line Brexiters over concessions made by Prime Minister Theresa May.

The beleaguered Premier is in the last throes of a tumultuous period in power focussed all-but exclusively on guiding her fractured country out of the European Union (EU).

“We will update the house on the publication and introduction of the Withdrawal Agreement Bill on our return from the Whitsun recess” on June 4, government official Mark Spencer told MPs.

Mr. Spencer said the government had planned to hold the vote on a landmark piece of legislation to implement Brexit on June 7 but had not been able to fix this date.

### Rejected three times

Ms. May is under intense pressure to resign after holding out the prospect of a parliamentary vote on a second referendum to try and persuade MPs to support the divorce deal she has struck with EU leaders.

The deal has already been rejected three times in Parliament, forcing a delay to the planned date of Brexit on March 29, and still faces strong cross-party opposition.

Meanwhile there are already several leading Conservatives, including members of her own Cabinet, who are campaigning to take over from Ms. May when she quits.

The Prime Minister’s



Defending the deal: U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May speaking in the House of Commons on Wednesday. •AP

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MARK SPENCER  
Government official

woes were made worse on Wednesday when Andrea Leadsom – one of Cabinet’s strongest Brexit backers – resigned from her post as the government’s representative in Parliament over her handling of the slowly-unfolding crisis.

“I no longer believe that our approach will deliver on the (2016) referendum results,” Ms. Leadsom said in her resignation letter.

In her response, Ms. May thanked Ms. Leadsom for her “passion, drive and sincerity”, but took issue with her assessment of the government’s Brexit strategy.

“I do not agree with you that the deal which we have negotiated with the European Union means that the United Kingdom will not become a sovereign country,” Ms. May said.

Ms. May has already promised to step down no matter the outcome of her

fourth attempt to ram her version of Brexit through Parliament.

But even that sacrifice – and a package of sweeteners unveiled on Wednesday that included a chance for lawmakers to get a second Brexit referendum – failed to win hearts and minds.

### ‘PM should go’

“It’s time for the Prime Minister to go,” Ian Blackford, of the pro-EU Scottish National Party, told Ms. May as she tried to defend her latest proposals in Parliament.

Ms. May ignored the question and called the upcoming vote Britain’s last chance to leave the EU with a negotiated deal that can avert economic chaos. Parliament should “stop ducking the issues and get on with the job that British people instructed us to do,” she said.

Thursday’s European elections are being interpreted in Britain as a referendum on Brexit and on Ms. May’s ability to get the job done.

They make grim reading for the government team, with Nigel Farage’s Brexit Party well ahead in the polls. The current deadline for Brexit set by EU leaders is October 31.

# Pak. hopes to work with Modi for peace

Imran congratulates PM; PPP leader calls for ‘revision in strategic priorities’

MEHMAL SARFRAZ LAHORE

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday joined a host of world leaders in congratulating Narendra Modi for his Bharatiya Janata Party’s election victory.

“I congratulate Prime Minister Modi on the electoral victory of BJP and allies. Look forward to working with him for peace, progress and prosperity in South Asia,” Mr. Khan tweeted.

The Pakistan Prime Minister had in April told a group of foreign journalists that “if the BJP wins, some kind of settlement in Kashmir could be reached.”

Federal Minister for Education Shafqat Mahmood said Mr. Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government firmly believes that the real wars that India and Pakistan need to fight are against poverty and illiteracy. “I hope that after this vic-

tory, Mr. Modi will play a positive role towards peace between our two countries. For peace to happen the sufferings of the Kashmiri people have to end,” he said.

While Mr. Khan and his party stalwarts think a Modi win means peace has a chance, others are not as hopeful.

### Sustainable talks

Sherry Rehman, parliamentary leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the Senate, said the exit polls had foretold a BJP landslide. “The final count means a tougher neighbourhood for Pakistan.”

Ms. Rehman said that ideally, a more confident Mr. Modi should mean sustainable talks are a possibility. “Yet, the BJP’s mandate, among other things is extremism and exclusion. Islamabad has a sweet tooth for Modi’s *mithai* (sweet) but



Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan. •AP

translating niceties into a serious peace process is unlikely unless there is a revision in the strategic priorities of the Modi government, in which political and constitutional repressions are reversed in Kashmir.”

Senior journalist Nasim Zehra said it needs to be seen whether “Mr. Modi’s India will continue its aggressive militarised policy towards Pakistan, or will a wiser Mr. Modi, in the Vajpayee mode,

commit himself to regional peace and prosperity, and re-engage with Pakistan.”

These are questions on other minds also. Senior journalist Najam Sethi said Mr. Khan thinks Mr. Modi will make peace with Pakistan. “I think Modi will continue on the same path that has yielded dividends.”

Moed Yusuf, associate vice-president at the United States Institute of Peace, said he worries about the future of the relationship between the two countries. “Prime Minister Modi went out on a limb to bash Pakistan during his campaign. It won’t be easy for him to change tact on this. That said, his landslide victory may give him the confidence to take a few risks and I can only hope that he sees the importance of improving ties with Pakistan. But everyone will have to be patient. Nothing is going to improve quickly.”

# Putin, Abe send wishes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Congratulatory messages poured in from world capitals for Narendra Modi.

President Vladimir Putin of Russia expressed his readiness to enhance the “comprehensive development of special and privileged strategic partnership” between the two countries.

“I would like to reiterate my readiness to continue our fruitful personal contacts and joint work to consolidate the entire gamut of bilateral ties and constructive engagement in international affairs,” he said.

In a phone call, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expressed desire to strengthen “special strategic and global partnership” with India. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison also rang Mr. Modi and greeted him on the “historic election”.

# Xi Jinping congratulates Modi on election results

Hails ties between two countries

ATUL ANEJA BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping has congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday for steering the electoral victory of the National Democratic Alliance during the 17th Lok Sabha elections, and hoped that New Delhi-Beijing ties would now scale “new heights”.

In a letter to Mr. Modi, Mr. Xi expressed his “heartfelt congratulations” on the occasion. He stressed that China and India were important anchors of a multipolar world. “In recent years, China-India relations have shown strong momentum of



Chinese President Xi Jinping. •REUTERS

development under the joint efforts of both sides. China and India maintain good coordination and cooperation on major issues such as promoting multi-polarisation and economic globalisation as well as upholding multilateralism.”

# Sri Lanka, Maldives greet PM

Result is an endorsement of Modi’s policies: Sririsen

MEERA SRINIVASAN COLOMBO

Leaders from Sri Lanka and the Maldives on Thursday sent congratulatory messages to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a tweet from his official handle around noon, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena said: “Congratulations on your victory and the people’s re-endorsement of your leadership. Sri Lanka looks forward to continuing the warm and constructive relationship with India in the future. @narendramodi.”

Mr. Sirisena, who also sent a letter, said the decision of the people of India to entrust the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies with



Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena. •REUTERS

the responsibility of “guiding India’s destiny” for a further term with this renewed mandate was a “clear endorsement” of Mr. Modi’s policies. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who congratulated his Indian counterpart in a letter and on Twitter, said he looked forward to working closely with Mr. Modi to take forward “ongoing initiatives in

multi-faceted sectors.”

“I remain confident that the time-tested bilateral friendship between our two countries will be further consolidated and expanded during your consecutive second term of office,” Mr. Wickremesinghe said.

Leaders from the Maldives, especially the ruling Maldivian Democratic Party, too congratulated Mr. Modi.

President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih said in a tweet: “Congratulations to PM @narendramodi on his historic victory... It is a strong affirmation of the Indian people’s confidence in the BJP/led government. I look forward to closer and enhanced ties of Maldives-India cooperation.”

## ELSEWHERE



### China slams U.S. for ‘bullying’ Huawei

BEIJING  
China berated the U.S. for “bullying” Huawei on Thursday as Panasonic joined a parade of companies reviewing their ties with the telecom giant after a U.S. ban linked to security concerns. Commerce Ministry spokesman Gao Feng said China has lodged “solemn representations” with Washington. •AFP

### Pak. test-fires ballistic missile Shaheen II

ISLAMABAD  
Pakistan announced on Wednesday that that it had conducted a training launch of a Shaheen II surface-to-surface ballistic missile, which it said is capable of delivering conventional and nuclear weapons at a range of up to 1,500 km. “Shaheen II ... fully meets Pakistan’s strategic needs towards maintenance of deterrence stability in the region,” its military said. •REUTERS

# Great things are in store for bilateral ties, says Trump

U.S. House committee congratulates ‘Indian people’

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN WASHINGTON

Reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s victory in elections, U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted on Thursday afternoon: “Congratulations to Prime Minister @Narendramodi and his BJP party on their BIG election victory! Great things are in store for the U.S.-India partnership... I look forward to continuing our important work together!”

Earlier, the U.S. House [of Representatives] Foreign Affairs Committee issued a statement congratulating “the Indian people”.

Interestingly, the listing of priorities for the India-U.S. partnership mentioned human rights first. It also referred to climate change. “The Indian people have spoken, and the U.S. Congress looks forward to continue working with India, and the Narendra Modi-led National Democratic Alliance

government to advance our shared goals on a host of issues, including human rights, defense, trade and economic growth, and climate change.” Committee chair Eliot L. Engel said.

### Upholding liberal order

Richard Verma, former U.S. Ambassador to India, referred to the U.S. and India helping to guarantee the democratic and liberal order. “Especially as America’s challenges with China continue to escalate – on trade and on security issues – our relationship with India takes on even more importance. Both of our nations can be the guarantors of the democratic and liberal democratic order. Working together, across the range of sectors, will ensure a more prosperous and secure future for both our countries,” he told *The Hindu* via email.

“We now need to move past the transactional as-

pects of the relationship. We need to think big, and draw upon the huge potentials of our people to work together, to innovate, to solve the challenges that confront us. If we do that, then I’m very confident for our ties and for our people in the years ahead,” he wrote.

Other commentators too drew a link between the Indo-U.S. relationship and the strain on the China-U.S. ties. “While the U.S. may quibble with some of Delhi’s policy choices near the end of the Modi government’s first term, stability is crucial. Our leaders have personal connections, and have developed working relationships. We have a serious divide that seems nearly-impossible to broach: A deepening defence partnership, with a worsening trade relationship,” Rick Rosso, from the Centre for International and Strategic Studies, told *The Hindu* via email.

# ‘Dalits face discrimination, violence in U.S.’

Activists hold Congressional briefing on caste-linked bias in America

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN WASHINGTON

A group of South Asia-focussed community organisations held a Congressional briefing on caste discrimination on Wednesday. The hearing’s objectives included educating Congressional staff about how caste operates in the U.S., highlighting the damage it does to U.S. institutions, and advocating data collection, monitoring and legislation.

Central to the discussion was a survey conducted by Equality Labs, which describes itself as a “South Asian Community Technology Organization” that seeks to end discrimination in various forms. Some 1,500 pe-



The briefing was sponsored by Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal. •REUTERS

ople in the diaspora who identified as “South Asian” were sent a self-administered online survey with 47 questions related to caste. Of the respondents, 33% identified as ‘Brahmins’, 24% as

‘Dalits’, 7% as ‘Adivasis’ and 18% as ‘Shudras’.

Fifty two per cent of Dalit respondents feared their caste would be “outed” and 67% said they faced discrimination at the workplace. Forty one per cent of Dalits said they faced discrimination in educational establishments. Twenty six per cent of Dalits who responded said they had experienced physical assault based on their caste.

The briefing included testimony on caste discrimination and caste-based violence as well as a discussion of what is required in terms of sensitising American institutions to caste-based discrimination.

The briefing’s recommendations included a need for monitoring and reporting of caste-based discrimination at the workplace, including sensitisation to caste issues in diversity workshops.

A briefing is different from a Congressional hearing – the latter has the power to make individuals testify or face penalties for not doing so. A briefing can occur when a group wants to highlight an issue and it requires a Congressional sponsor – in this case, Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, a Washington State Democrat.

Ms. Jayapal and several other members of Congress were represented by their Chiefs of Staff.