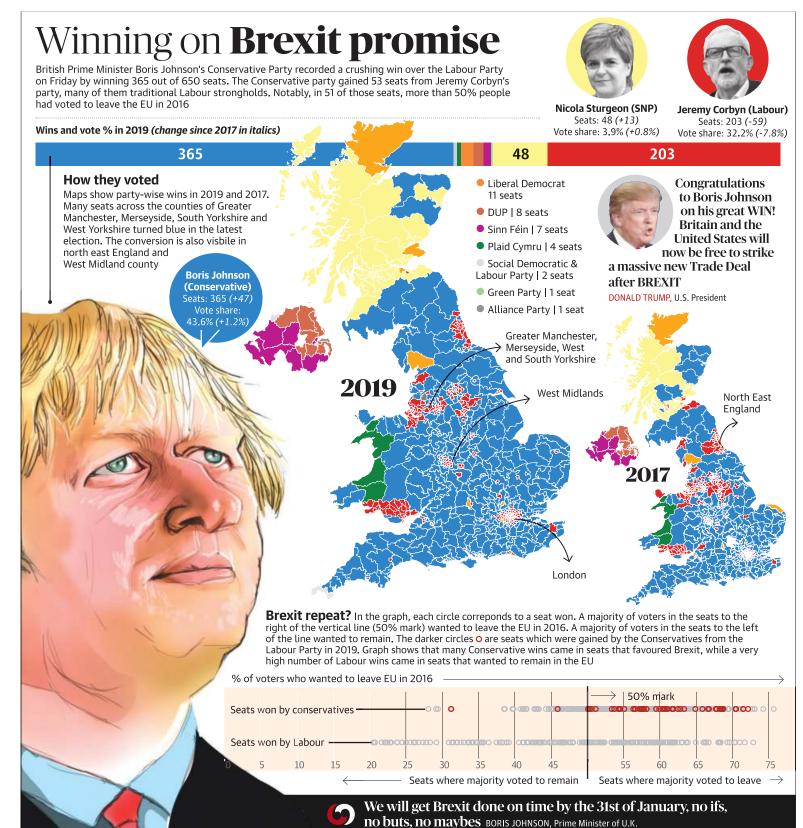
Despite massive victory, Boris Johnson faces a battle for Britain



Strong show by SNP and Irish nationalists raises concerns about independence movements gaining momentum

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Prime Minister Boris Johnson may be revelling in his mighty election victory but the results in Scotland and Northern Ireland have hinted at battles ahead in trying to keep the U.K. together.

Strong performances by Scottish and Irish nationalists in Thursday's snap vote will increase concerns about independence movements gaining momentum north of England's border and in Northern Ireland.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) won 48 seats, almost matching its performance in the 2015 election and setting up a showdown between Mr. Johnson and its combative leader Nicola Sturgeon.

Ms. Sturgeon said it had been an "exceptionally good night" for her party, leaving Scotland and the rest of Britain on "divergent paths".

"I accept that Boris Johnson after this election has a mandate to take England out of the European Union, but he does not have a mandate to take Scotland out of the European Union," she said, adding that she would push for another independence referendum after losing a 2014 vote.

"I have a mandate, a renewed, refreshed, strengthened mandate, to offer people in Scotland the choice of a different future.

"I don't pretend everybody who voted SNP yesterday will necessarily support independence, but there is a clear endorsement Scotland should get to decide our future and not have it decided for us," she said.

Ms. Sturgeon is expected to write to Mr. Johnson before Christmas to formally demand Holyrood – the seat of the Scottish government –

I won't lead Labour in next election: Corbyn

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jeremy Corbyn on Friday said he would not lead Britain's main Opposition Labour Party in the next general election. "I will not lead the party in any future campaign," the veteran socialist, 70, said after winning his north London seat for the 10th time.

Mr. Corbyn went into Thursday's election offering a radical leftist programme for social change, including huge investment in public services, as well as a second referendum on Brexit.

But he was criticised for his handling of allegations of anti-Semitism within Labour and supposed sympathies with proscribed groups.

Senior Labour figures have indicated that Mr. Corbyn was responsible for the heavy losses. He admitted in an acceptance speech the results were 'very disappointing".

He said a new party leader would be chosen early next year.

Mr. Corbyn defended his "manifesto of hope" and maintained they were "extremely popular" during the campaign. But his message had been eclipsed by Brexit. "Brexit has so polarised and divided debate in this country, it has overridden so much of a normal political debate," he added. "I recognise that has contributed to the results that the Labour Party has received."

be given the power to hold a second independence vote. But the Conservative government is unlikely to accept her demands.

Demands by nationalists Conservative Party chairman James Cleverly told the BBC that Thursday's result was not a mandate for a second independence vote. "The majority of votes in Scotland went to parties that are prounion," he said. "The 2014 referendum was meant to be a once in a generation referendum." In that poll, Scotland – a country of 5.4 million – voted by a margin of

55% to 45% to stay in the U.K. Mr. Johnson is also facing the serious but less urgent threat of keeping Northern Ireland part of the U.K., in the wake of demands by nationalists for a united Ireland. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland voted against Brexit in the shock 2016 referendum.

Nationalists now – for the first time since the partition of Ireland in 1921 - hold more seats in the British Parliament than those who want to stay part of the U.K. The hardline Democratic

Unionist Party, which previously held most Northern Irish seats in the Parliament, had a tough night, losing deputy leader Nigel Dodds. Unionists have also warned that Mr. Johnson's Brexit deal creates a Customs border down the Irish Sea, which they fear nationalists will exploit to pull Northern Ireland

+ A record 15 Indian-origin candidates win

This has been a hard-fought election in a very cold time of the year, says Priti Patel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A record 15 Indian-origin candidates entered the House of Commons on Friday, registering seven wins each for the ruling Conservative and Opposition Labour parties in the U.K. general

The new Parliament is the most diverse ever, with one in 10 MPs now from an ethnic minority background.

All the nearly dozen Indian-origin MPs from the previous Parliament contesting this time were successful in clinching their seats, with Gagan Mohindra and Claire Coutinho for the Conservative Party, Navendru Mishra for Labour and Munira Wilson for the Liberal Democrats among the first-timers.

"The better our Parliament reflects the diversity within the country, the more likely it is that all voices will be represented," said Mr. Wilson, who won from the south-west London constituency of Twickenham.





Three cheers: Conservative MPs, from left, Priti Patel, Rishi Sunak and Alok Sharma

"Time to Get Brexit Done and get on with investing in our schools, hospitals and police to keep our streets safe," said Goan-origin Coutinho, who clinched victory in the Surrey East seat.

The other Tories to return to the Commons include Priti Patel, the former U.K. Home Secretary who is likely to remain in Mr. Johnson's top team in the new Cabinet as well. "This has been a hard-fought election in a very cold time of the year because we needed a functioning Conservative majority, said Ms. Patel, who won the Witham seat in Essex.

Her fellow Cabinet colleagues Rishi Sunak – the son-in-law of Infosys cofounder Narayana Murthy – and Alok Sharma, the former International Development Minister, clinched victories from the Richmond and Reading West seats, respectively.

Shailesh Vara won his North West Cambridgeshire seat, while Goan-origin Suelclinched Braverman

From the Opposition Labour Party, Navendru Mishra clinched the Stockport seat, while Preet Kaur Gill, who made history in the last election as the first British Sikh woman MP, was re-elected from Birmingham Edgbaston. Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, the first turbaned Sikh MP, will also return to the Commons with an impressive win from Slough in south-east England.

Veteran Labour MP Virendra Sharma won from Ealing Southall. The others holding on to their seats included Lisa Nandy who won Wigan and Seema Malhotra who clinched Feltham and Heston. Valerie Vaz, the sister of scandal-hit former MP Keith Vaz, held on to her Walsall

Fixing ties a challenge, says Merkel

REUTERS

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Friday said the shortage of time to fix future relations with Britain post Brexit was a major challenge.

"It's about an array of relations, in trade, in fishing and cooperation in security and foreign policy," Ms. Merkel told mediapersons after an EU summit in Brus-

"Our biggest hurdle will be that we need to sort out these issues very quickly."

French President Emmanuel Macron warned Britain that the more it chose to deregulate its economy after Brexit, the more it will lose access to the European Union's market. "I don't think that you can have a strong relationship with Europe's single market with substantial regulatory differences on climate, environmental, economic or social regulations," Mr. Macron said.

EU warns of 'challenging' timeframe for U.K. trade deal

Member states will not accept it blindly, says EU Council

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Friday warned of the tight timing for securing a trade deal with Britain, hours after Boris Johnson's Conservatives won a crushing election victory.

"The time frame ahead of us is very challenging," Ms. von der Leyen said, following a discussion by EU leaders on the way forward after Brexit, now expected on January 31.

On the "first of February, we go to work," she said.

EU Council President Charles Michel warned that the 27 member states would not accept a deal blindly, stressing that the bloc would insist that Britain respect European norms to win the deal. "There is no question of

concluding a deal at any price, said Mr. Michel, who



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen

coordinates EU summits, after the talks.

"Negotiations are over when the results are balanced and guarantee respect for the different concerns," the former Belgian premier said

"We have a way of doing things based on experience, transparency and maintaining unity" in the EU, he

EU is worried about the breakneck speed with which Mr. Johnson would like to

rope and any British effort to undermine the unity among the remaining 27 members.

strike a trade deal with Eu-

Level playing field In a text released after the

talks, the 27 EU leaders called for "as close as possible a future relationship with the U.K." while warning that it "will have to be based on a balance of rights and obligations and ensure a level playing field".

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier will direct trade negotiations, which the leaders will follow closely "and provide further guidance as necessary, fully consistent with the EU's best interest," conclusions added.

Mr. Johnson has until July 1 to ask for a trade talks extension.

If he refuses to extend the negotiation period, a nodeal Brexit will loom at the end of 2020.

IN BRIEF

Bouteflika-era PM elected **President of Algeria**

A former Algerian PM who served under deposed leader Abdelaziz Bouteflika was elected President of the protest-wracked country after a vote marred by unrest and low turnout, results showed on Friday. Abdelmadiid Tebboune, 74. took 58.15% of the votes, trouncing his four fellow contenders without the need for a second-round runoff, electoral commission Chairman Mohamed Charfi announced. A record six in 10 Algerians abstained in the

vote, Mr. Charfi said. AFP

House panel approves charges against U.S. President

Full House set to vote next week to impeach Trump

REUTERS WASHINGTON

A Democratic-controlled House of Representatives committee on Friday took Republican President Donald Trump to the brink of impeachment when it approved two charges against him stemming from his efforts to pressure Ukraine to investigate Democratic polit-

ical rival Joe Biden. A deeply divided House Judiciary Committee voted 23-17 to approve articles of impeachment charging Mr.



Donald Trump

Trump with both abusing the power of his office over Ukraine and obstructing House Democrats' attempts to investigate him for it.

If the full House votes next week to impeach Mr. Trump, as expected, the Republican will become the third U.S. President to be impeached. But the chances of

him being removed from office are close to zero because the Senate, which is dominated by Republicans, will have the final say.

"Today is a solemn and sad day, the committee's Democratic Chairman, Jerry Nadler, said.

'A hoax'

Mr. Trump dismissed the impeachment process against him as a hoax and said he would not mind a long trial in the Senate. "It's a very sad thing for our country, but it seems to be very good for me politically," Mr. Trump told reporters at the White House, arguing that his poll numbers had increased.

U.S., China pause trade war

Washington and Beijing agree on rollback of tariffs

REUTERS BEIJING/WASHINGTON

The U.S. and China cooled their trade war on Friday, announcing a "Phase one' agreement that reduces some U.S. tariffs in exchange for increased Chinese purchases of American farm

In a press conference in Beijing, Chinese officials said the two countries have achieved major progress in their phase one trade negotiations, and agreed on the text of a phase one deal. Mr. Trump tweeted: "We

have agreed to a very large Phase One Deal with China." Officials in China have "agreed to many structural changes and massive purduct, Energy, and Manufactured Goods, plus much more," he said. The U.S. has agreed to suspend tariffs on \$160 billion in Chinese goods due to go into effect on December 15, Mr. Trump said on Twitter, and cut some existing tariffs to 7.5%.

chases of Agricultural Pro-

A statement issued by the United States Trade Representative's office did not mention the December 15 tariffs, but said that the U.S. would leave in place 25% tariffs on \$250 billion worth of Chinese goods.

The U.S. will cut the tariff rate in half, to 7.5%, on another \$120 billion list of Chinese imports that was levied on September 1.

China has also agreed to suspend retaliatory tariffs, targeting goods ranging from corn and wheat to U.S. made vehicles and auto parts, that were due to take effect on December 15. It will import more wheat, corn, and rice after the deal. China's Vice-Agricultural Minister said on Friday, but did not elaborate.

The agreement covers intellectual property, technology transfer, agriculture, financial services, currency, and foreign exchange, USTR

The deal will provide more protection for foreign companies in China, and Chinese companies in the U.S., Chinese officials said.

Bomb blast kills 10 in Afghanistan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ten civilians, including four women and a child, were killed when their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb in eastern Afghanistan, officials said on Friday.

The explosion happened in the volatile district of Jaghatu in Ghazni province after the U.S. and Taliban paused ongoing talks on Thursday. "Unfortunately, in the explosion 10 people, including four women and a child, were killed," Ghazni Provincial Governor spokesman Aref Noori said. There was no claim of responsibility for the explosion.