

International

May faces parliamentary assault

Prime Minister Theresa May's plan to leave the European Union is expected to survive weeks of intense parliamentary scrutiny, which started yesterday, despite pro-EU lawmakers' attempts to force the government to rethink its strategy.

Ms May's government is seeking approval for a new law giving her the right to trigger Article 50 – the legal process for leaving the bloc – after the Supreme Court ruled last week that she could not take that decision unilaterally.

"This Bill simply seeks to deliver the outcome of the referendum – a decision the people of the UK have already made. They will view any attempt to halt its progress dimly," Brexit minister David Davis told lawmakers at the start of a two-day debate on the Bill yesterday – the first stage in the lawmaking process.

Some lawmakers will try to use the legislative process to press Ms May to reveal closely-guarded details of her negotiating strategy, give parliament and devolved governments

more say over the exit talks, or even block Brexit entirely.

But Ms May's majority in Parliament means her plan to start Brexit negotiations by the end of March is currently expected to pass through Parliament's legislative process relatively unchanged and on time.

"I suspect at the moment there isn't going to be enough for a majority for any amendment," a source close to cross-party discussions on the legislation told Reuters.

Disquiet among Conservative lawmakers, many of whom campaigned for Britain to remain in the EU, has so far been contained after May last week bowed to pressure to set out her Brexit plan in a formal policy document.

"The bottom line is that there is very, very little appetite for Conservative MPs to back any amendments," the source said.

The second largest party, Labour, called for more parliamentary scrutiny of the Brexit process, but has said it will not ultimately try

to thwart it. Several Labour MPs disagree with this stance and will oppose the law.

Lawmakers who disagree with the government's plan to leave the EU's single market and negotiate a free trade deal with the bloc – a strategy described by some as a 'hard Brexit' – are gearing up for a fight.

Five separate amendments designed to halt the Bill before it can become law have been submitted by lawmakers from different opposition parties. One of these motions, written by the pro-EU Scottish National Party, will be put to a vote on Wednesday.

"Today's debate falls shamefully short in time and in detail and that is why SNP MPs will be voting against the Bill proceeding," SNP lawmaker Stephen Gethins said in a statement before the debate.

In addition, 85 pages of proposed amendments to the short two-clause Bill have been submitted for debate at later stages in the parliamentary process, seeking to change the law for a wide range of reasons. (Reuters)



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May leaves 10 Downing Street, London, yesterday. Photo: Peter Nicholls/Reuters



Top federal government lawyer Sally Yates. Photo: Reuters

Trump dumps top lawyer who defied his order

US President Donald Trump has fired top federal government lawyer Sally Yates after she took the extraordinarily rare step of defying the White House and refused to defend new travel restrictions targeting seven Muslim-majority nations.

It was another dramatic twist in the unusually raucous roll-out of Mr Trump's directive that put a 120-day hold on allowing refugees into the country, an indefinite ban on refugees from Syria and a 90-day bar on citizens from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

The Friday night ban prompted protests and chaos at airports on the weekend as customs officials struggled to put the order into practice, and the fallout spread to US markets on Monday, where stocks suffered their biggest drop of 2017 and companies affected by the change spoke out against it.

Ms Yates said late on Monday that the Justice Department would not defend the order against court challenges, saying that she did not believe it would be "consistent with this institution's solemn obligation to always seek justice and stand for what is right."

Hours later, she was fired. The White House said Ms Yates "has betrayed the Department of Justice by refusing to enforce a legal order designed to protect the citizens of the United States" and portrayed her actions as political. (Reuters)

VON DER HEYDEN GROUP

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In terms of article 99 of the Companies Act (Cap. 386 of the laws of Malta) notice is hereby given that **Von der Heyden Group Finance p.l.c.** has issued a Prospectus dated 30th January 2017 relating to an issue of €25,000,000 Unsecured Bonds (the "Bonds") due in 2024 bearing interest at the rate of 4.4% per annum. The Bonds are guaranteed by Timan Investments Holdings Limited (the "Guarantor"), a private limited liability company registered in Malta. The Company is, except for one share, a fully-owned subsidiary of the Guarantor.

The Bonds are being issued to the public in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act and the Listing Rules of the Listing Authority. The Bonds are expected to be admitted to the Official List of the Malta Stock Exchange on the 10th March 2017 and trading is expected to commence on the 13th March 2017.

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Calamatta Cuschieri Investment Services Ltd.
www.cc.com.mt

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www.vdhgroup.com

The value of investments may increase as well as decrease and past performance is not an indication of future performance. Prospective investors are urged to read the Prospectus especially the sections entitled "Risk Factors" contained in the Summary Note, the Registration Document and the Securities Note. Prospective investors are to refer to the guarantee contained in Annex B of the Securities Note forming part of the prospectus for a description of the scope, nature and term of the guarantee.

1st February 2017

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