
MAY'S BREXIT PLAN LIKELY TO SURVIVE PARLIAMENTARY ASSAULT

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

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.

Some lawmakers will try to use the legislative process to press her 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 Conservative leader 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.

"The bottom line is that there is very, very, very little appetite for Conservative MPs (Members of Parliament) to back any amendments."

"HARD BREXIT"?

The second largest party, Labour, is expected to call 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. The two-day debate starting on Tuesday is expected to include a vote on one of these.

"If we were serious about opposing an extreme Brexit then we can't just wave through Article 50," said Caroline Lucas, a Green Party MP who has signed one of the amendments along with lawmakers

from other parties.

In addition, 60 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 bill for a range of different reasons.

The government is expected to use its majority to resist any substantial amendments to the bill, arguing that the June 23 referendum to leave the bloc has already empowered them to execute Britain's withdrawal.

"It is simply about implementing a decision already made, a point of no return already passed," Brexit minister David Davis will say. "We asked the people of the UK if they wanted to leave the EU; they decided they did."

Kaynak/Source: