

UK GENERAL ELECTION

# Record number of women elected

REUTERS, London

A record 200 women - a third of lawmakers - and over 40 openly gay, lesbian or bisexual parliamentarians won seats in Britain's election.

The party with the most female lawmakers is the opposition Labour party with nearly half of its elected members of parliament (MPs) women, while the smaller Green Party's only elected MP is a woman.

However the announcement on Friday that Prime Minister Theresa May would form a new government with support from Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), after her Conservative party fell short of a parliamentary majority, raised concerns from LGBT and women's rights campaigners.

The DUP, one of the most socially conservative parties in Europe, has fought to maintain tight restrictions on abortion and opposes gay marriage.

The vote returned a small increase in women MPs from 191 in the last election in 2015 after which Britain ranked 46th in an index of parliaments based on the number of female lawmakers, behind many European countries and others such as Rwanda, Cuba and Belarus.

"We are moving forward at a snail's pace and this is embarrassingly slow," Sam Smethers, chief executive of women's rights organisation the Fawcett Society, said in a statement.

"If the UK only improves by this much at each election, we will not see equal representation in parliament until 2062," she said.

In 2015, Northern Ireland health minister and DUP senior member Jim Wells resigned after police started an investigation into comments he made linking gay marriage to child abuse.

"You don't bring a child up in a homosexual relationship. That child is far more likely to be abused and neglected," Wells told a campaign event in the last election.

Many LGBT rights supporters took to social media to voice their concern.

"We share the concerns of countless LGBT people, and our friends, of all political persuasions who are deeply anxious about the potential Democratic Unionist Party involvement in the new government," Ruth Hunt, chief executive of Stonewall, wrote in a blog.

"It's important to remember that our values are defined as much by who we stand with as what we stand for," she added.



British daily newspapers' front page stories show the media reaction to results of the snap general election. Britain's newspapers lambasted Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday after she lost her Conservative majority in the general election, weakening her authority.

PHOTO: AFP

# EU fears Brexit delay

FROM PAGE 1

Barnier was ready: "The clock is ticking," Juncker said.

Barnier sounded conciliatory: "Brexit negotiations should start when UK is ready," he tweeted. "Timetable and EU positions are clear. Let's put our minds together on striking a deal."

Donald Tusk, the former Polish premier who will oversee the process as chair of EU national leaders' summits, also stressed there was "no time to lose" and a need for London and Brussels to cooperate to minimise disruption for people, businesses and governments across Europe when Britain walks out in 22 months.

"Our shared responsibility and urgent task now is to conduct the negotiations... in the best possible spirit, securing the least disruptive outcome," said Tusk.

French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe was quick to scotch a suggestion Britain might do a U-turn and ask to stay in the bloc -- something that would need EU agreement -- and a Commission spokesman resisted a barrage of questions at a press briefing on whether the Union might agree to extend the two-year deadline.

Few Europeans voiced much sympathy for May. Some compared her to her predecessor David Cameron, who sought to silence Eurosceptic fellow Conservatives by calling the referendum on EU membership which ended his career and shocked Europe.

"YET ANOTHER OWN GOAL" "Yet another own goal; after Cameron, now May will make already complex negotiations even more complicated," tweeted Guy Verhofstadt, the liberal former Belgian premier who is the European Parliament's point man for the Brexit process.

German conservative Markus Ferber, an EU lawmaker involved in discussions on access to EU markets for Britain's financial sector, was scathing: "At the most untimely point," he said, "The British political system is in total disarray. Instead of strong and stable leadership we witness chaos and uncertainty."

May, who had campaigned against Brexit last year, delivered her terms for withdrawal on March 29 that included a clean break from the EU single market. She then called a snap election hoping for a big majority to strengthen her negotiating hand.

That was also the broadly desired outcome in Brussels, where leaders believed that a stronger May would be better able to cut compromise deals with the EU and resist pressure from hardline pro-Brexit factions in her party to walk out without a deal.

European leaders have largely given up considering the possibility that Britain might change its mind and ask

to stay, something May made clear was not her intention.

Most now appear to prefer that the bloc's second-biggest economy leave smoothly and quickly. Having recovered from last year's shock, Germany, France and other powers see Brexit as a chance to tighten EU integration without the awkward British.

As news of British mayhem broke, Juncker was launching a new push for an expanded EU defence project which Britain has long opposed, fearing a clash with the US-led NATO alliance.

**FEAR OF COLLAPSE** A breakdown in negotiations could mean Britain ceasing to be an EU member without having in place the legal agreements that would avoid a chaotic limbo for people and businesses. That would also make it improbable that Britain could secure the rapid free trade agreement it wants with the EU after it leaves.

In a note to clients, UBS wrote that a breakdown in talks was now more likely and would make it harder to reach a trade deal: "A tighter political balance could make it easier for Eurosceptics ... to prevent the government from offering the compromises needed to secure a trade deal."

Barnier aims to start with talks on residence rights for expatriates, on how much Britain will owe the Union on departure and on EU-UK border arrangements in Northern Ireland. He hopes outline agreements on those issues by the end of this year can open the way for discussion on a future trade deal. However, May and her allies have questioned the EU's negotiating proposals.

May's reappointment and determination to soldier on without a clear majority has muted talk of a different ruling coalition taking power with a mission to seek a "softer" Brexit than May is pursuing, possibly seeking to remain in the single market.

While the other 27 states would quite possibly be willing to extend to Britain the same kind of access to EU markets they offer to Norway or Switzerland, they have made clear that would mean Britain continuing to pay into the EU budget and obey EU rules, including on free migration across the bloc, while no longer having any say in how the Union's policies are set.

"Maybe there won't be a hard Brexit," Norwegian Foreign Minister Borge Brende said. "Maybe Britain will have to show greater flexibility in the negotiations."

But EU officials question how any British government could persuade voters to accept a Norway-style package and so would be wary of starting down the path of negotiating it for fear of ending up without a deal that both sides could ratify in 2019.

# Where it went wrong for May

FROM PAGE 1

enough for a potentially triple-figure majority.

Here are five reasons why things went so wrong:

**THE BRENDA FACTOR** Many Britons viewed the election as a cynical ploy to score gains against an unpopular opposition leader, Jeremy Corbyn. After all, the country was only two years into a five-year parliament and May, after becoming prime minister last year, had repeatedly pledged not to hold new elections.

But there were others who were mindful of the toxic legacy from two referendums -- one on Scottish independence in 2014, the other on membership of the European Union in 2016 -- that left the country deeply divided. To them, a new election would simply open old wounds.

In a BBC video hugely shared on social media, a woman called Brenda seemed to speak for many after the election was announced. Asked by an interviewer in Bristol about her reaction, she wailed: "Not another one! Oh for God's sake! I can't stand this!"

# Big win for all 3

FROM PAGE 1

"Humbled to be re-elected for my home seat of Hampstead & Kilburn! Thank you all so much for your kind support," Tulip tweeted yesterday after her victory.

In her victory speech, she thanked everyone, especially members of the Bangalee community who turned up in large numbers to support her during the campaign.

She had earlier said, "A vote for me will be a vote for a strong, local voice. I will always listen to you before I act in parliament."

Born in Mitcham, London in 1982, Tulip completed two Master's degrees -- one in English Literature and the other in Politics, Policy and Government -- from King's College London.

After the 2015 election victory, she was inducted into the shadow cabinet of Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn but resigned later.

Meanwhile, Rushanara Ali, the first British lawmaker with roots in Bangladesh, has secured a third consecutive victory in Bethnal Green and Bow constituency in Bangalee-dominated East London.

She got 42,969 votes while her nearest rival from the Conservative Party, Charlotte Chirico, managed

'DEMENTIA TAX' May's attempt to make it an election just on Brexit leadership went badly awry in mid-May.

A row brewed over a Conservative proposal to make elderly people pay potentially unlimited amounts for care in their home -- a move that would force the sale of many family homes.

Even the pro-May conservative press rounded on the idea, branding it a "dementia tax" that would wipe out the inheritance of the middle classes.

Corbyn seized the advantage, painting May as cold and uncaring. She backed down, promising that there would be a limit on contributions to pay for care, and the government would launch a consultation paper.

But the row also shone a light on May's managerial style, of surrounding herself with a few trusted advisors. Even cabinet ministers were excluded from discussion over parts of the Tory manifesto.

**TERROR ATTACKS** The Conservatives are traditionally more popular than Labour when it comes to security, but May suddenly found herself on the back foot after

terror attacks occurred in Manchester and London, leaving 30 dead and around 150 injured.

May sketched plans for tightening Britain's already extensive security laws, but Corbyn shifted the debate to focus on her own six-year record as interior minister, when she oversaw thousands of budget-saving cuts in the police roll.

He pounded away on his proposal to hire more neighbourhood police, arguing these would provide a vital bulwark against jihadist radicalisation.

**REFUSAL TO DEBATE** May refused from the outset to join a TV debate, saying she preferred "getting out and about, meeting voters and hearing directly from voters" rather than "debates where the politicians are squabbling among themselves."

Corbyn initially replied that he would not take part in the debate unless she attended, but cannily changed his mind, joining the leading candidates on the podium on May 31, with the Conservatives represented by May's interior minister, Amber Rudd.

May thus handed Corbyn the

spotlight and exposed herself to accusations of political cowardice.

'MAYBOT' STYLE May sought to showcase herself as a no-nonsense, get-things-done Englishwoman in the face of a woolly, idealistic Corbyn, but the downsides of this image showed up glaringly on the campaign trail.

Her endlessly repeated mantra of "strong and stable leadership" grated for many, earning her the nickname of "Maybot", and her awkward style, favouring programmed events, compared badly with Corbyn, a veteran grassroots campaigner who enjoys meeting the public.

In a rare unscripted encounter with a voter that was filmed and went viral, May responded to a woman angry about welfare cuts with bland campaign slogans.

"Theresa May has the personal warmth, wit, oratorical ability and attractiveness of an Indesit fridge-freezer which has been faultily connected by a man called Trevor for five quid, cash in hand, and which is now full of decomposing Findus Crispy Pancakes," satirical writer Rod Liddle wrote in the conservative political weekly The Spectator.

	<b>HAMPSTEAD &amp; KILBURN</b> LAB TULIP SIDDIQ 34,464 CON C. LEVLAND 18,904 TURNOUT - 70% MAJORITY - 15,560
	<b>BETHNAL GREEN &amp; BOW</b> LAB RUSHANARA ALI 42,969 CON CHARLOTTE CHIRICO 7,576 TURNOUT - 70% MAJORITY - 35,393
	<b>EALING CENTRAL &amp; ACTON</b> LAB RUPA HUQ 33,037 CON JOY MORRISSEY 19,230 TURNOUT - 75% MAJORITY - 13,807

only 7,576 votes, according to the latest BBC polls result. Rushanara had defeated her rival

from the Conservative Party by a big margin in the last elections too. At that time, she got 32,387 votes while the Conservative Party candidate polled just 8,070 votes.

"Thank you, Bethnal Green & Bow, from the bottom of my heart for re-electing me as your member of parliament. It is an honour and a privilege", Rushanara tweeted after her win.

Rushanara from Biswanath in Sylhet was appointed UK Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Bangladesh after the 2015 elections.

Earlier, she had performed the responsibility of the shadow minister of International Development and Education after being elected as an MP for the first time in 2010.

Labour Party candidate Rupa Huq has retained the Ealing Central and Acton seat with 33,037 votes, while her rival candidate Joy Morrissey of the Conservative Party got 19,230 votes.

In the 2015 election, she had defeated her rival candidate from the Conservative Party by only 274 votes. But this time the difference is huge -- 13,807 votes.

Rupa's ancestral home is in Pabna. She is a senior lecturer at the sociology department of the Kingston University, and also a columnist.

A total of 14 candidates of Bangladeshi origin contested the June 8 UK polls. Of them, eight including Tulip, Rushanara and Rupa contested from the Labour Party, one from the Liberal Democrats, one from the Friends Party and four as independent candidates.

**PRESIDENT, PM AND SPEAKER GREET THE THREE**

In a message, President Abdul Hamid congratulated the three politicians and wished them success in every walk of life, reports BSS.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also extended her heartiest congratulations to the three on their re-election.

"The victory of three daughters -- Tulip Siddiq, Rushanara Ali and Rupa Huq -- is a matter of pride for us. I hope that the crown of the victory they brought for the people of the country beam out a ray of light forever," PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim quoted her as saying.

In her message, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury said the victory of the three has brightened further Bangladesh's image in the world.

"Bangladesh can be proud of them," she said.

[Our London Correspondent contributed to this report.]

# Gulf crisis deepens

FROM PAGE 16

supporting groups across a wide political spectrum, including those that engage in violence, and that the emir of Qatar had made progress in halting financial support for terrorism but that he must do more.

In an apparent escalation of the crisis, staff at Al Jazeera, Qatar's influential satellite television news channel which often infuriates the rulers of the Arab world, said on Thursday its computer systems were under cyber attack.

Riyadh, Cairo and their allies accuse Qatar, the world's richest country per capita, of supporting militant Islamist movements across the region. They have imposed what Qatar says is a blockade

of shipping and air traffic, and closed Qatar's only land border, causing panic buying at supermarkets.

**FOREIGN POLICY** Qatar, which has developed an assertive foreign policy over the past decade, denies that it supports militants and says it is helping to reduce the threat of terrorism by backing groups that fight poverty and seek political reform.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani called the moves by Arab neighbours and others "clear violations of international law and international humanitarian law."

"They will not have a positive impact on the region but a negative one," the

ministers said during a visit to Germany.

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel called for diplomatic efforts to resolve the worst crisis to grip the region in years.

Washington relies closely on the countries on both sides of the dispute for its military operations in the Gulf: Qatar hosts the US Air Force's biggest base in the region, while Bahrain hosts the US Navy. Both Saudi Arabia and Qatar have funded rebels fighting in the Syrian civil war.

**MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD** Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt and Bahrain added 59 people to terrorist blacklists, among

them 18 Qataris, including Abdullah bin Khalid Al Thani, a former interior minister and member of Qatar's royal family.

The Qatari government said the move "reinforces baseless allegations that hold no foundation in fact".

"Our position on countering terrorism is stronger than many of the signatories of the joint statement - a fact that has been conveniently ignored by the authors," it said in a statement. Those on the list, including the former interior minister, could not be reached for comment.

Many of the others added to the list are figures associated with the Muslim Brotherhood who have made Qatar a

base, including Brotherhood spiritual leader Yousef al-Qaradawi. Some are prominent jihadists who have fought in Libya and Syria.

Qatar has angered its neighbours for years by supporting the Brotherhood, a decades-old underground movement that calls for rule based on Islamic principles.

The Brotherhood says it eschews violence but some Arab states call it a terrorist movement. It came to power in Egypt in an election in 2012 but was toppled a year later by the military.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, whose AK Party has its roots in Islamist politics and who has voiced support for

the Brotherhood, signalled his firm backing for Qatar by swiftly signing a law to send Turkish troops to a base there.

**TURKISH WARPLANES** Turkey will send warplanes and warships to Qatar after an initial deployment of troops at a base in Doha, the mass-circulation Hurriyet newspaper said on its website.

"The number of Turkish warplanes and Turkish warships going to the base will become clear after the preparation of a report based on an initial assessment at the base," Hurriyet said. Around 90 Turkish soldiers are currently at the base, it said.