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UK govt facing parliamentary defeat over Brexit bill

LONDON, AFP: The British government on Monday faced potential defeat in parliament over controversial legislation that would allow it to override parts of the country's EU divorce treaty.

Members of the unelected upper chamber House of Lords were tipped to vote against the Internal Market Bill, which is designed to regulate trade between all four UK nations.

The government insists it is a safety net in case talks for a new trade agreement fail, even though it admits it breaks international law in a "very specific and limited way".

But the Lords want to take out clauses relating to Northern Ireland, which will have the UK's only land border with the EU from January I and will remain under some of the bloc's rules.

A "no-deal" could compli-

cate the situation on the island of Ireland, and its politically-sensitive border between UK-ruled Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland.

Brussels has already initiated legal action over the draft law.

Top Democrats in the United States, including President-elect Joe Biden, have waded in, warning a US-UK trade deal could be compromised if a "no-deal" jeopardises a hardwon peace.

An open border was a keystone of the US-brokered 1998 Good Friday Agreement that largely ended more than 30 years of violence over British rule in Northern Ireland.

Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney said Monday that the election of Biden, who has Irish roots, could lead London to "pause for thought" and ensure Irish issues are prioritised.



