Brexit Progress

Why in news?

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After almost 6 months of futile talks, breakthroughs are emerging in the Brexit deal.

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What are the major decisions thus far?

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- It has been agreed that current EU citizens living in the UK will have their rights protected by the European Court of Justice.
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- London has also agreed to pay Brussels 40 billion euros in the coming years as its share of outstanding obligations.
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- This is a considerable compromise from London's initial offers – highlighting that London wants to get things moving fast.
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- These agreement are just the beginning terms for Brexit talks and the path ahead in discussions looks bleaker for London.
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What are the issues remaining?

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- Determining the kind of relationship the UK and Europe will have after Brexit is completed is a major one.
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- Multiple proposals ranging from a simple free trade agreement to no deal at all exists.
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- Some argue for a deeper agreement on trade, services and immigration on the lines of EU-Norway relationship.

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What are the political challenges?

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- The process has been difficult so far mainly because of the rough domestic coalition Ms May's government has been piloting.
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- A disastrous election, in which her party lost its individual majority, has weakened Ms.May's position.
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- Even within her "Conservative Party", balancing the views of radical euro-sceptics with others has been a challenge.
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- She also had to play off supporters of free-trade against those vouching for economic nationalism.
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- Notably, these divides are also visible in the Opposition Labour Party, thereby complicating things further.
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How could Northern Ireland complicate matters?

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- Northern Ireland is part of UK and in the recent elections, the pro-UK protestant Democratic Unionist party (DUP) won there.
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- There is a considerable catholic minority within Northern Ireland who support for closer ties with the "Republic of Ireland".
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- While these Irish tensions flared in the late 90's a peace agreement was reached, establishing open borders between the two Irelands.
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- As Republic of Ireland is an EU state, if Northern Ireland's EU exit as part of Brexit means closed borders, it might trigger new unrest.
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- As Ms May is running a minority government with support from Northern Ireland's DUP, she'll have to walk a tight rope.
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- Notably, there is no consensus between Belfast, Dublin, London and Brussels

on how to solve this problem.
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Source: Business Standard

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