

London The EU Withdrawal Bill, the British government's central legislation to pave the way for the country's exit from the European Union by March next year, today officially became law in Parliament.

House of Commons Speaker John Bercow told MPs that the bill had received Royal Assent, which involves Queen Elizabeth II's final approval required to make it an Act of Parliament.

"I have to notify the House in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967 that Her Majesty has signified her Royal Assent to the European Union Withdrawal Act 2018," Bercow said.

The new act will repeal the 1972 European Communities Act, which put European law above laws made by the British Parliament as the country joined the European Economic Community (EEC). It will ensure the supremacy of British law on Brexit day March 29, 2019.

The new act ensures that around 20,000 pieces of EU legislation will now be transferred into British law, in an attempt to ensure a smooth 'Brexit'. It was subject to fierce debate as it passed through Parliament, with many attempts to change its wording.

A potential rebellion by Prime Minister Theresa May's own Conservative party MPs was seen off after she promised to allow the Speaker to rule on whether the Commons would get a so-called "meaningful vote" in the event of no deal with the EU.

A Downing Street spokesperson said that the premier had opened a Cabinet meeting this morning by marking this historic moment for our country and a significant step towards delivering on the will of the British people.

She described the legislation as "a major building block for the UK's bright future outside of the European Union".

The EU Withdrawal Bill is just the first major hurdle on the path of Brexit for the UK government, with other significant bills on future trade and customs ties with the EU set to return to the House of Commons after the House of Lords' interventions.

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