

Johnson 'row' rocks UK leadership race

● Loud altercation involving screams, shouts and bangs were reported at Johnson's south London property

● London's Metropolitan Police said it responded to a call from a local resident

● Johnson's partner Carrie Symonds could be heard telling the former London mayor to "get off me" and "get out of my flat"

London, United Kingdom

Britain's leadership contest was rocked yesterday by reports that police were called to a late-night "row" between frontrunner Boris Johnson and his partner, just hours before campaigning opens to win over grassroots Conservatives.

The *Guardian* said officers were alerted early on Friday after a neighbour said there had been a loud altercation involving screams, shouts and bangs at the south London property, shortly after Johnson had secured his place in the final run-off to become prime minister.

The paper said late Friday Johnson's partner Carrie Symonds could be heard telling the former London mayor to "get off me" and "get out of my flat".

London's Metropolitan Police said it responded to a call from a local resident but that "all occupants of the address... were all safe and well".

Johnson is the runaway favourite to beat Jeremy Hunt, but will face questions over the incident on Saturday when he and Hunt kick off a month-long nationwide tour to win over the grassroots Conservatives, who have the final say.

Whoever takes the Tory party leadership in the week beginning July 22 -- and therefore becomes prime minister -- will



Boris Johnson's London home (Courtesy of the Scotsman). Inset, Boris Johnson's partner Carrie Symonds with his dad Stanley

JEREMY HUNT



Aged 52

- ◆ British Foreign Secretary
- ◆ As health secretary, saw bitter pay dispute with junior doctors
- ◆ Dislikes the idea of a no-deal Brexit but doesn't rule it out

BORIS JOHNSON



Aged 55

- ◆ Former British foreign secretary
- ◆ Figurehead of 2016 campaign to leave the European Union
- ◆ Intends to take Britain out of the EU on Oct 31, deal or no-deal

then face the looming Brexit deadline of October 31.

The battle is likely to feature pledges from both contenders to take Britain out of the European Union safely and in one

piece, succeeding where outgoing Prime Minister Theresa May repeatedly failed.

But the race might ultimately turn into a popularity contest between Johnson -- pugnacious

but affable with a tendency for gaffes -- and the more diplomatic, low-key Hunt.

The "row" was splashed across the front pages of most newspapers on Saturday, and while bookmakers were still betting for Johnson, pundits warned the incident could harm his chances.

"Much will depend on the next 24 hours and whether the audio said to have been recorded by a concerned neighbour emerges," said *The Times* newspaper.

"At the very least it will ensure a leadership race that had started to look like a formality might in fact be something of more consequence."

Fearing Farage

After the MPs whittled down

the original field of 13, it is now up to the 160,000 or so paid-up Conservative members who select the centre-right party's next leader.

According to *Times* commen-

tator Matthew Parris, the group comprises "classic shire Tories", as well as poorer urban workers who are anti-European and more populist in their views.

The winner will need to succeed where May failed in pushing a deal with the EU through parliament, or face the prospect of leaving without a deal, which MPs have warned could collapse the government and trigger a general election.

With arch-Brexiteer Nigel Farage's new Brexit Party ahead in the polls, Johnson is widely viewed as the one Conservative who could compete in the party's heartlands.

A poll for *The Daily Telegraph* -- the paper for which Johnson writes a column -- showed six out of 10 Brexit Party backers jumping over to the Conservatives should the man known simply as Boris take charge.

Hunt and Johnson will appear Saturday in Birmingham, central England, for the first of 16 "hustings" -- occasionally rowdy events where candidates field audience questions -- three days before the third anniversary of the Brexit vote.

'Bottler'

Foreign minister Hunt launched an early attack on his rival, accusing him of ducking a television debate.

"This is supposed to be his finest hour ... but if you're going to hide away, that's not democracy," he wrote in Saturday's *Daily Telegraph*.

"Conservative Party members can only make that choice if you have a proper debate and you can't have that debate if one of the candidates is bottling all opportunities."

Both Johnson and Hunt have vowed to extract better terms from Brussels -- or walk away without any strings attached, but European leaders appear unmoved.

"Maybe the process of Brexit will be even more exciting than before because of some personnel decisions in London, but nothing has changed when it comes to our position," European Council President Donald Tusk said.

Pompeo to assure India on tech visas

Washington, United States

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will assure India on a visit next week that the United States is not planning to slash visas commonly used by Indian technology workers, an official said Friday.

The United States has backed internet behemoths and major corporations in opposing India's orders that all online data be stored within the country, a move to ensure that authorities in New Delhi have access to it.

A US official denied reports that Washington was linking the issue to H-1B visas for professionals, for which the vast majority of recipients are Indian.

"We attach great importance to the US-India relationship," the official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

"Indians have contributed under the H-1B program to the US economy and I think the sec-



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

retary will be able to assure the Indian leadership that we have no plans to place caps on H-1B work visas for nations that are having foreign companies store data locally," she said.

The official acknowledged that President Donald Trump's administration was undertaking a review of the H-1B program

but said it was "not targeted at India."

"It's completely separate from our ongoing discussion with India on the importance of ensuring better trade," she said.

Pompeo will be seeking to build defense relations with India during his visit starting Tuesday, which will include a

speech in New Delhi on the future of the relationship between the world's two largest democracies.

The trip comes after the convincing re-election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a Hindu nationalist who has supported stronger ties with Washington.



The United States each year grants 85,000 H-1B visas, which are valid for three years to professionals sponsored by employees.

US Fed says large banks prepared to withstand economic crisis

Washington, United States

Major banks operating in the United States would be able to withstand a severe global economic crisis with funds to spare, the Federal Reserve said Friday.

The Fed announced the results of its annual bank stress tests, showing the 18 largest financial institutions would suffer losses but still have enough of a capital buffer to continue operating.

"The results confirm that our financial system remains resilient," Fed Vice Chairman Randal Quarles said.

During the 2008 financial crisis, the collapse of the mortgage securities market essentially froze the financial system and the US government had to spend billions to bail out banks.

Banking reform laws required the institutions to sig-

nificantly increase their capital and shore up their internal risk management to avoid another government rescue.

"The nation's largest banks are significantly stronger than before the crisis and would be well-positioned to support the economy even after a severe shock," Quarles said in a statement.

The Fed subjects banks to a potential global crisis in which the US economy contracts by eight percent and unemployment jumps to 10 percent.

Credit card loans showed the highest losses under the "severely adverse scenario," followed by commercial and industrial loans, at \$73 billion and \$107 billion respectively, according to the report.

Those two categories amount to 44 percent of the total estimated losses of more than \$410 billion.