

# Windsor Framework replaces Northern Ireland Protocol

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**In news**– The UK government under Prime Minister Rishi Sunak recently reached a landmark deal with the European Union (EU) on post-Brexit trade rules that will govern Northern Ireland.

## Windsor Framework-

- **The 'Windsor Framework' will replace the Northern Ireland Protocol, which had proved to be among the thorniest of Brexit fall-outs, creating problems both economic and political.**
- **The framework has two crucial aspects –**
  1. **The introduction of a green lane and red lane system for goods** that will stay in Northern Ireland and those that will go to the EU respectively.
  2. The **'Stormont Brake'**, which allows Northern Ireland lawmakers and London to veto any EU regulation they believe affects the region adversely.
- **British goods meant for Northern Ireland will use the green lane at the ports**, and will be allowed to pass with minimal paperwork and checks.
- Physical checks will be conducted if the goods are deemed suspicious, in place of the routine checks now.
- This is especially significant for meat products, such as sausages, travelling between the two parts of the UK, as the EU has stricter rules about animal products.
- Also, people in Northern Ireland can order goods online from Britain easily now. Because of the cumbersome checks, many firms had stopped deliveries to Northern Ireland.
- Plants and seeds can move easily now, and pets can

travel without expensive health treatments like rabies or documentation from a vet.

- The same medicines, in the same packs, with the same labels, will be available across the UK, without the need for barcode scanning requirements under the old Protocol.
- The UK will license all medicines for all UK citizens, including novel medicines like cancer drugs, rather than the European Medicines Agency under the old Protocol.
- Goods destined for Ireland or the rest of the EU will have to take the red lane, with the attendant customs and other checks.

### **What is Stormont Brake?**

The new Stormont Brake means the **democratically elected Northern Ireland Assembly can oppose new EU goods rules that would have significant and lasting effects on everyday lives in Northern Ireland**. For this, **they will need the support of 30 members from at least two parties**. The British government can then veto the law.

### **Background-**

- After the UK left the European Union, Northern Ireland remained its only constituent that shared a land border with an EU-member, the Republic of Ireland.
- Since the EU and the UK have different product standards, border checks would be necessary before goods could move from Northern Ireland to Ireland.
- However, the two Irelands have had a long history of conflict, with a hard-fought peace secured only in 1998 under the **Belfast Agreement, also called the Good Friday agreement**.
- Fiddling with this border was thus considered too dangerous, and it was decided the checks would be conducted between Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland (which together with Great

Britain forms the United Kingdom). **This was called the Northern Ireland Protocol.**

- **Under the protocol, Northern Ireland remained in the EU single market,** and trade-and-customs inspections of goods coming from Great Britain took place at its ports along the Irish Sea.
- The checks made trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland cumbersome, with food products, especially, losing out on shelf life while they waited for clearance