

Blow to Theresa as her deputy resigns ahead of tough Brexit talks

UNITED KINGDOM

London

British Prime Minister Theresa May was left weakened by the resignation on Wednesday of her deputy Damian Green, the latest crack in her government as she faces tough Brexit talks.

Green agreed to step down as first secretary of state after a probe into his conduct found he had acted dishonestly.

May said she was "extremely sad" to ask her deputy to step down, describing him as a friend since their time at university and throughout their political careers.

The departure of one of her closest aides is the result of an investigation into Green's conduct following newspaper allegations published last month.

The *Sunday Times* reported that pornography was found on his parliamentary computer in 2008, while a journalist claimed Green acted inappropriately towards her in 2015.

In its report, the Cabinet Office said Green had breached the ministerial code when he made "inaccurate and misleading" statements, by falsely claiming he was unaware that indecent material had been found on his computer.

London's Metropolitan Police had told Green about the pornography found, the Cabinet Office noted, without drawing conclusions on whether he had viewed the material.

In a summary of the report findings published by May's Downing Street office, the investigation did not draw definite conclusions on Green's behaviour towards the journalist Kate Maltby.

Scandal at Westminster

In his resignation letter, Green apologised for breaching the ministerial code, while denying that he downloaded or viewed pornography in parliament.

He also expressed his regret at the "distress caused" to Maltby, who claimed Green touched her knee and later sent her a suggestive text message.

Green's resignation comes as part of a broader scandal over sexual harassment at Westminster, which erupted weeks ago and prompted the departure of Defence Secretary Michael Fallon last month.

Numerous other claims have been made against those working in politics, prompting the prime minister to call for rules on MPs' behaviour to be toughened.

AFP