

Thousands March in 9th Straight French Yellow Vest Protests

PARIS — Thousands of people wearing yellow vests started marching in the streets of Paris as others were gathering in the central French city of Bourges amid high security measures as authorities feared possible violence between police and protesters Saturday.

In Paris, a few thousand people set off from near the Finance Ministry in eastern Paris at around 11 a.m. (1000 GMT; 5 a.m. EST) and were walking peacefully in the central streets of the capital. They were planning to head toward Champs-Élysées avenue.

Paris police say 24 people were arrested Saturday before the protests started, primarily for carrying potential weapons. Meanwhile, yellow vest protesters were also gathering in



Bourges, a provincial capital with a renowned Gothic cathedral and picturesque wood-framed houses, where online groups mounted

calls through the week for actions. Authorities deployed 80,000 security forces nationwide for a ninth straight weekend of

anti-government protests. Interior Minister Christophe Castaner threatened tough retaliation against rioters and their backers, warning of increasing radicalization among the largely peaceful demonstrators.

The movement waned over the holidays but appears to be resurging, despite President Emmanuel Macron's promises of euros in tax relief and an upcoming "national debate" to address demonstrators' concerns. Protesters want deeper changes to France's economy and politics, seen as favoring the rich. Paris police said they wouldn't let down their guard, and deployed armored vehicles, horses and attack dogs around the city. (AP)

UK Calls on Myanmar's Suu Kyi to Take Personal Interest in Case of Jailed Reuters Reporters

LONDON - Britain on Friday called on Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi to look at whether due process was followed in the case of two Reuters reporters sentenced to seven years in jail in Myanmar.

A Myanmar court earlier on Friday rejected the appeal of the two reporters sentenced to seven years in jail on charges of breaking the country's Official Secrets Act, saying the defense had not provided sufficient evidence to show they

were innocent. "We are very worried about due process in this case," British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt told BBC radio when asked about the case. "We urge Aung San Suu Kyi to look at whether that due process happened and to recognize that, as someone who fought for democracy in Burma, she should be taking a personal interest in the future of these two brave journalists." (Reuters)

Control of Russian Radio Telescope Satellite Lost

MOSCOW — Russia's space agency says its specialists are attempting to fix problems that have blocked control of an orbiting radio telescope. The Spektr-R satellite is continuing to transmit signals, but scientists have been unable to control the satellite since Friday. The satellite was launched in 2011 and has exceeded its initially expected useful life of about three years. It is used to study radio sources within and out-



side Earth's galaxy. An official from Russian space agency Roscosmos, Alexander Bloshenko, said Saturday that another attempt to establish control of the satellite will take place Sunday. (AP)

US Starts Withdrawing Supplies, But Not Troops, from Syria



WASHINGTON — The U.S. military says it has started pulling equipment, but not troops, out of Syria as a first step in

meeting President Donald Trump's demand for a complete military withdrawal. The announcement is

fueling concern about how quickly the U.S. will abandon its Kurdish allies, amid contradictory statements recently by Trump administration officials on an exit timetable. The withdrawal began with shipments of military equipment, U.S. defense officials said. But in coming weeks, the contingent of about 2,000 troops is expected to depart even as the White House says it will keep pressure on the Islamic State group. Once the troops are gone, the U.S. will have ended

three years of organizing, arming, advising and providing air cover for Syrian, Kurdish and Arab fighters in an open-ended campaign devised by the Obama administration to deal the IS group a lasting defeat. Uncertainty over the timing and terms of the Syria pullout have raised questions about the Trump administration's broader strategy for fighting Islamic extremism, including Trump's stated intention to reduce U.S. forces in Afghanistan this summer. (AP)

BUENOS AIRES - Following a painful 2018 recession and forced into unpopular austerity measures, President Mauricio Macri faces an uphill battle in his bid for re-election in October. But while the statistics from his "annus horribilis" make grim reading — inflation initially calculated at 10 percent finished the year at 48 percent while an economy expected to grow by 3.5 percent shrunk by 2.7 percent, according to the World Bank — if he manages to stabilize the economy, he has a chance. Macri has a lot of ground to make up: his approval rating crashed from 66 percent in October 2017 to just 35 percent last month, according to a poll by the San Andres University. A lot of people will need convincing that he could bring stability, and even prosperity, if afforded a second term in office. "I think Argentines will choose the most extensive path: the one of efforts, truth, the long term, joint construction. (AFP)

Argentine Recession Hampers Macri's Re-Election Bid

Neighbor News

Pakistani Court allows 5-Day Probe in Chinese Mission Attack

KARACHI, Pakistan — A Pakistani court has ruled that police may have five days to investigate the five suspects accused of helping a separatist group attack the Chinese Consulate in Karachi in November, killing two civilians and two policemen. Officer Nusrat Shaikh said Saturday that anti-terrorism court judge Abdul Malik ordered that formal charges be leveled against the five after the investigation. Senior officer Amir Sheikh said earlier the

men confessed to facilitating three assailants who were killed during the Nov. 23 attack at the consulate. Sheikh claimed the detainees were linked to the Baluch Liberation Army, a Baluchistan-based group which claimed responsibility for attacking the Chinese mission. For over a decade, separatist groups in Baluchistan have been engaged in a low-level insurgency demanding greater share from province's gas and mineral resources. (AP)

Iran, Pakistan to Promote Trade

TEHRAN - Iranian Consul General in Lahore Mohammad Reza Nazeri met with Pakistani Chief Minister of Punjab Province Sardar Usman Buzdar on Friday in Lahore, where the two sides vowed to implement measures to promote trade and cooperation between the two countries. Nazeri and Buzdar exchanged views on bilateral relations and discussed promotion of cooperation in different fields, including trade and economy. During the meeting, Buzdar said that there are immense opportunities available to enhance Iran-Pakistan ties. He said both countries can promote their cooperation in the field of culture. For his part, Nazeri praised Punjab govern-

ment's 100-day economic plan, and vowed to take more steps to further strengthen Iran-Pakistan ties. On Monday, Consul General of Iran in the Southwestern Pakistani city Quetta Mohammad Rafiye, in a meeting with Chief Minister of the Pakistani Province of Baluchistan Jam Kamal Khan, said that the joint free economic zone will open in the coming days. In the meeting, both sides agreed that boosting trade between the two neighboring nations would directly benefit ordinary citizens. Reports also suggested that increasing Pakistan and Iran trade up to five billion dollars remained the focal point of the meeting. (FNA)

Tajikistan Offers Cheap Electricity to Pakistan

RAWALPINDI - Tajik Ambassador Sherali S. Jononov on Friday offered electricity to Pakistan and also expressed desire to increase the trade volume between the two countries. "Rogun Dam in Tajikistan has begun its operations and we are ready to provide cheap and clean electricity to Pakistan to meet its energy needs in future," he stated this during his visit to Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry offices. "Pakistan trade and business community should come forward and take benefit of the emerging opportunities in Tajikistan," he said. The RCCI organized a farewell ceremony for the outgoing Ambassador of Tajikistan, Sherali S. Jononov. RCCI President Malik Shahid Saleem and other office bearers were present on the occasion. Addressing the ceremony, Tajik envoy said that Pakistan and Tajikistan relations had historical, cultural and

religious background and the roots of their relation are very deep. Both countries are enjoying friendly and cordial relationship. Refreshing key memories of his tenure comprising six years, Tajik envoy said: "I have found Pakistan, a peaceful, positive and wonderful country and people of Pakistan are very hardworking, loving and full of hospitality. You can only know Pakistan since you live in Pakistan. "I always advise to my diplomatic friends to visit Pakistan, it's an amazing country, and have beautiful weather and landscape," he said. He also shared information on key success stories during his tenure, including, Economic Corporation Organization (ECO) summit, visit of Pakistan President to Tajikistan in June 2018, frequent visits to at foreign office, Central Asia South Asia (CASA 1000) energy project etc. (Agencies)

Poland: Huawei Exec, Polish Security Expert Spied for China

WARSAW, Poland — Poland has arrested a director at the Chinese tech giant Huawei and one of its own former cybersecurity experts and charged them with spying for China, authorities said Friday. The development comes as the U.S. is exerting pressure on its allies not to use Huawei, the world's biggest maker of telecommunications network equipment, over data security concerns. The two men — one a Chinese citizen who was a former envoy in Poland before moving over to a senior position at Huawei and the other a Pole who held several top government cybersecurity positions — were arrested Tuesday, according to Poland's Internal Security Agency. (AP)

Malaysian State Choses New Sultan, expected to be Elected King

KUALA LUMPUR - A Malaysian state announced it had a new sultan Saturday, who is expected to be elected king after the former monarch abdicated following his reported marriage to a Russian former beauty queen. Tengku Abdullah Shah has replaced his father, Sultan Ahmad Shah as the ruler of Pahang state, the official Bernama news agency said, citing a senior palace official. Local reports said the move was designed to pave the way for Sultan Abdullah to be chosen as the next king of Malaysia by the Council of Rulers, who will choose a new king on January 24. Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy with a unique arrangement where the national throne changes hands every five years between rulers of the country's nine states. (AFP)

Macedonia PM Urges Greek Mps to Ratify Name Deal

SKOPJE - Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev on Saturday called on Greece to end their nations' decades-long dispute by ratifying the deal to rename his country "The Republic of North Macedonia". Macedonian lawmakers voted through the agreement late on Friday and it now needs backing from the Greek parliament to come into effect. "Our parliament found the strength but it wasn't easy. But I am convinced that the Greek parliament will also find the strength to make the decision," Zaev told a press conference in Skopje. During the vote, 81 of the Macedonian parliament's 120 MPs backed



the name change, securing the required two-thirds majority to push it through. Zaev, who came to power in May 2017, is now looking to his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras to uphold his end of the deal, which the pair brokered last year. "Within 10 days... if we see everything is in

order, we will vote," Tsipras said on Friday evening. Athens has promised to lift its veto on Skopje's attempts to join NATO and the European Union if Macedonia changes its name. Zaev said he was "convinced that Greek lawmakers will recognize the historical significance of the agreement". (AFP)

Haley, Ivanka Trump Among Possible World Bank Nominees: Report

WASHINGTON - Former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley and US President Donald Trump's daughter and adviser Ivanka are among possible US candidates to replace outgoing World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, The Financial Times reported Friday. Kim abruptly announced Monday he was cutting short his tenure as the bank's president more than three

years before his second term was due to end. In addition to Trump and Haley, who stepped down as US Ambassador to the United Nations last month, other names being floated include Treasury Undersecretary for International Affairs David Malpass and Mark Green, head of the US Agency for International Development, the newspaper reported. (AFP)

Rivals Unite in Indian State in Bid to Beat Modi in Elections

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI - Two political rivals in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh will form an alliance in a bid to defeat Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in national election scheduled for May, leaders of the parties said. The Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), both of whom command large support bases among Uttar Pradesh state's working class and are led by former chief ministers, will contest the election as a team, they said. Uttar Pradesh is India's most populous state and accounts for about a sixth of all members of the parliament, the highest by a single state. Barring a couple of exceptions in the 1990s, the party winning the most number of seats there has helped form the federal government. Out of the 80 seats in the state, SP and BSP will nominate candidates for 38 seats each, BSP chief Mayawati Das said at a joint press conference with SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday. They will not contest the other four seats, which include two that have historically been held by the country's main opposition party, Congress. Congress, which ruled India for nearly four decades since its independence from Britain in 1947, has also been working to build a "grand alliance" with other parties ahead of the polls. Mayawati, however, said Congress would not be a part of the BSP-SP alliance in Uttar Pradesh. (Reuters)

Amanov Turns Attention to Uzbekistan Showdown

ABU DHABI - With dust settling on Wednesday's narrow 3-2 loss to Japan, Turkmenistan midfielder Arslanmurat Amanov believes he saw enough positives during the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 Group F tussle to stand his side in good stead when they face regional rivals Uzbekistan at the weekend. Amanov opened the scoring for the Central Asians with an impressive first-half thunder-

bolt, before Japan netted three times after the break to seal a win following what had proved to be a stern test for the four-time Asian champions. Despite the defeat, and given that Turkmenistan still have two group stage games to play, hope continues to spring eternal for Yazguly Hojageldiyev's charges — with Amanov now targeting all three points from the Uzbekistan encounter. (Agencies)