

Britain's General Election: A Gamble too Far for May

LONDON - As British Prime Minister Theresa May gambled her political future on calling a snap general election seven weeks ago, results from Thursday's election show that her party can not form a majority government.

With 647 out of 650 seats declared, the Conservatives won 316 seats, but failed to hit the 326-seat threshold for majority. Labour won 261 seats. If the Conservatives eventually have to forge a coalition government, which will bring more uncertainties to British politics, they can still rely on the support of Ulster Unionists party of Northern Ireland, which is projected to win eight seats.

Experts said exit polls gave a



strong indication that the election is a significant blow for May as losing the majority will inevitably reduce her authority in a future government. There are calls for her to step down.

Patrick Dunleavy, professor of politics at the London School of Economics (LSE) said Friday morning he didn't anticipate the actual results of the election to be "strikingly different" from what the exit poll suggested, adding, however, it is unlikely that May will either resign or be deposed as Conservative party leader amid ongoing Brexit process.

If May does quit Number 10 Downing Street, her 11-month tenure as prime minister would be the shortest in Britain in almost a century. (Xinhua)

Trump Offers to Help Resolve Rift between Qatar, Gulf Nations

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump offered to help Qatar and the other Gulf nations resolve their differences, including through a meeting at the White House if necessary, the White House said Wednesday. In a telephone conversation with Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar, Trump reiterated that a united Gulf Cooperation Council and a strong United States-Gulf Cooperation Council partnership are critical to defeating terrorism and

promoting regional stability.

He also emphasized the importance of all countries in the region to work together to prevent the financing of terrorist organizations and stop the promotion of extremist ideology, according to a White House statement. The telephone talk came after a diplomatic row erupted between Qatar and the other Gulf nations. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt have cut off diplomatic relations



with Qatar, accusing it of supporting terrorism. But Qatar has rejected the accusations as "unjustified" and "baseless." On Tuesday, Trump

seemed to claim credit for Gulf nations' decision to isolate Qatar, saying his recent visit to Saudi Arabia was "already paying off." (Xinhua)

EU Warns of 'No Deal' if Vote Delays Brexit Talks

LONDON - The European Union warned Britain Friday that delaying Brexit negotiations after Prime Minister Theresa May failed to win a majority in elections could wreck the chance of securing a divorce deal.

Brussels had set June 19 as the start date for talks, but the bloc's leaders said that was now in doubt after Prime Minister Theresa May's gamble to strengthen her parliamentary mandate backfired.

EU President Donald Tusk bluntly warned that the clock was now ticking for negotiations on Brit-

ain's exit and a new trade deal before it formally leaves the bloc in March 2019.

"We don't know when Brexit talks start. We know when they must end. Do your best to avoid a 'no deal' as result of 'no negotiations,'" former Polish prime minister Tusk wrote on Twitter.

European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said the bloc had been ready "for months" to negotiate but suggested talks could be held up while Britain figures out its new top team. (AFP)

Erdogan Sides with Doha, Approves Deployment of Turkish Troops to Qatar

ANKARA - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has approved the legislation for increased military cooperation with Qatar, including a deal for the deployment of Turkish troops there.

The move is a sign of support for the Gulf state in its dispute with its regional neighbors.

The legislation, which also foresees cooperation in military training, was rapidly passed in parliament on Wednesday, a day after Erdogan openly sided with Qatar and criti-

cised other Gulf countries' moves to isolate it.

Erdogan approved the legislation late on Thursday, his office said. It was published in the Official Gazette on Friday.

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other Arab nations cut off relations with Qatar after accusing it of supporting terrorism.

Turkey and Qatar have developed close ties over the years and reached an agreement in 2014 to set up a Turkish military base in the tiny Gulf nation. (AP)

Turkey, EU, UNICEF Start Program to Provide Refugee Children Education

ANKARA - Turkish government, the European Union and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have started a program aiming to finance refugee children to get school education on Thursday in Turkish capital Ankara.

Through the EU-fund program, families could receive conditional cash payments in return for sending and keeping their children in school, according to Daily Sabah.

As many as 56,000 refugee children have been registered in the pro-

gram since it was announced in Brussels in March. Authorities hope the number reach 230,000 by the end of the year.

Turkey currently hosts over one million school-aged refugee children, of which nearly 500,000 are enrolled schools and temporary education centers run by the Ministry of Education, Turkish Family and Social Policies Minister Betul Sayan Kaya said that at the ceremony.

She noted that, however, less than one-third of the three billion euros prom-



ised by the EU-Turkey migrant deal had been transferred to Turkey.

Turkey, a country hosting nearly 3 million refugees from its southern

neighbor Syria, has tried to provide school education for refugee children by governmental authorities and international organizations. (Xinhua)

German Chancellor Visits Latin America for Climate, Trade Talks

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union) arrived in Buenos Aires on Thursday, marking the start of a three-day trip to Argentina and Mexico.

Merkel will consult with Argentinian president Mauricio Macri over the possibility of adopting a shared stance on a range of global issues areas including trade, migration and the environment.

Both politicians will subsequently host a joint press conference.

The meeting follows close on the heels of the latest Group of Seven (G7) meeting in Taormina, Italy in May and roughly four weeks before the Northern German city of Hamburg will host a summit of the Group of 20 major economies known as the G20. (Xinhua)

US Urges DPRK to Refrain from "Provocative" Actions

WASHINGTON - The U.S. on Thursday called on Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to refrain from "provocative" actions after Pyongyang test-fired multiple ground-to-ship cruise missiles.

"We continue to call on them to stop those destabilizing activities," said State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert. "That only serves to undermine the situation in the Korean Peninsula." Nauert also expressed Washington's hope that talks on the Korean Peninsula issue could resume, but she added that "we are nowhere near that point." The DPRK fired several suspected short-range anti-ship missiles Thursday, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. (Xinhua)

UN Marks World Oceans Day at Ocean Conference

UNITED NATIONS - World Oceans Day was celebrated on Thursday at UN Headquarters during the high-level Ocean Conference among some 1,700 delegates advocating healthier oceans, now plagued with pollution, over-fishing and for coastal areas, rising sea levels due to climate change.

Damian Cardona Onses, spokesman for the conference, announced more than 1,000 governments and organizations around the globe had registered voluntary commitments to mitigating damage to the oceans.



The 102-story Empire State building, 443 meters tall, in Midtown Manhattan and only about 1.5 kilometers from UN Headquarters, was to bathe in blue light to mark the evening, he said.

"On this World Oceans

Day, we look to the future," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "Caring for, and using, our oceans in sustainable ways is critical to achieve ecological and economic goals for communities everywhere." (Xinhua)

U.S. House Passes Bill to Roll Back Financial Regulations

WASHINGTON - U.S. House of Representatives on Thursday passed a bill to replace the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act established after the 2008 financial crisis to prevent another meltdown. The House passed the Financial Choice Act along party lines by a vote of 233 to 186. The bill isn't expected to receive sufficient support in the Senate in its current form since Democrats have universally opposed it. The bill would allow banks with a simple leverage ratio of 10 percent or higher to be exempted from a number of regulatory requirements, including Dodd-Frank's heightened standards

for larger lenders. It would restructure the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, repeal the Volcker rule that restricts banks from speculative trading, and remove the so-called orderly liquidation authority, which provides regulators with a process for winding down large financial institutions in distress. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that the bill would reduce federal deficits by 24.1 billion U.S. dollars over the 2017-2027 period. "Of all the regulations that were imposed on our economy in the Obama era, Dodd-Frank was the worst. (Xinhua)

U.S.-Backed Syrian Force Starts Battle to Capture Raqqa from Islamic State

HUKOUMIYA, Syria/BEIRUT - The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said on Tuesday it had begun a battle to capture Raqqa, Islamic State's de facto capital in Syria, launching attacks from the east, west and north of the city.

In a phone interview with Reuters from Syria, SDF spokesman Talal Silo said the operation started on Monday and the fighting would be "fierce because Daesh (Islamic State) will die to defend their so-called capital".

Islamic State captured the city from rebel groups in 2014 and has used it as an operations base to plan attacks in the West.

The assault on Raqqa will pile more pressure on Islamic State's self-declared "caliphate" with the group facing defeat in the Iraqi city of Mosul and being forced into retreat across much of Syria.

"The coalition has a big role in the success of the operations. In addition to warplanes, there are coalition forces working side by side with the Syrian Democratic Forces," Silo said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based organization that reports on the war, earlier said the SDF attacked the eastern edge of Raqqa and a military base on the northern outskirts of the city on Tuesday.

The Kurdish YPG, part of the SDF, told Reuters on Saturday the assault on Raqqa was expected to start in a few days. (Reuters)

Nieghbor News

Iranian Authorities Hint U.S., Saudi Arabia "Blameworthy" for Attacks in Tehran

TEHRAN - Top Iranian political leaders have gestured the United States and Saudi Arabia of being behind the recent twin deadly attacks in the capital Tehran.

On Friday, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that recent terrorist attacks in Iran will result in hatred towards the United States and Saudi Arabia. The terrorist acts which led to the "martyrdom and injury" of the Iranians is "a clear sign of enmity" of the mercenaries of global arrogance against the Iranian nation, Khamenei said in a condolence message to the nation over Wednesday's twin deadly attacks by the Islamic State

(IS) militants in Tehran. "The definite result of these (terrorist) acts will lead to an increase in the hatred towards the U.S. governments and its regional elements like Saudi Arabia," he said.

Such crimes will not shatter the will of the Iranians, and the nation will move ahead "unified and even with stronger determination," Khamenei stressed.

On Friday, Iranians participated in the mourning ceremony of the 17 people who were killed in the twin attacks against Iran's Majlis (parliament) and the mausoleum of the founder of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in Tehran. (Xinhua)

Xi Visits Chinese Pavilion at Astana Expo, Eyes Better Cross-Border Transportation

ASTANA - Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday visited the Chinese national pavilion of the Expo 2017 in Astana, and urged bilateral efforts to facilitate the China-Kazakhstan cross-border transportation.

Accompanied by his Kazakh counterpart Nursultan Nazarbayev, Xi toured different sections of the pavilion. The two heads of state also experienced simulated driving in a high-speed rail.

The Chinese pavilion, under the theme of "future energy, green silk road," was the first to start construction and the first one put into test operations. Covering around 1,000 square meters, it aims to share China's experience in such areas as traditional energy upgrading, new energy, environmental protection and sustainable development.

The two presidents later inspected via videolink the logistic center in China's eastern city of Lianyungang and a dry port in Horgos, a city of China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region bordering Kazakhstan.

Both cities are key hubs of the Europe-bound China Railway Express and the New Eurasian Land Bridge. In 2016, more than 1,200 trains transited through Kazakhstan, with rail freight handled by the two countries' railways reaching 8.2 million tons and the number of freight containers rising by more than two-fold. In a statement, Xi said that China Railway Express trains transited through the Central Asian country have benefited not only the two nations, but also countries along the Belt and Road routes. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Becomes Full Member of SCO at Astana Summit

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan on Friday became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Pakistani media reported.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his inaugural speech during the 17th SCO summit welcomed Pakistan as full member of the organisation.

Paistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, addressing the summit, said, "The SCO goals resonate with Pakistan's national ethos, and so do the core values of the Shanghai spirit and the SCO charter with our own quest for peaceful neighbourhood."

The premier welcomed a proposal made by Chinese President Xi Jinping on a five-year treaty for good neighbourliness among SCO members, and thanked the founding members including China, Russia and others for their staunch support to Pakistan.

"As leaders, we should leave a legacy of peace and amity for our future generations, not a toxic harvest of conflict and animosity. Instead of talking about counter-weights and containment, let us create shared spaces for all," PM Nawaz urged SCO heads of state.

The PM congratulated India, which also became a full member of the SCO today. He added that in the coming decades, the SCO, which has emerged as a "sheet anchor" for regional stability would serve as a strong link between Asia Pacific, East Asia, West Asia and the Atlantic region. (Monitoring Desk)

Turkmenistan Business Delegation to Visit Tajikistan to Boost Ties

DUSHANBEH - A delegation of Turkmen companies will visit Tajikistan on June 12 to establish economic cooperation, the Tajik Foreign Ministry said June 8.

The delegation will include the representatives of Turkmenistan Airlines, the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, and tourism companies. According to the Tajik Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the visit is

aimed at strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation between Turkmenistan and Tajikistan in the economic and trade sectors, attracting investments and finding partners. The chamber said the Turkmen delegation will include more than 70 entrepreneurs working in banking, food, agriculture, construction, energy, trade and other sectors. (AKI)