

Macron Eyes Victory as France Elects New Parliament

PARIS - French voters went back to the polls on Sunday for the first round of parliamentary elections that are predicted to give President Emmanuel Macron's centrist party a commanding majority. Macron has enjoyed a political honeymoon since he beat far-right candidate Marine Le Pen to become France's youngest-ever president on May 7, naming a cabinet that straddles the left-right divide and making assured appearances in meetings with US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. But the 39-year-old president has done only half the job. His *Republique en Marche* (Republic on the Move, REM) party, which he



founded only 14 months ago, needs a clear majority in the National Assembly for him to push through the reforms he promised in his campaign. A host of opinion polls show that Macron's untested party could take 30 percent of the first-round vote, putting it on track to secure a landslide in next Sunday's second round. The centre-right Republicans and the Socialists fear heavy losses after their candidates failed to reach the presidential run-off for the first time in France's postwar history. Some predictions indicate the REM could win around 400 seats in the 577-seat chamber thanks to voters seeking to give the new president a strong mandate. (AFP)

Erdogan Urges to Resolve Qatari Crisis by End of Ramadan

ISTANBUL - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday that the Qatari crisis should be resolved before the Ramadan holiday starts on June 25. The president made the statement in a closed-door meeting with Bahrain's Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa in Istanbul, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu was quoted as saying by Turkish media. Erdogan voiced his resolve to end the Qatari crisis in

a peaceful way, Cavusoglu said. Early this week, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt cut off diplomatic ties and imposed sanctions on Qatar, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Other countries including Libya, Yemen and the Maldives have followed suit. On Thursday night, Erdogan ratified two deals on deploying Turkish troops to Qatar and training its gendarmerie after they were passed by Turkey's parliament a day earlier. On Friday, the president



called for a lift of the blockade against Qatar. Cavusoglu said Turkey's military base in Qatar is aiming at the security of the Gulf region and does not specifically target

any country. During the month-long Ramadan that ends on June 24, Muslims in Turkey and other countries go through annual fasting from sunrise until sunset. (Xinhua)

Climate Change Prompts Residents in Northwestern U.S. to Support Tidal Energy

SAN FRANCISCO - A new survey found that residents in the U.S. Pacific northwest state of Washington, who believe climate change is a problem and see economic, environmental and/or social benefits to using tidal energy, are more likely to support such projects. Puget Sound, along the northwestern coast, is one of the best places in the United States to capture energy from tides. As water in Sound rises and falls twice daily at high and low tide, strong

underwater currents move swiftly in the narrow regions among islands and peninsulas. Those currents at the inlet of the Pacific Ocean are what developers were eyeing when they proposed the first Pacific Northwest tidal energy pilot project in Admiralty Inlet, between the Olympic Peninsula and Whidbey Island. Though U.S. federal permits were issued, the project failed to launch in 2014 due to ballooning costs. (Xinhua)

Irish PM Expresses Concern over May's Proposed DUP Deal

DUBLIN - Irish prime minister Enda Kenny expressed concern Sunday that a proposed alliance between Britain's ruling Conservatives and Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) could pose a "challenge" to peace in the province. In a phone call with British Prime Minister Theresa May, Kenny warned that efforts to shore up her minority government with the hardline Protestant DUP should not put at risk the Good

Friday peace accords. "They discussed the outcome of the UK general election and the (British) prime minister outlined the proposed supply and confidence arrangement between her party and the DUP," a spokesman for the Irish government said. "The taoiseach (Kenny) indicated his concern that nothing should happen to put the Good Friday Agreement at risk and the challenge that this agreement will bring." (AFP)

May's Deal to Work with DUP Causes Anger among Political Rivals

LONDON - A controversial working relationship between the British Conservatives and the North Ireland Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) was agreed in principle Saturday. The so called supply and confidence deal, aimed at keeping Prime Minister Theresa May in power at 10 Downing Street, came under immediate attack. Liberal Democrat Vince Cable, who served as a minister in the previous coalition government, called on details of a deal struck between the two parties to be published.

Cable, beaten in the 2015 election, regained a parliamentary seat in Thursday's general election, which ended with the Conservatives being forced to form a minority government. The Conservatives won 318 seats, not enough for a majority in the Commons, but buoyed by the 10 DUP MPs. It would give May a working majority. A confidence and supply deal falls short of a full coalition arrangement, but it means May would have enough votes to carry major issues in the Commons. The agreement emerged



after Gavin Williamson, the Conservative Party's chief whip, spent the day in Belfast holding talks with DUP leader Arlene Foster and key DUP mem-

bers. Details of the deal will be discussed by May's cabinet which is scheduled to meet at 10 Downing Street on Monday morning. (Xinhua)

Qatar, in Regional Crisis, Hires Former US Attorney General

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates - Qatar has paid \$25 million to the law firm of a former attorney general under U.S. President George W. Bush to audit its efforts at stopping terrorism funding, a matter at the heart of the Gulf diplomatic crisis that erupted last week. John Ashcroft personally will lead his Washington-based firm's efforts "to evaluate, verify and as necessary, strengthen the client's anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing" compliance and potentially lobby lawmakers and the media, according to documents filed to the U.S. Justice Department. Qatar hiring Ashcroft, who was attorney general during the Sept. (AP)

Gulf Citizens can Stay despite Crisis: Qatar

DOHA - Qatar moved Sunday to avoid an escalation of its feud with Gulf neighbours by telling their citizens they are welcome to stay, while boasting of "business as usual" for vital gas exports. Iran also announced it had sent tonnes of vegetables to Qatar, which has seen food imports threatened after its neighbours cut air, sea and land links with the country. Nearly a week after Saudi Arabia and several of its allies severed ties with Qatar in an unprecedented Gulf diplomatic crisis, there were no signs of the bitter dispute being resolved. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and others accused Qatar of supporting extremist groups, an assertion since backed by US President Donald Trump. (AFP)

Turkey Rejects Independence Referendum Decision of Iraqi Kurds

ANKARA - Turkey has criticized a plan by Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region to hold a independence referendum, calling this alarming move of its ally neighbours as a "grave mistake" susceptible of creating new problems for the region. Turkey's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Iraq's territorial integrity was a "precondition" for lasting stability for the country and urged Iraqi Kurds to be part of efforts to strengthen Iraq's unity. Iraqi Kurdish officials said on June 7 that the region would hold a independence referendum on Sept. 25, a move which has not



been welcomed by the federal government in Baghdad, which doesn't want to lose vast areas of territory, particularly oil-rich ones. The news is not surprising since Iraqi Kurds have long sought independence from the rest of Iraq. And in recent months Mas-

soud Barzani, President of the Iraqi Kurdish region (KRG), has told he would push for a popular vote. Erbil, the capital of the KRG, and Ankara have developed close political, economy and security ties for about a decade, both opposing strongly Islamic State (IS). (Xinhua)

U.S.-Backed Forces Capture Third Neighborhood from IS in Raqqa

DAMASCUS - The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) captured on Sunday their third neighborhood in the Islamic State (IS) group's de facto capital of Raqqa, less than a week since they started operation to liberate the city from IS, activists reported. The SDF captured the Romaniyeh neighborhood in northwestern Raqqa, the latest achievement by the Kurdish-led group in their push to dislodge IS out of Raqqa city, Raqqa-based activist said. Aside from the capturing Romaniyeh, which was partially stormed a day earlier,

the situation in Raqqa was "calm" on Sunday morning, activists added. The SDF, which comprises of Kurd, Arab and Assyrian fighters and led by the Kurdish YPG militia, previously captured the neighborhoods of Mashlab and Jazra in the city. The SDF announced their campaign to liberate Raqqa under the title of "Euphrates Wrath" in November last year, and declared their fourth stage of the attack to storm the Raqqa city last Tuesday, after months of battles at the outskirts and countryside of the city. (Xinhua)

Germany's Merkel Speaks against Walls on Mexico Visit

MEXICO CITY - German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said during a state visit to Mexico that countries should focus on improving life for people fleeing their homes rather than building walls. Merkel spoke Saturday in response to a question about migration. She was speaking of Europe's handling of migrants from Africa and Syria, but coming in Mexico the parallels to U.S. President Donald Trump's call to wall the entire U.S.-Mexico border were unavoidable. Merkel has been an outspoken advocate of more generous migrant policies in Europe. She says countries must work against what causes people to abandon their homes. The U.S. Congress denied Trump's initial request of \$2.6 billion to begin building a stretch of border wall. His first full budget requests \$1.6 billion for about 74 miles of new and replacement wall. (AP)

Kuwait Says Qatar is 'Willing' to Hold Dialogue

DOHA, Qatar - Kuwait says Qatar is "willing to hold a dialogue" with Arab nations that have cut diplomatic ties. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Khaled Al Sabah said in a statement carried by the state-run KUNA news agency Sunday that unity among Gulf Arab countries "was paramount to the people of the region." Kuwait's ruling emir has traveled to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar to try and mediate the crisis that began June 5. (AP)

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Renewable Energy Use Rises with China, EU, India Giving World Hope

MADRID - The use of renewable energy sources throughout the world is gathering pace with 2016, seeing a 9-percent rise in the capacity to generate clean energy, according to a latest study published by the Spanish "Fundacion Renovables". According to the foundation, 2016 saw the capacity to generate electricity from renewable energy sources increased by 161 gigawatts to a total of just over two billion gigawatts, of which of which 47 percent is produced by sunlight, 34 by the wind and 15.5 percent by water. Speaking to Xinhua, Laura Martin-Murillo, Director of the Fundacion Renovables (Renewable Energy Foundation), which pressures for increased generation

of clean energy sources in Spain, was optimistic this trend will continue. "Last year showed the growth of renewables is unstoppable," she said, adding that renewables now produce "9 percent of the world's energy and 2016 saw a 9 percent increase in capacity". Once the infrastructure is in place, renewable energy becomes much cheaper, with the Fundacion Renovables calculating the cost of just 0.05 U.S. dollar per kilowatt per hour - less than the equivalent cost of producing energy with fossil fuel or nuclear energy. "(In 2016) we did more with less; there was more renewable energy in the world, but with less investment. Renewable energy is getting cheaper all the time," Martin-Murillo said. (Xinhua)

Sharif Arrives Pakistan after Participating in SCO Summit

LAHORE - Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif Saturday arrived Pakistan after concluding his two-day official visit to Astana, Kazakhstan. The prime minister, during his stay in Astana, participated in 17th meeting of the Heads of State Council of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Pakistan became a full member of the SCO. Pakistan has been an Observer with SCO since 2005 and applied for full membership of the organization in 2010. On the sidelines of the SCO Summit, the Prime Minister held bilateral meetings with the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Afghani-

stan and Russia. He exchanged views with these leaders on matters of mutual interest and discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations with these entities and to promote stability and prosperity in the region. The UN Secretary General also called on the Prime Minister. The prime minister along with other participating SCO Heads of States also attended the inaugural ceremony of the Expo 2017 where he also visited Pakistani and Belarusian stalls. Advisor to PM on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz, Minister for Commerce Khuram Dastgir and Minister of State for Petroleum Jam Kamal accompanied the prime minister during his visit. (APP)

Terrorist Attacks Seeking to Take Revenge from Iran: Rouhani

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani condemned the Wednesday's terrorist acts in Tehran, and said that the attacks were aimed at taking revenge from the Iranian nation. "When the great Iranian nation achieves a very significant success; the ill-wishers never lose a chance to strike them a blow," President Rouhani said. The Iranian president reiterated that the massive presence of people in the country's presidential and municipal elections astonished "our ill-wishers while our friends became happy

round the globe", President Rouhani said. The Iranian president went on to say that since democracy abolishes terrorists' thoughts and indicates that violence is not a solution and the only solution to resolve problems is the votes of people, then elections and polling stations have dealt a severe blow to violence-seekers and terrorists, their supporters are looking for a chance to take revenge ignoring the fact that the Iranian people are very resistant and have experienced many of such incidents in their lives. (FNA)

OSCE Assists Turkmenistan in Implementation of Migration Programs

ASHGABAT - The OSCE assists Turkmenistan in implementation of programs on migration, reads a press release of the OSCE Ashgabat office. Representatives of government institutions and public organizations discussed topical issues of migration and the role of the OSCE in migration governance at an OSCE-organized roundtable discussion that took place in Ashgabat. The Center in Ashgabat, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan and the Office of the Co-ordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA),

organized this event to contribute to the implementation of national migration-related initiatives of Turkmenistan in line with relevant OSCE's commitments. The event brought together officials from law-enforcement bodies, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Mejlis (Parliament), Ombudsman and Justice Ministry as well as representatives of other relevant institutions and public organizations. A representative from the OCEEA presented OSCE's mandate and best practices, as well as regional and national activities in the area of migration. (Trend)