

Macron's Party Makes Big Win in Round One of Legislative Election: Exit Polls

PARIS - President Emmanuel Macron's party "The Republic On The Move" (LREM) and its ally MoDem took the lead in the first round of French legislative election on Sunday.

Major results of all available exit polls showed that LREM won up to 33.5 percent of votes, ahead of the conservatives which collected between 20.8 percent and 22 percent. Eying to form a strong opposition, the far-right National Front collected up to 14 percent while the outgoing ruling Socialist Party reported a poor score of between 9 and 10 percent.

Following the first result of parliamentary competition's first leg, LREM and allies



were likely to win between 415 and 455 seats out of the 577-seat lower house of parliament, securing a landslide majority. The Kantar Sofres-opinion estimate, made for French newspaper Le Figaro, put the number at between 400 and 440 seats for LREM. By 5 p.m. local time (1500 GMT), 40.75 percent had cast their ballots, the lowest turnout in the 5th Republic, compared with the same time of day in the first round of 2012, when the figure stood at 48.3 percent.

Opinion pollsters predict Sunday's turnout to hit record low of 49 percent, mirroring the French people's growing disinterest in legislative election. (Xinhua)

May Faces First Post-Election Meetings with Ministers, Backbench MPs

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May chaired her first meeting of ministers since last week's general election at 10 Downing Street Monday. The wheels of government had been scheduled to start turning Tuesday, but May moved things forward 24 hours following the shock outcome in the election which saw her lose the majority she had held. May's new-look cabinet is virtually unchanged, with her main ministers all keeping their jobs.

One headline-grabbing change was her appointment of one-time foe, Michael Gove as the environment secretary.

Political commentators speculated his return to front-line politics was to help protect May from a challenge for her job.

Gove, who previously was education secretary in David Cameron's cabinet, was a strong campaigner for Brexit in last year's EU referendum.

On the agenda at the cabinet meeting is the proposed confidence and



support deal May has put forward with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). The 10 DUP members of parliament would give May the working

majority she needs in the House of Commons. The leader of the DUP, Arlene Foster, is due at Downing Street Tuesday for a meeting with May. (Xinhua)

Terror Victims to be Honored as Macron, May Attend France-England

PARIS - A minute's silence will be held prior to France's home friendly with England on Tuesday as a tribute to the victims of recent terror attacks in England, the French Football Federation (FFF) confirmed on Monday.

French president Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Theresa May are both expected to attend the match at the Stade de France, according to Macron's own diary.

May is due in the French capital earlier in the day

on business ahead of the start of Brexit negotiations next week.

In addition to the minute's silence, the English national anthem will be played after that of France, in a reversal of the usual protocol.

The English Football Association had paid a similar tribute prior to the team's last meeting, a friendly at Wembley in November 2015 that was played just days after a wave of terror attacks in Paris that left 130 dead. (AFP)

White House Denies Trump Rethinking his UK Visit

WASHINGTON - The White House on Sunday denied a Guardian report that suggested that U.S. President Donald Trump was considering postponing his first state visit to Britain over concerns about potential large protests.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer on Sunday told The Washington Post that the Guardian report was "false."

The Hill also cited another White House spokesman as saying that Trump "has tremendous respect for Prime Minister May," adding that

"that subject never came up on the call." Earlier on Sunday, the British newspaper Guardian cited sources as saying that Trump told British Prime Minister Theresa May in a recent phone call that "he did not want to come if there were large-scale protests."

The newspaper cited as its source a Downing Street adviser who was in the room at the time of the call.

Trump's statement was said to have surprised May, according to those present, the newspaper added. (Xinhua)

German Minister Cautions on Surveillance of Minors to Combat Terror Threat

BERLIN - German Federal Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere reacted skeptically in the "ARD Morgenmagazin" on Monday to proposals by the Christian Social Union party (CSU) to intensify the surveillance of minors as a means of foiling terrorism.

De Maiziere pointed to existing federal regulations that endow the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution with the responsibility to monitor all individuals aged 14 or over, a system which he described as working well. He appeared un-

convinced by proposals to take fingerprints from children above the age of six, but instead voiced concerns over variation in security regulations across Germany's federal and state levels of government and a related lack of communication.

"We cannot allow the existence of two different zones of security in Germany," he warned.

The minister renewed his demand that security services should gain access to encrypted messenger services such as WhatsApp, stating that it must be possible



to take the same surveillance measures on the internet that are already conducted for phone calls and standard text messages. While emphasizing that

not every citizen would be scanned, de Maiziere further advocated using facial recognition software for video surveillance to assist public searches for suspects. (Xinhua)

British Government to Delay Unveiling Policy Plan: BBC

LONDON - The British government will delay by "a few days" the presentation of its programme in parliament following its setback in the general election last week, the BBC reported on Monday.

The pageantry-filled ceremony, officially the State Opening of Parliament but more commonly known as the Queen's Speech, is an outline of the government's policy proposal read by Queen Elizabeth II. It had been scheduled for June 19 and has been in the queen's diary since April.

A spokesman for British Prime Minister Theresa May refused to confirm the date at a daily briefing, saying only that there would be a statement regarding the Queen's Speech "in due course". (AFP)

Germany's Merkel Hosts African Leaders Ahead of G20 Summit

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel is hosting a meeting with African leaders ahead of next month's Group of 20 summit, and her government is offering funds to encourage reform on the continent.

Merkel is opening a conference titled "G-20 Africa Partnership - Investing in a Common Future" in Berlin on Monday. Guests include the presidents of Egypt and Guinea, which currently holds the African Union's rotating presidency. Germany is offering some 300 million euros (\$335 million) to help African nations. Development Minister Gerd Mueller said ahead of the conference that his ministry wants to encourage countries "that want to take with us the road against corruption, for transparency and implementing human rights." (AP)

US Opts out of G7 Pledge Committing to Paris Climate Accord

BOLOGNA, Italy - The United States refused Monday to sign onto a Group of Seven pledge that calls the Paris climate accord the "irreversible" global tool to address climate change.

The G7 environment ministers issued a final communique Monday after their two-day meeting, the first since the United States announced it was withdrawing from the Paris climate pact. In a footnote to the communique, the United States said it wouldn't join with the other six countries in reaffirming their Paris commitments, but said it was taking action on its own to reduce



its carbon footprint.

"The United States will continue to engage with key international partners in a manner that is consistent with our domestic priorities, preserving both a strong economy and a healthy environment," the footnote read. As a result, the U.S. said it would not

join those sections of the communique on climate and multilateral development banks. The head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Scott Pruitt, had attended the first few hours of the summit Sunday, but left to attend a Cabinet meeting in Washington. (AP)

U.S. Senate Democratic Leader Invites Trump to Testify about his Interactions with Comey

WASHINGTON - U.S. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer on Sunday invited President Donald Trump to testify before the Senate about his interactions with former Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) James Comey. "I'd like to invite the president to testify before the Senate. I think we could work out a way that it could be dignified, public with questions with (Senate Republican) Leader (Mitch) McConnell," Schumer told CBS News's "Face the Nation." Schumer said Trump could "clear up that cloud" surrounding his presidency by testifying

or publicly releasing tapes he alluded to recording his interactions with Comey. "If there are tapes, he alluded to the fact that there are tapes, maybe as a threat or taunting Comey. If there aren't tapes, he should let that be known. No more game playing," Schumer argued. "And of course, he said he would testify. So I'm inviting him to come testify, and we could work that out," Schumer said, adding they would also consult with Robert Mueller, the special counsel to oversee the probe into the Trump campaign's relations with Russia, before the hearing. (Xinhua)

Impatient Brussels Hosts Brexit 'Talks about Talks'

BRUSSELS - The EU's Brexit chief met British officials on Monday to try to hammer out a date for the start of formal talks, as concerns grew that negotiations could be delayed by the fallout from Britain's chaotic election.

Full negotiations had been due to start on June 19, but Brussels said the date was still not confirmed after British Prime Minister Theresa May unexpectedly lost her majority in parliament.

In a sign of the confusion, the furthest the two sides have managed to progress is to have what a European Commission spokesman called "talking about talks" in a bid to move forward.

EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier met senior British Brexit official Oliver Robbins in Brussels to discuss arrangements such as dates and the sequencing of talks once they do actually get started.

"We are fully prepared and ready for negotiations to start," commission spokesman Alexander Winterstein told reporters.

"When will be the point from moving to talking about talks, to more detailed talks, I cannot say. This doesn't depend entirely on us."

Brussels has warned that time is running out to start the talks on divorce terms and a future trade deal, with Britain set to leave the EU come what may in March 2019.

European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said last Friday that Brussels would be ready "at half past nine" the next morning if Britain was ready. (AFP)

Nieghbor News

China Eyes more Cooperation with Singapore on Belt and Road Construction

BEIJING - China and Singapore can increase co-operation under the Belt and Road Initiative via setting up platforms for connectivity, finance and third-party market, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Monday.

Wang made the remarks while holding talks with his Singaporean counterpart Vivian Balakrishnan, who paid an official visit to China from Sunday to Monday. Hailing the sound development of bilateral ties with Singapore since the beginning of this year, Wang said the two countries need to continue to implement the consensus reached by both leaders and promote the "partnership of all-round cooperation in keeping with the times."

China welcomes Singapore's participation in Belt and Road construction and is ready to work with the country to carry

out the Belt and Road MOU, Wang said.

Balakrishnan said the Belt and Road Initiative is of historic importance and Singapore has supported it from the very beginning as it connects Asia, Europe and Oceania and brings prosperity to all.

Singapore is an important point along the Belt and Road and could provide support to the financing of the initiative as it is a regional financial hub, Balakrishnan told media at a joint press conference held after the talks.

The connectivity projects conducted by Singapore and China in southwestern China's Chongqing Municipality could also join the land and maritime Silk Roads, he said, adding that Singapore is willing to better align its economic development strategies with China. (Xinhua)

Middle East Crisis: Sharif, Gen. Bajwa Off to Saudi for One-Day Visit

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Qamar Bajwa on Monday left for Saudi Arabia on a day-long visit in the backdrop of a deepening diplomatic rift in the Middle East.

The PM and COAS are accompanied by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Adviser to the PM on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and other senior officials, according to the Press Information Department.

The delegation is expected to hold talks with Saudi leadership centered on deteriorating relations between Gulf nations after Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates cut ties with Qatar, accusing it of supporting terrorism.

In its initial response to the Middle East crisis, Pakistan had stressed the need for unity in the Muslim world and urged the countries involved to engage in dialogue.

Last week, lawmakers at the National Assembly expressed "deep concern" over the diplomatic rift and passed a resolution urging all countries to "show restraint and resolve their differences through dialogue".

Earlier, a six-member Qatari delegation had reportedly visited Islamabad last week to relay a message from the Qatari emir, asking Pakistan to play a positive role in resolving the diplomatic crisis engulfing the Middle East. (Monitoring Desk)

Middle East Needs no more Turmoil: Iran

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who is in Norway to attend the Oslo Forum, says the Middle East region is already fraught with tensions and needs no more turmoil, as a diplomatic crisis between several Arab countries in the region heats up.

Speaking to Press TV's correspondent on arrival in Oslo, Zarif said he would discuss with other officials present there to participate in the Oslo Forum "particularly the very volatile situation in the Persian Gulf region, and the fact that our region doesn't need any more turmoil."

He was referring to the recent tensions between Qatar and a number of other regional states. Qatar has come under intense pressure from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, the Maldives, and Egypt - all of which have broken off ties with Doha - over accusations that the Qatari government sponsors extremist groups. The tensions risk turning into a regional conflict.

Zarif will stay in Norway for two days, during which he will give an address to the Oslo Forum, which gathers leading armed conflict mediation practitioners. This year's summit is to be held under the rubric, "Peace Making in the New Era of Geopolitics." (Presstv)

Turkmenistan, UN Plan to Sign Set of Documents

ASHGABAT - The program of the visit of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to Turkmenistan has been agreed upon, the Turkmen government said in a message.

High-level meetings are planned to be held in accordance with the program, the message said. "Following the upcoming high-level talks, it is planned to sign a set of documents aimed at further boosting mutually beneficial partnership between the UN and Turkmenistan," said the

message. The UN News Center reported earlier that Guterres will visit Turkmenistan June 13 and take part in a high-level dialogue in Ashgabat city, dedicated to the implementation of the strategy for combating terrorism in Central Asia. Over the past ten years, Turkmenistan, together with UN specialized agencies, has implemented more than 260 projects in various spheres in accordance with the previously adopted framework programs. (Trend)