

Final Results Confirm Macron Wins French Presidential Election

PARIS - Centrist Emmanuel Macron won the 2017 French presidential election with 66.1 percent of the votes cast in a runoff over the weekend, the updated final results published Monday by the French Interior Ministry show.

The results took into account both the votes cast in the French European contest on Sunday, and those in the French overseas territories on Saturday. The result makes the 39-year-old former economy minister the eighth president of the French Fifth Republic, and the youngest one ever. With 33.9 percent of the



vote, his rival Marine Le Pen garnered the support of more than 10 million voters, a stunning record for her far-right party National Front.

Macron is scheduled to attend a series of events and ceremonies with outgoing president Francois Hollande on Monday.

With nearly 47 million registered voters, abstentions amounted to 25.44 percent, up from 22.23 percent in the first round, the ministry said.

In 2012, abstentions in the second round was only 19.65 percent, according to figures from the French Constitutional Council. (Xinhua)

Merkel's Party Wins Regional Election

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) has scored a clear victory in the regional elections in Germany's northernmost state Schleswig-Holstein Sunday. In the official election results, the CDU gained 32 percent of the vote -- an increase of 1.2 percent compared to the last election five years ago. CDU top candidate Daniel Guenther is now tasked with the formation of a government. The current coalition of the SPD, the Greens and the

South Schleswig Voter's Association (SSW) has been voted out of office, Guenther said, "the people have voted against the coalition of standstill and for a new start." The CDU now faces difficult coalition negotiations. A coalition of CDU, the Greens and the FDP is possible, as is a coalition of SPD, the Greens and the FDP -- or a grand coalition of the CDU and SPD. Guenther staked his claim to the post of prime minister of Schleswig-Holstein after the elections. (Xinhua)

Syrian FM Stresses Commitment to De-Escalation Zones' Deal

DAMASCUS - Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem said Monday that his government will abide by the de-escalation zones' deal, warning, however, any breach by the rebels will be retaliated.

In a press conference, al-Moallem said his government hopes for the armed opposition groups to comply with the deal, concluded by Russia, Iran and Turkey, which provides for creating four de-escalation zones in Syria. "We are committed to the deal, but there will be a decisive response in case of any violation by the armed groups,"

the minister said. He noted that the guarantors of the rebels will be responsible for the rebel breaches. Al-Moallem, meanwhile, stressed the Syrian government's keenness on the unity of Syria, responding to the claims by the opposition groups in exile that the creation of the de-escalation zones, or the safe zones, could be a prelude for fragmenting Syria.

"We are keen on our national unity, and the unity of Syria and its policies, thanks to the steadfastness of our people, and the bravery of our army," he said. (Xinhua)

US Studying Moscow's Syria Deal: Mattis

COPENHAGEN - The United States is closely examining whether a Russia-brokered deal to establish safe zones in Syria can work in the long term, Pentagon chief Jim Mattis said. "All wars eventually come to an end and we have been looking for a long time how to bring this one to an end," Mattis told reporters ahead of his arrival in Denmark on Monday. "So we will look at the proposal, see if it can work," Mattis added. Experts are sceptical about

Thursday's deal because neither the Syrian government nor the rebels were direct signatories and the opposition offered only a lukewarm reaction. Washington has given the deal an extremely cautious welcome, citing concerns about Iran's role as a guarantor even as it expressed hope the agreement could set the stage for a later settlement. "Does this proposal have a hope for ending this war? We'll have to look at it. The devil is always in the



details, so we are going to have to look at the details, see if we can work them out, see if we think they are going to be effective," Mattis said.

The United States takes part in separate peace talks under a UN mandate in Geneva, where the rivals have been deadlocked on key issues. (AFP)

Trump's Team Rushes to Sell Health Care Reform Bill Ahead of Senate Debate

WASHINGTON - Multiple allies of U.S. President Donald Trump went out in force on Sunday to promote a health care reform bill that they hope can make past the Senate despite a forecasted overhaul.

Capitol Hill and White House prominent members, including House Speaker Paul Ryan and Trump's Chief of Staff Reince Priebus, uniformly appeared on major cable news networks to defend the American Health Care Act (AHCA), which the Trump administration hoped would become

its first legislative breakthrough and also fulfill its promise of "repeal and replace" Obamacare.

House Republicans pushed the AHCA bill past the House on Thursday in a 217-213 vote, which Trump hailed as a major victory in striking down Obamacare, formally known as the Affordable Care Act.

"This is a rescue mission," Ryan told ABC's This Week, adding the AHCA's goal is to lower the cost of insurance coverage and make sure that "everyone has access to affordable health care, especially and



including people with pre-existing conditions." Addressing criticism on the lack of transparency in drafting the AHCA, Ryan said they are "bogus attack from the left." "The bill has been online for two

months," Ryan said. Ryan also cited a report from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) saying reforms proposed by the AHCA was "in compliance with the Senate budget rules." (Xinhua)

UN Says over 1 Mln Children have Fled South Sudan

JUBA - Two UN agencies said Monday that over 1 million children have fled South Sudan due to escalating armed conflict.

Latest figures by UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) show that children make up 62 percent of the more than 1.8 million refugees from South Sudan and that most have arrived in Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan.

"Refugee families fleeing to neighboring countries in search of shelter and safety are facing a double



calamity this rainy season, with children most at risk from the health and protection risks associated with inadequate shelter," the UN agencies said in a joint statement.

The agencies said children

remain at risk of recruitment by armed forces and groups and, with traditional social structures damaged, are also increasingly vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse and exploitation. (Xinhua)

Khamenei Urges Massive Turnout in Elections to Disappoint Enemies

TEHRAN - Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Sunday called for a massive turnout in the upcoming presidential elections in the country to disappoint the enemies, Press TV reported. "If we want the grandeur and sovereignty of the Islamic republic to be preserved and it remains immune (to the harms), all should participate in the elections," Khamenei said, adding that "The only way to confront the animosity of the enemy is the presence of people at the scene."

"If a dereliction is made and some pave the way for people's disappointment, the country will definitely suffer," he was quoted as saying.

Iranians will go to the polls on May 19 to elect a new president. More than 50 million people are eligible to vote. (Xinhua)

Belt and Road Initiative to Boost Globalisation, Int'l Cooperation: WIPO Chief

GENEVA - China's Belt and Road Initiative is expected to enhance greater international cooperation while fostering multilateral ties between participating countries, the World Intellectual Property Organisation's (WIPO) director general told Xinhua in an interview.

"I think the Belt and Road Initiative will support the multilateral framework, enabling participating countries to reinforce and use the international agreements that are in place," Francis Gurry said. "I think the initiative is a stepping stone to internationalizing on a greater scale what can be achieved more easily in a regional initiative like the Belt and Road Initiative," he added.

Gurry made these remarks ahead of a high-level Belt and Road forum for international cooperation scheduled to take place on May 14-15 in Beijing.

The Australian national, who has been at the helm of WIPO since 2008, noted that the event would enable global stakeholders to take stock of what has been achieved and review plans going forward.

He welcomed the implementation of a new approach to commercial relationships, one which highlights the importance of developing key infrastructure to boost future trade ties.

This is particularly important for developing countries which often lack the required roads, railways, ports, and telecommunication facilities required to trade at full capacity. (Xinhua)

UN Official Calls for more Work with Disabled in North Korea

PYONGYANG, North Korea - A United Nations official visiting North Korea called Monday for more attention to disabled people in the socialist state. The U.N. special rapporteur on the rights of people with disabilities, Catalina Devandas Aguilar, talked to a small group of foreign and North Korean media at a news conference on the last full day of her eight-day trip to Pyongyang. She urged the U.N. and other international organizations to "make all of their projects inclusive of persons with disabilities and to mainstream disabilities in all of their humanitarian strategies and programs in the country." (AP)

Hollande, Macron Chair Celebration of "Victory in Europe" Day in Paris

PARIS - France's outgoing President Francois Hollande and president-elect Emmanuel Macron on Monday led a ceremony in central Paris to mark the 72nd anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, known as Victory in Europe Day. Hollande kicked off the ceremony at the iconic Arc de Triomphe by laying a wreath at the foot of General Charles de Gaulle's status. Under the escort of the Republican Guards, he came to greet audience along the Champs-Elysees avenue before meeting with his ministers at the Place de l'Etoile (Star Square). Attending the ceremony side by side, Hollande and his former minister of economy and adviser inspected troops

to the national anthem "The Marseillaise," laid a wreath and rekindled the flame at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the base of Arc de Triomphe.

They were joined in the commemoration by Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve, ministers, lawmakers, veterans from the right and left parties, and military dignitaries. Neither of them gave a speech during the ceremony. The outgoing president told French media after the ceremony that he wanted Macron to stand by his side in the ceremony as a symbol of "passing on the torch." "I wish him every success, and he knows that if he needs any information, advice, he will contact me. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

Educational Institutions Play an Important Role in Development of a Country: Mamnoon

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain said that educational institutions play an important role in human resource and economic development of a country while emphasizing that it is the basic responsibility of teachers to also focus on character building of students along with imparting quality education.

The President was talking to a delegation of Tanzeem-e-Asateza Pakistan which headed by its President Prof Mian Muhammad Akram called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, in Islamabad on Monday. Federal Education & Professional Training Minister Engineer Muhammad Balighur-Rehman and senior civil officials were also present at the meeting. Express-

ing his keen interest in promoting quality education across the country, the President hoped that teachers will continue playing their due role for proper training and education of new generation. The President underlined that it is also the responsibility of teachers to play their part in controlling sectarian differences and parochialism in educational institutions. Mamnoon called for benefiting from the experiences of other countries to further improve the state of education. He said that policies of the government are in the right direction for improving the standard of education. He apprised that Urdu as an official language has been completely enforced at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran, China to Develop Technology Cooperation

TEHRAN - The Iranian and Chinese scientific delegations in a meeting in Tehran underscored the need for the further expansion of technological cooperation between the two countries.

The meeting was held between Iran National Science Foundation and National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) on Monday.

During the meeting, the two sides stressed the importance of cooperation between the two countries' researchers and strengthening their potential and de facto capacities.

Also, they agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation to support research plans, holding

training workshops and exchanging researchers. In relevant remarks in October, Iranian Vice-President for Scientific and Technological Affairs Sorena Sattari voiced Tehran's preparedness to boost cooperation with China in various areas of science.

"The two countries enjoy the potential to boost cooperation in different fields, specially science and technology," Sattari said after paying a visit to Zhongguancun Science Park of China.

He underlined the country's readiness to develop scientific cooperation with China. He said that Iran is doing its best to direct the country's economy towards a knowledge-based one. (FNA)

Uzbekistan to Strengthen Civil Rights Protection

TASHKENT - The Uzbek presidential apparatus' service for control and coordination of work with appeals of individuals and legal entities established in late 2016, has been transformed into the service for the protection of civil rights, control and coordination of work with appeals of individuals and legal entities of the country's presidential apparatus, according to the decree of Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The main task of the service is to ensure functioning of a qualitatively new and effective system of work with appeals of individuals and

legal entities, aimed at full protection of their rights, freedoms and legitimate interests, said the decree.

The service will analyze how the Uzbek government agencies and the bodies of the economic management ensure the civil rights protection in the country.

The service will also develop proposals for improving law enforcement practices and the existing Uzbek legislation. This improving is aimed at eliminating the causes and conditions of systemic violations revealed during the consideration of appeals, the decree said. (Trend)

Turkmenistan Eyes to Clean Soil at Caspian Coastal Zone

ASHGABAT - A draft cleanup of soil at the Caspian coastal zone of Turkmenistan was presented at the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of the country, the Turkmen government said in a message.

The project is planned to be implemented by a consortium of "Gazyk", "Hazar Balyk" Turkmen enterprises and the UK's Global Ecological Ventures Limited, according to the message.

The Caspian Sea region is a unique natural complex with a single ecosystem, Turkmen President Gur-

banguly Berdimuhamedov said at the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers. In his opinion, flora and fauna of the Caspian Sea require a very careful and prudent approach.

Turkmenistan strictly observes all the obligations undertaken regarding environmental protection, and implements major projects in this sphere together with the United Nations Environment Program, the Caspian Environment Program, the Global Environment Facility and other international agencies, he added. (Trend)