

Under Pressure, France's Macron Puts Off Cabinet Reshuffle

PARIS - French President Emmanuel Macron postponed a planned government reshuffle on Wednesday, prompting new questions about the depth of political experience in his party and his own ability to keep his administration on track after several resignations.

The president and his prime minister have been weighing the reshuffle for a week following the departure of three ministers since late August, resignations that have challenged Macron's authority and stalled his reform ambitions.

The 40-year-old faces multiple challenges in carrying out a significant revamp. Not only must he try to maintain the left-right balance that he made a hallmark of his centrist movement, but he must find strong candidates from



among a relatively shallow and inexperienced pool of loyalists. "The president wishes to take all the time neces-

sary to draw up a team in a calm and professional way," the Elysee Palace said. Ministers had expected the rejig before a cabinet

meeting on Wednesday morning. But in the event, the Elysee said it would not happen until after Macron returns from a visit to Armenia late on Friday. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire canceled traveling to Bali for an International Monetary Fund gathering to attend the cabinet session.

Macron's popularity has sunk in recent months, falling to below 30 percent, as voters express frustration with a leader they often regard as arrogant and supportive of policies that benefit the wealthy. Impatience has also grown with the sluggish pace of economic growth and job creation. Opponents branded the reshuffle a "tragic-comedy" that exposed a shortage of political experience in the ruling party. (Reuters)

Suspect Arrested in Germany over Killing of Bulgaria Journalist

SOFIA - Police in Germany have arrested a man in connection with the rape and brutal murder of Bulgarian television journalist Viktoria Marinova, Bulgarian officials said Wednesday.

But they said it does not appear that the murder was linked to her work as a journalist.

The suspect was picked up late on Tuesday at the request of Bulgarian authorities, Interior Minister Mladen Marinov told a news con-

ference. "We have enough proof linking this person to the scene of the crime," he said.

The country's chief prosecutor, Sotir Tsatsarov, named the suspect as Severin Kasimirov, born in 1997, and said he was already sought in connection with another rape and murder. "At this stage, we do not believe that the murder is linked" to Marinova's work. "But we are continuing to look at all hypotheses." (AFP)

Ukraine Sends Aircraft as Fire Rages at Arms Depot

KIEV - Kiev said on Wednesday it had sent in aircraft to fight a massive fire as explosions continued at an arms depot in northern Ukraine.

More than 12,000 people were evacuated after ammunition stored at the depot near the village of Druzhba began exploding early on Tuesday, sparking a huge blaze. Security services said they were investigating "possible sabotage" at the facility around 135 kilometres (85 miles) northeast of Kiev, implying Russia's involve-

ment.

Kiev forces have been fighting pro-Russian separatists in the east of the country since 2014 in a conflict that has killed more than 10,000 people. "Several aircraft have already taken off" to battle the blaze, Ukrainian Defence Minister Stepan Poltorak told a cabinet meeting. "There is still smoke coming from the arms depot, but I think we will be able to stop it soon," he said.

Poltorak said the depot contained about 70,000



tonnes of ammunition over 680 hectares (1,700 acres), around 43,000 tonnes of which were "ready to use". There was another powerful blast in the middle of the night, he said, adding that the intensity of explosions on Wednesday was one every three minutes. (AFP)

EU's Barnier Calls for 'Decisive Progress' on Brexit for Summit Next Week



BRUSSELS - The European Union's Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier on Wednesday called for "decisive progress" in negotiations with Britain in time

for a summit of all 28 EU nation leaders next week. Brexit negotiators from both sides have been locked in intense discussions this week, trying to

overcome differences on the biggest outstanding hurdle to a Brexit deal - how to keep the Ireland-UK border open after Britain leaves the bloc in March. Speaking after Barnier briefed the executive European Commission, spokesman Margaritis Schinas told a news conference: "He recalled that decisive progress must be made in time for the October European Council next week and negotiations at the technical level will continue this week." The 27 EU states will get an update at a

meeting of national ambassadors, without Britain, on Friday evening. The sides will continue negotiations through the weekend with hopes for a breakthrough as early as Monday. The 27 EU leaders meeting next Wednesday and Thursday in Brussels want to be able to announce decisive progress on the Brexit deal to agree to hold another summit in November. That would be to finalize work on a declaration of close future ties with Britain that would also be part of the Brexit package. (Reuters)

Pope Compares Abortion to Hiring a Hit Man to Solve Problems

VATICAN CITY - Pope Francis compared abortion to a mafia-style killing Wednesday, saying it's the equivalent of hiring a hit man to "take out a human life to solve a problem."

Francis made the comments, among his strongest yet against abortion, during his weekly Wednesday audience dedicated to the commandment exhorting the faithful not to kill. Francis said some people justify abortion as respecting other rights. But, he asked, "How can an act that suppresses innocent and defenseless life as it blossoms be therapeutic, civil or simply human?" He asked if it was fair "to take out a human life" to solve a problem: "Is it fair to hire a hit man to solve a problem? It is not fair. We cannot take out a human being, even if it is small." It was the second time within recent months that Francis has expressed the church's longstanding opposition to abortion in violent, stark terms. (AP)

Oxfam Rejects Singapore Defense of Low Taxes

SINGAPORE - Oxfam on Wednesday rejected Singapore's defense of its low taxes after the NGO ranked the wealthy city state among the 10 worst-offending countries in fuelling inequality with its low-tax regime.

Oxfam's Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) index ranked Singapore 149th of 157, below Afghanistan, Algeria, and Cambodia, and marginally higher than Haiti, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

The index assesses social spending, taxation and labor policies. It ranked Denmark, Germany and Finland as the top three. (Reuters)

Bolivia Must Give Up Demand for Access to Sea through Chile: Pinera

BERLIN - Chilean President Sebastian Pinera said on Wednesday that he was prepared to negotiate further with Bolivia in the countries' long-running border dispute, but said Bolivia must first give up its demand for access to the sea through Chilean territory.

"It must be quite clear that the 1904 border agreement between Chile and Bolivia is recognized," he told reporters during a visit to Berlin. "Bolivia must give up its absurd demand for access to the sea and to Chilean territory."

On Oct. 1 the International Court of Justice ruled that landlocked Bolivia cannot force Chile to negotiate over granting it "sovereign access" to the Pacific Ocean. (Reuters)

Category 4 Hurricane Michael Being Felt on Florida Coast

PANAMA CITY, Fla. - Michael's leading edge careened onto northwest Florida's white-sand beaches as a still-growing Category 4 hurricane Wednesday, lashing the coast with tropical storm-force winds and rain and pushing a storm surge that could cause catastrophic damage well inland once it makes landfall.

The unexpected brute quickly sprang from a weekend tropical depression with top winds growing to 145 mph (230 kph), the most powerful hurricane in recorded history for this stretch of the Florida coast. The sheriff in Panama City's Bay County issued a shelter-in-place order before dawn



Wednesday, and Florida Gov. Rick Scott tweeted that for people in the hurricane's path, "the time to evacuate has come and gone ... SEEK REFUGE IMMEDIATELY." At 8 a.m., Michael's eye was about 90 miles (145 kilometers) from Panama City and

Apalachicola, moving relatively fast at 13 mph (21 kph). Tropical-storm force winds extended 185 miles (295 kilometers) from the center, lashing the coast, and hurricane-force winds were coming closer, reaching 45 miles (75 kilometers) from the center. (AP)

Turkish Newspaper Names 15 Saudis in Missing Journalist Case

ISTANBUL - Turkish pro-government newspaper Sabah said on Wednesday it had identified a 15-member intelligence team it said was involved in the disappearance of prominent Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Khashoggi was last seen a week ago entering the consulate in Istanbul to get documents related to his forthcoming marriage. His fiancée, waiting outside,

said he never emerged and Turkish sources said they believe Khashoggi, a prominent critic of Saudi policies, was killed inside the mission.

Saudi Arabia has dismissed as baseless accusations that it killed or abducted Khashoggi. Saudi authorities have so far not commented on the 15 nationals reported to have come to Turkey. (Reuters)

Italy Coalition Eyes Alternatives to Economy Minister Tria

ROME - When a senior representative of Italy's ruling coalition met international investors over dinner last week he was asked at the end of the evening if he had any questions. He only had one: "What would you do if Tria goes?"

The episode shines a light on the precarious position of Economy Minister Giovanni Tria, who looks weak and isolated after caving in to party chiefs by agreeing to raise next year's fiscal deficit far above levels agreed with Brussels.

Tria had committed to holding the deficit below 2 percent of gross domestic product but buckled under pressure from the coalition to set a target of 2.4 percent in what was seen as a humiliating defeat for the economics professor.

He is now in the middle of a power struggle between his paymasters from the right-wing League and the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement who need money to fulfill election pledges, and a European Union that is insisting on fiscal constraint.

Investors are nervous. Italian 30-year bond yields hit a four-year high on Tuesday above 4 percent on concerns talks between the coalition and Brussels could turn sour, with Tria, the face of economic moderation, side-lined.

"Tria is a good and competent person but I don't think he has yet fully understood his role," the coalition official said at the dinner, attended by a Reuters reporter, in an exclusive restaurant in Rome. (Reuters)

Neighbor News

ICJ Hears Iran Arguments in Asset Freeze Case against US

TEHRAN - The UN's top court has heard Iran's arguments against the United States in a new showdown between the two sides over the freezing of Iranian assets, just days after the tribunal handed Tehran a victory in a separate case. The Hague-based International Court of Justice (ICJ) -- the UN's principal judicial organ -- held the second hearing in the legal proceedings on Wednesday.

The session featured Iranian representatives make a case against the US freezing of billions of dollars in Iranian assets either inside or outside of America under domestic court rulings.

The court held the first hearing in the case on Monday, when American lawyers brought their arguments before the body, repeating Washington's allegations against Iran of involvement in "terrorism" or "financing" it. Iran had lodged the case with the court two years ago by invoking the Treaty of Amity, signed between Tehran and Washington in 1955. The US has also argued that the ICJ does not have jurisdiction over the case. Washington quit the Treaty last week after it was defeated in the previous case over US sanctions on Iran, which was also based on the same deal. (Press TV)

Pakistan Attracts \$11.96bn Net FDI during Last 5 Years

ISLAMABAD - The country attracted US \$11.96 billion worth of net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) during the previous five years from, 2013 to 2018.

Year wise data shows that during 2012-13, the net inflow of FDI was recorded at the US \$1.456 billion, while during 2013-14, the net FDI was recorded at \$1.699 billion, and in 2014-15, the total FDI stood at \$987 million.

Similarly \$2.3 billion worth of FDI flowed to Pakistan during 2015-16, \$2.746 billion in 2016-17 and \$2.767 billion in 2017-18.

According to data issued by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), China made the highest investment of \$4.966 billion during the period under review followed by the UK, which made FDI of \$1.6 billion.

Similarly, investment from the United States during last five years was recorded at \$813 million, from the United Arab Emirates \$425 million, Japan \$281 million, Hong Kong \$858.6 million, whereas Switzerland made an investment worth of \$600.2 million.

Austria made an investment worth \$224 million, the Netherlands \$410 million, Italy \$634 million, Turkey \$234 million and others \$909 million.

Net sector-wise data shows that during previous five years, the highest investment was made in power sector where and amount of \$3.12 billion was invested followed by \$1.95 billion worth of investment made in oil and gas exploration, and \$1.624 billion in the financial business. (Monitoring Desk)

Business Integration of Central Asian Countries Discussed in Ashgabat

ASHGABAT - An advisory meeting with the coordinators of the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program is taking place in the Turkmen capital these days, the Neutral Turkmenistan newspaper wrote Oct. 10.

The event, organized by the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan, is attended by national CAREC coordinators and representatives of partner organizations - ADB, EBRD, IsDB, IMF and UNDP.

The results of the work on the CAREC trade agenda until 2030 and the preparations for the

17th Ministerial Conference to be held in Ashgabat in November have been presented for discussion.

The main objective of the program is to assist the countries of Central Asia in the implementation of investment projects in the field of transport, trade and energy. The issues included in the integrated trade program, in particular the three-years' action plan for its implementation during 2018-2020, which will be presented at the next CAREC ministerial conference, have been discussed in the course of the plenary sessions. (Trend)

Uzbek Presidential Administration to Set Up Greenhouse, Cattle-Breeding Complex

TASHKENT - The financial and economic department of the Presidential Administration of Uzbekistan will organize a greenhouse and cattle-breeding complex in the Tashkent region and will modernize a hotel in the capital of Uzbekistan, Uzbek media reported referring to the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan dated Oct. 4, 2018. According to the document, the state unitary enterprise Agro Service will re-

construct a greenhouse at the farm in Kibray district, consisting of a glazed block for growing tomatoes, cucumbers and flowers.

In addition, Agro Service will organize a modern goat-breeding complex in the Tashkent region.

The state unitary enterprise Turkiston mehmonxonalar kompleksi will create a modern premium class hotel complex by reconstructing the existing guest rooms and a restaurant. (Trend)