

# Germans Voting to Pick New Parliament as Merkel Seeks 4th Term

BERLIN - More than 61 million German voters were called to cast ballots on Sunday to pick their Bundestag, or federal parliament, on which a new government will be formed. About 73,500 polling stations across the country opened at 8:00 a.m. local time (0600 GMT) and will be closed at 6:00 p.m. (1600 GMT). Polling institutions will interview voters anonymously at the exit of selected polling stations, and will publish the initial results exactly after the election ends.

GLOBAL ATTENTION  
In a chilly morning with drizzle at a polling in Wedding Borough, people coming to vote were mainly senior citi-



zens, most of who were concerned about refugee issues and pension, but refused to elaborate their opinions. "We work too long. We have to retire at 67 years old to get our pensions," said a voter anonymously to Xinhua. At a bustling polling station in Mitte, center of Berlin, two civil servants working at the station said they cared about the foreign policy of Germany's new government, hoping that the country can play a more active role in addressing the root causes of terrorism. Volunteers at polling stations were also busy calculating ballots which had been cast by many voters via post. (Xinhua)

## 2,617 Civilians Killed in U.S.-Led Anti-Terror Operations in Syria: Monitor Group



DAMASCUS - A total of 2,617 civilians have been killed in the U.S.-led anti-terror operations in Syria since late 2014, a monitor group reported Saturday. The death toll includes 615 children and 443 women, said the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The casualties were documented in the provinces of Hasakah, Raqqa, Aleppo, Idlib and Deir al-Zour, the group added. The U.S.-led coalition has been backing the Kurdish-led fighters in northern Syria in their fight against Islamic State militants. (Xinhua)

## Syria Tells UN Complete Victory within Reach

DAMASCUS - Syria's foreign minister said Saturday that complete victory was within reach in the country and Damascus hopes de-escalation zones will help Syria reach a cessation of hostilities, state news agency SANA reported. "The liberation of Aleppo and Palmyra, the lifting of the siege of Deir al-Zour and the eradication of terrorism from many parts of Syria prove that victory is now within reach," Foreign Minister Walid Muallem said in his speech at

the United Nations General Assembly. U.S.-backed Syrian fighters captured Saturday the country's largest gas field from the Islamic State group in an eastern province that borders Iraq as they race with government forces to capture the energy-rich region, a senior official with the group said. Nasser Haj Mansour of the Syrian Democratic Forces said the Conoco gas field and plant came under full control of the group on Saturday morn-



ing after days of fighting with the extremists. Deir al-Zour is a province rich in oil and gas and both sides have been racing to reach the fields. The next main target will

be al-Omar oil field which is Syria's largest oil field and is also on the east bank of the Euphrates. Syrian government forces are also speeding to capture it. (Xinhua)

## UK Negotiator Dismisses Reports of £40bn Brexit Bill



LONDON - Brexit negotiator David Davis on Sunday dismissed a report that Britain was prepared to pay a £40 billion (\$54 billion, 45 billion euros) divorce

bill on leaving the European Union. The Times quoted a "Brussels source" in their story on Saturday, but Davis told BBC television that "they sort

of made that up." "I'm not going to do an actual number on air, it would be ridiculous to do that, but we have a fairly clear idea where we're going on this," he said. He called EU claims for Britain to contribute to the bloc's future pension pot as "debatable to say the least." "The last time we went through line by line and challenged quite a lot of the legal basis of these things and we'll continue to do that," British Prime Minister Theresa May on Fri-

day revealed plans for a transition period of around two years after it officially leaves in 2019, during which time Britain would still largely be under current EU rules. Davis stressed that Britain "would not under any circumstances" accept the supremacy of the European Court of Justice after the transition period, a key issue for Brexit hardliners. He added that it was "quite likely" that a joint system of EU-UK courts will be agreed in order to resolve disputes. (AFP)

## Trump Travel Ban Expires Sunday; New Restrictions Expected

WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump is expected to announce new restrictions on travel to the United States as his ban on visitors from six Muslim-majority countries expires Sunday, 90 days after it went into effect. The Department of Homeland Security has recommended the president sign off on new, more targeted restrictions on foreign nationals from countries it says refuse to share information with the U.S. or

haven't taken necessary security precautions. Officials haven't said which — or how many — countries will be affected by the new restrictions, which could take effect as soon as Sunday. "The acting secretary has recommended actions that are tough and that are tailored, including restrictions and enhanced screening for certain countries," said Miles Taylor, counselor to acting Homeland Security Secretary Elaine Duke. (AP)

## Rohingya in Bangladesh Need 'Massive' Assistance: UN

COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh - Bangladesh needs "massive international assistance" to feed and shelter the 436,000 Rohingya who have fled Myanmar in recent weeks, the head of the UN refugee agency said Sunday. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said there were "immense" challenges after visiting the overflowing camps around Cox's Bazar in southern Bangladesh. "I was struck by the incredible magnitude of their needs. They need everything — they need food, they need clean water, they need shelter, they need proper health care," he told reporters. Grandi said there had been an "incredible outpouring of local generosity" but that now needed to be "beefed up by massive international assistance, financial and material". (AFP)

## Lavrov Says US Will not Strike North Korea

MOSCOW - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Sunday that the United States would not carry out a strike on North Korea because it knows Pyongyang has nuclear bombs. "The Americans won't carry out a strike on (North) Korea because it's not that they suspect, they know for sure that it has nuclear bombs," Lavrov said in an interview with Russia's NTV television aired Sunday. "I'm not defending North Korea, I'm just saying that almost everyone agrees with such an analysis," the Russian diplomat said. North Korea this month carried out an underground test on a hydrogen bomb estimated to be 16 times the size of the US bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in 1945. It was its sixth and largest nuclear test. (AFP)

## Turkish, Iraqi Military Leaders Discuss Kurdish Independence Referendum

ANKARA - The heads of the Turkish and Iraqi armed forces held talks on Saturday to discuss the planned referendum in the Kurdistan region in northern Iraq. Turkish Chief of General Staff Hulusi Akar and his Iraqi counterpart Othman al-Ghanimi, met at the General Staff headquarters in Ankara, the Turkish military said in a written statement. The two military leaders underlined the importance of preserving Iraq's territorial integrity and political unity,



voicing to continue the joint fight against terror organizations. They also exchanged views on maintaining effective cooperation on border security and safeguarding the region's

stability. The meeting came two days ahead of the independence referendum scheduled by the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) for Sept. 25. (Xinhua)

## France's Hard-Left Leader Melancon Brings Supporters to Street Against Labor Reform

PARIS - Jean-Luc Melancon, leader of hard-left "Unbowed France" party, on Saturday took tens of thousands of supporters to streets in Paris to protest against President Emmanuel Macron's decrees to make labor code more flexible, a day after the reform was enacted. Melancon said the rally against a "social coup d'etat" drew 150,000 people in the Bastille square to denounce 36 measures with which Macron targets to give more freedom to companies in terms of recruitment and working

conditions to create dynamism and bolster growth. The president said it is "an unprecedented in-depth reform of labor market which is essential to our economy and society". However, to opponents, the reform aims to weaken workers' rights and hit their social protection. Portraying himself as Macron's strongest opponent, Melancon told the crowd "the battle is not over. It begins." "The mobilization will continue. In the civil service, in different sectors, mobilization is organized. (Xinhua)

## US Bombers, Jet Fighters Fly Off DPRK Coast: Pentagon

WASHINGTON - U.S. Air Force B-1B Lancer bombers and F-15C Eagle fighter escorts on Saturday flew in international airspace over waters east of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), according to the Pentagon. "This is the farthest north of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) any U.S. fighter or bomber aircraft have flown" off the DPRK's coast in the 21st century, said the Pentagon in a statement, adding that the move underscored "the seriousness with which we take DPRK's reckless behavior." "This mission is a demonstration of U.S. resolve and a clear message that the President has many military options to defeat any threat," the statement added.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened in a speech at the United Nations General Assembly that the United States "will have no choice but to totally destroy" DPRK if forced to defend itself or its allies. After the threat, the DPRK said it might test a hydrogen bomb in the Pacific Ocean. China on Friday urged all relevant parties to avoid any action that may increase tension on the Korean Peninsula. "The current situation on the peninsula is severe and complicated," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said at a daily press briefing. "Only if all sides bear their due responsibilities, can the peninsula nuclear issue be truly resolved and peace and stability restored to the region." The DPRK knows well that China opposes its development of nuclear weapons and nuclear tests, Lu said. (Xinhua)

## Neighbor News

### China to BRICS Countries: Push for Multilateralism

NEW YORK - Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that the BRICS countries should uphold the banner of multilateralism. Unilateralism does not work, unilateral sanctions lose popularity and unilaterally using force is very dangerous, Wang told a foreign ministers' meeting of the BRICS bloc that gathers Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa on the sidelines of the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly. He urged the group to maintain a multilateral trading system, strengthen coordination in macro-economic policies, and stay committed to reforming global

economic governance and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. Wang also called on the BRICS nations to firmly preserve the international system with the UN at its core. He urged the five nations to push all sides to follow the basic principles of the UN Charter, such as equal sovereignty, non-interference in domestic affairs and peaceful settlement of disputes, and to constantly enhance the UN Security Council's primary obligations in maintaining international peace and security. (Agencies)

### Regional Cooperation: Leaders Exchange Views on Promoting Pak-China Friendship

LAHORE - Chinese Counsel General Long Dingbin called on Punjab Chief Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and discussed matters of mutual interest, promotion of Pak-China friendship and promotion of relations between Communist Party of China (CPC) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The counsel general gave a letter to the chief minister from the Communist Party of China in which best wishes were conveyed and his performance of for the promotion of Pak-China ties and completion of CPEC projects at the fast track were appreciated. The letter was signed by International Department of Communist Party of China Central

Committee Vice Minister Zheng Xiaosong. In the letter, Zheng Xiaosong wrote, "I am writing to express my sincere wishes to you and your family. May you enjoy good health, happy family and every success. I recall with pleasure our acquaintance in July last year. Although we have not seen each other very often, frequent communications have enabled our friendship to grow continuously." He said in his letter that as a veteran political leader in Pakistan, Shehbaz had demonstrated strong leadership in Punjab. "The remarkable achievements in various fields have brought tangible benefits to the locals. (Monitoring Desk)

### Iran Discussing \$60B Investment with Foreign Firms: VP

TEHRAN - Iran has been holding talks for foreign investment with many countries, the sum of which amounts to \$60 billion, First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri said. Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the International Exhibition of Plastics Rubber, Machinery and Equipment, Iran Plast, in Iran's capital city of Tehran on Sept. 24, Jahangiri said \$26 billion of the investment plans has already turned into contracts signed between the sides, Trend correspondent reported from the event. This week Iran signed a 1 billion euro line of credit deal with Austria's Oberbank and another worth half a billion euros with Denmark's Danske Bank. The Iranian vice president further said that among the agreements

signed so far, \$11.6 billion has been implemented and the respective projects carried out. He noted that since the conclusion of the nuclear deal, aka joint comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran has lured some \$14 billion direct foreign investment. The Iran nuclear deal which Tehran struck in 2015 with six major powers lifted many sanctions against the country in exchange for restrictions on its nuclear activities and paved the way for international business deals. Recently, a Chinese state-owned investment firm provided a \$10 billion credit line for Iranian banks. China Development Bank also recently signed preliminary deals with Iran worth \$15 billion for infrastructure and production projects. (Trend)

### India in Talks with Uzbekistan, other Countries to Create Uranium Reserve

TASHKENT - India is engaging with various countries, including Uzbekistan, to procure nuclear fuel as part of its plan to create a strategic uranium reserve to ensure long-term security. The plan is to have a stockpile of nuclear fuel for its strategic uranium reserve that can sustain the country's reactors for the next five years so that they do not stop functioning because of the lack of uranium.

In the past, the Indian power reactors were under-performing due to shortage of uranium, owing to the sanctions imposed by the West post 1974 Pokhran nuclear tests. Talks are currently being held with Uzbekistan, a senior government official said, and a delegation from the Central Asian country had visited India last month to discuss the issue in detail. (Agencies)