

Hollande sworn in as French president

AFP, Paris

Francois Hollande was sworn in as president of France yesterday with a solemn vow to find a new growth-led strategy to end the debt crisis threatening to unravel the eurozone.

After brief ceremonies and a rain-lashed walkabout, the 57-year-old Socialist was to dash to Berlin to confront Chancellor Angela Merkel over their very different visions as to how to save the single currency bloc.

Hollande also named his new prime minister, Jean-Marc Ayrault, a 62-year-old longtime Hollande ally and the head of the Socialists' parliamentary bloc, who was tipped as favourite.

Ayrault's new cabinet will likely hold its first session on Thursday after which the Socialists turn to their campaign to win a parliamentary majority in June's legislative elections -- a key test for the party after Hollande's win.

The new president was welcomed to the Elysee Palace by his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy, who led him to the presidential office for a private head-to-head and to hand

over the codes to France's nuclear arsenal.

Hollande then signed the notice of formal handover of power -- becoming the seventh president of the Fifth Republic and only the second Socialist -- and then headed back in to the palace ballroom.

No foreign heads of state were invited to what was a low-key ceremony for a post of such importance, leader of the world's fifth great power.

But the real work was to begin later in the afternoon, when Hollande was to fly to Berlin from an airbase north of Paris, for tense talks with Merkel, the leader of Europe's biggest economy and France's key ally.

Merkel was a Sarkozy ally and the architect of the European Union's fiscal austerity drive. Hollande opposed the speed and depth of the cutbacks demanded by Berlin, and wants to renegotiate the eurozone fiscal pact.

After the talks with Merkel, Hollande heads to the United States where he is to meet President Barack Obama at the White House on Friday ahead of back-to-back G8 then Nato summits.



France's newly-elected President Francois Hollande and his companion Valerie Trierweiler watch France's outgoing president Nicolas Sarkozy and his wife Carla Bruni-Sarkozy leaving the Elysee presidential Palace after the formal investiture ceremony between France's president-elect Francois Hollande and his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy yesterday in Paris.

PHOTO: AFP

Murdoch insider charged with phone hacking

AFP, London

British prosecutors accused former Rupert Murdoch aide Rebekah Brooks and five others of obstructing justice yesterday in the first criminal charges from the News of the World phone hacking scandal.

The ex-News International (NI) chief executive, her husband Charlie Brooks and four people who worked for her were charged with trying to hide evidence from police investigating wrongdoing at the now-closed tabloid.

Brooks, 43, and her husband, 49, who is a former racehorse trainer and schoolfriend of Prime Minister David Cameron, said the decision was "weak and unjust".

Senior prosecutor Alison Levitt said in a television statement that there was "sufficient evidence for there to be a realistic prospect of conviction" in six cases of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

The charges are a stunning fall from grace for the woman who started on the bottom rung of Murdoch's empire more than two



Rebekah Brooks

decades ago but eventually became so close to him that she was dubbed his "fifth daughter."

Instantly recognisable with her shock of flame-red hair, Brooks also moved in the highest circles of British politics, and testified to a press ethics inquiry just last week about her close relationship with Cameron.

The others to be charged are Cheryl Carter, Rebekah Brooks's personal assistant; Mark Hanna, head of security at NI; Brooks's chauffeur Paul Edwards, who was employed by NI, and Daryl Jorsling, who provided security for Brooks that was supplied by NI.

All six are due to appear in court in London at a later date, Levitt said.

The maximum sentence for perverting the course of justice is life imprisonment, but jail terms are normally far shorter.

The charges announced yesterday are the first since Scotland Yard opened a huge new investigation into hacking and bribery in which more than 40 people have been arrested.

Eurozone escapes recession

AFP, Brussels

The eurozone logged zero growth in the first three months of the year, the EU said yesterday, narrowly avoiding recession after a 0.3-percent contraction in the last quarter of 2011.

The estimate from the bloc's statistics agency Eurostat surprised analysts, who predicted a 0.2-percent decline in economic output across the 17-nation currency area from January to March.

The figure will be officially confirmed on June 6.

Eurostat said the European Union as a whole, which also includes big non-euro states Britain and Poland, recorded 0.1 percent growth over the period, after a 0.3 percent contraction the previous quarter.

Greece faces new polls as govt talks fail

AFP, Athens

Greece will have to hold fresh elections after talks on forming a new government broke up yesterday without agreement, socialist Pasok party leader Evangelos Venizelos said.

"We are going again towards elections, in a few days, under very bad conditions," Venizelos said, while a statement from the president's office noted simply that efforts to form a government had failed.

The talks turned on implementation of a very tough EU-IMF debt bailout accord after May 6 inconclusive elections saw Greeks largely vote against the austerity measures which Athens agreed to in return for the aid.

Panos Kammenos, leader of the Greek Independents party, lashed out at those he claimed would betray the people and who "prefer the creditors to national unity."

President Carolos Papoulias called a meeting meanwhile for 1000 GMT today with all party leaders to put in place an interim government to run the country until fresh elections, expected on June 10 or 17.

Five of the parties which won seats in inconclusive polls on May 6 went into the talks to discuss a presidential plan for a technocrat administration to resolve differences over the EU-IMF debt bailout.

President Papoulias called the meeting after talks Monday with the conservative New Democracy, Pasok and radical Democratic Left parties failed to reach an accord on a coalition government.

He suggested that in the absence of any other solution, a government of "distinguished and non-political figures" should be considered to defuse an impasse over the tough austerity measures agreed to in the EU-IMF bailout.

Forming such a government would have avoided new polls and helped keep Greece in the eurozone, but time was very short -- parliament convenes tomorrow and new polls had to be called if there was no government in place by then.

Also attending Tuesday's talks were leaders of the Greek Independents party and the radical left Syriza, which came second on May 6 on its pledge to scrap the austerity policy, if not the whole EU-IMF deal.

The polls produced no clear winner and showed a majority of Greeks opposed to the austerity measures, which many feel make the problems worse, reflecting increasing calls across Europe that the focus needs to be on growth.

Figures on Tuesday showed the Greek economy slumped a massive 6.2 percent in the first quarter compared with a year earlier, leaving the country mired deep in recession for a fifth year.



A masked Palestinian protester pours petrol on burning tyres during clashes at the Qalandia crossing in the occupied West Bank following protests yesterday, marking Nakba day, which commemorates the exodus of hundreds of thousands of their kin after the establishment of Israel state in 1948.

PHOTO: AFP

EU strikes pirate base in Somalia

AFP, Brussels

An international naval force struck Somali pirate assets on land for the first time yesterday, marking a major escalation in the fight against the scourge of piracy plaguing vital shipping lanes.

A European naval helicopter fired a volley against pirate skiffs stowed away on a beach in Somalia's central Galmudug region in a carefully planned operation, a spokesman for the EU's naval mission told AFP.

An armada of ships from Nato and European Union nations has battled pirates at sea since 2008, but the EU decided to step up the fight in March by authorising strikes on assets stored on land.

"We believe this action by the EU Naval Force will further increase the pressure on, and disrupt pirates' efforts to get out to sea to attack merchant shipping and dhows," said the EU force's commander, Rear Admiral Duncan Potts.

Somali pirates use small skiffs, grappling hooks and rocket-propelled grenades to hijack ships and take hostages in return for ransom. The EU says eight vessels and 235 sailors are currently still held hostage.

Somali attacks cost the world nearly \$7 billion in 2011, including more than \$2 billion for military operations, armed guards and equipment to protect ships, according to the US-based Oceans Beyond Piracy monitoring group.

The EU naval force said no Somalis were injured in Tuesday's strike and that the helicopter returned safely after the operation.

Nato invites Pakistan to Chicago summit

AFP, Islamabad

Nato yesterday invited Pakistan to key talks on the future of Afghanistan in Chicago next week as Islamabad signalled it was about to end a nearly six-month blockade on supply routes.

Nato Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen telephoned President Asif Ali Zardari to invite him to the May 20-21 summit, Islamabad said, a day after Pakistan's foreign minister said it was time to "move on" after US air strikes killed 24 soldiers last November.

Islamabad shut its Afghan border crossings to Nato supplies after the deaths and its relations with the United States, already frayed by the discovery of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, plunged into their worst ever

crisis.

Pakistan stopped short of confirming immediately that the president would travel to Chicago, but the invitation marks a return from the cold for Islamabad, which boycotted the last major international talks on Afghanistan, held in Bonn in December.

A defence committee of cabinet is to convene at around 1430 GMT, followed by a cabinet meeting today which is widely expected to decide to reopen overland Nato supply lines into Afghanistan, closed since November.

Sources familiar with the discussions told AFP the government had effectively decided to end the blockade, probably by the beginning of next week.

Qaeda offensive kills 44 in Yemen

AFP, Aden

At least 44 people were killed in south Yemen yesterday as the army pounded the al-Qaeda stronghold of Jaar and clashes between jihadists and troops backed by local militias raged nearby, sources said.

Twenty-five Islamist militants were among the dead, 13 killed in air raids on Jaar and 12 in battles raging around Loder, another town in restive Abyan province, local and tribal sources said.

In the air raids on Jaar, twelve civilians were also mistakenly killed, while two soldiers and five armed residents died in Loder, witnesses and military sources said.

The number of people killed in both towns on Tuesday has risen sharply, with several sources giving an earlier toll of 24.

Yemeni forces at the weekend launched a multi-pronged assault aimed at recapturing al-Qaeda-held towns and cities across Abyan, including its capital Zinjibar.

Tribal sources said on Monday that battles in the south had seen 37 militants killed in two days, but AFP could not independently verify the toll.

A military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that 12 soldiers have been killed since the operation was launched on Saturday. But the defence ministry news website 26sep.net put the toll at six dead.

Pillay to remain UN rights chief

AFP, United Nations

UN leader Ban Ki-moon said Monday he has asked UN human rights chief Navi Pillay to stay on for an extra two years.

Pillay's four-year term as head of the UN human rights monitoring operation ends this year. Ban's office said he had proposed that the 193-member UN General Assembly to vote the extension for the former South African judge.

Ban "trusts the General Assembly will approve this extension."

Pillay has taken a leading role in speaking out on the need to protect civilians in Libya, Syria and other Arab uprising countries in recent months.

Syria opposition elects leader

AFP, Beirut

Burhan Ghalioun was elected yesterday as head of the exiled opposition coalition, the Syrian National Council, an SNC source told AFP.

Ghalioun garnered 21 votes in the leadership battle while another opposition figure, Georges Sabra, won 11 of the 40 votes cast by members of the general secretariat, the source said.

The SNC is Syria's main opposition umbrella group ranged against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

The vote was held in Rome, where exiled university professor Ghalioun and other SNC members were meeting.


Left-leaning and Arab nationalist in his thinking, Ghalioun was deemed capable of representing a coalition composed of multiple tendencies, including Islamists, nationalists, liberals and independents.

He is also accepted by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, who are part of the SNC.

Meanwhile, Another 16 people were killed yesterday in nationwide violence, including seven in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor, four in the coastal city of Banias, and four in Damascus province, among them a six-year-old girl, a watchdog said.



Burhan Ghalioun



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ENLISTMENT NOTICE

Applications are hereby invited from the bona fide firms for Enlistment as qualified vendors for the fiscal year 2012-2013 of the North South University. The firms who are engaged in business of the following items may apply:

Category No.	Items
Category - 01	Brand/Clone Computer, Printer, Scanner, Computer Accessories & Printer Toner/Cartridge.
Category - 02	Photocopier Machine, Toner of Photocopier and Repairing.
Category - 03	Air-Conditioner, Parts and Repairing.
Category - 04	Office Stationery & Cleaning items (Paper, Stapler, Soap etc).
Category - 05	Furniture (Wooden & Steel).
Category - 06	Networking Equipments & Accessories.
Category - 07	Chemicals, Accessories, Reagents, Glassware's & Lab Equipments. (For Lab)
Category - 08	Electrical and Electronic items (Light, Fan, Switch etc.) UPS, IPS, AVR, IVS, Substation etc
Category - 09	Printing Press.
Category - 10	Audio Visual products.

Vendors are requested to submit their application with following documents:

- Valid Trade License,
- Certificate of Incorporation (if any),
- Income Tax Certificate,
- VAT Registration Certificate,
- Bank Solvency Certificate,
- List of Clients,
- Brief profile of the firm,
- Distributorship/Agency/Dealership Certificate and any other relevant papers.

The vendors must have minimum 3 years supply record. One vendor may submit application for more than one Category but have to be submitted separately. Applications are to be submitted to the undersigned on or before **May 28, 2012 within 3.00p.m.** Clearly mentioning the Category name and number on the top of the envelop.

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