



Le Pen can win French polls: PM

French Prime Minister Manuel Valls yesterday warned that far-right leader Marine Le Pen had a chance of winning next year's presidential election, boosted by the momentum of Donald Trump's shock victory in the United States.

"It's possible," Valls said in response to a question at an economic conference in Berlin on whether the candidate of France's anti-immigration National Front could win in light of the US upset.

"All the opinion polls have the candidate Marine Le Pen making it to the second round" of France's presidential race in May, the Socialist premier said.

"If she does make it to the second round, she will face either a candidate of the left or the right. This means that the balance of politics will change completely," he added, warning of "the danger presented by the extreme right".

There is growing concern in France that the same wave of populist, anti-globalisation anger that carried Trump to the White House and saw Britons vote to leave the EU could hand Le Pen the keys to the Elysee Palace.

People run in panic after a coalition airstrike hit Islamic State fighters positions in Tahrir neighbourhood of Mosul, yesterday. *Inset*, Mosul resident Hassan suffering shrapnel wounds to his upper body cries out for his 8-month-old son (*inset 2*) who was being treated for head injuries at a field hospital in the Samah neighbourhood of Mosul. Iraqi forces piled pressure on the Islamic State group around Mosul yesterday, moving closer to cutting off the jihadists' escape route west to Syria and thrusting deeper into the east of the city near capturing two airports. Civilians alike have paid a heavy price in the first month of the battle for Mosul, although casualty figures have not been released by the authorities.



Fight for our values

Says Clinton in her first public appearance since polls defeat; flurry of new names floated as Trump assembles cabinet

Defeated Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton called on Wednesday for a renewed fight for a more-inclusive United States despite disappointment over an election loss that laid bare national divisions. In her first public remarks since conceding to Republican Donald Trump last week, Clinton said that many Americans were asking whether his victory meant the United States was still the country they thought it was. "The divisions laid bare by this election run deep, but please listen to me when I say this. America is worth it, our children are worth it," she said at a Children Defense Fund event honoring scholarship winners. "Believe in our country, fight for our values and never, ever give up." Although Fund founder Marian Wright Edelman called the nonprofit advocacy group's event "a love-in for Hillary Rodham Clinton," the former first lady said it had not been easy for her to attend. "There have been times this past week when all I wanted to do was just to curl up with a good book or our dogs, and never leave the house again," said Clinton. Clinton, a former secretary of state, won the

popular vote but lost the crucial electoral college tally to Trump, a New York real estate magnate who has taken a hard line on immigration. Meanwhile, President-elect Donald Trump was to meet with more candidates for top White House positions in New York, as a flurry of new names have emerged as potential cabinet picks. One of the most unusual names floated is that of South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, who according to CNN and MSNBC is under consideration for secretary of state and other posts. Trump is expected to spend the day at his Manhattan headquarters, where he will meet a stream of potential new hires as well Henry Kissinger, now 93. However, his appointment of the anti-establishment firebrand Stephen Bannon as his chief strategist, however, has rankled many Democrats. Bannon -- who played a central role in Trump's victorious campaign -- is on leave as chairman of the Breitbart website, which critics say is a haven for white supremacists. At least 169 House Democrats signed a letter demanding that Trump remove Bannon, saying his appointment "directly undermines your ability to unite the country."

Britain ratifies climate pact

Britain yesterday ratified the Paris agreement on climate change, joining more than 100 other countries in a move that campaigners hope will prompt US President-elect Donald Trump to honour the deal. Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson signed the Paris Agreement as countries met in Morocco for the latest round of United Nations climate talks, focused on implementing the treaty by the end of the year. The pact commits countries to limiting global temperature rises to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to keep increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Trump's election victory this month has shocked UN diplomats and notably put a question mark over the fate of the Paris climate deal championed by UN chief Ban Ki-moon during his 10 years at the helm. Before his election, Trump called climate change a "hoax" perpetrated by China and vowed to "cancel" the hard-fought Paris Agreement concluded last year to limit dangerous global warming. China and the United States, the two largest emitters, gave a major boost to the accord when they signed on during a summit in September between Presidents Xi Jinping and Barack Obama.

UNEASE IN FREE WORLD OVER TRUMP'S ELECTION

Obama passes torch to Merkel

US President Barack Obama pays a farewell visit on Thursday to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, seen by some as the new standard bearer of liberal democracy since the election of Donald Trump. On the last leg of his final European tour as president, Obama will try to ease fears about the future of the transatlantic partnership and thank Merkel for her friendship during his two terms, White House officials said. In a joint article to coincide with his arrival in Germany, Obama and Merkel appealed for ongoing cooperation on the basis of shared principles to fight climate change, ensure collective defence within Nato, and promote free trade. "These values of democracy, justice and freedom form the foundation of our successful economies," they wrote in business magazine *Wirtschaftswoche*. "We owe it to our industries and our peoples -- indeed, to the global com-

munity -- to broaden and deepen our cooperation." As Western leaders brace for potentially radical changes with Trump moving into the Oval Office in January, Obama wrapped up a visit to Athens Wednesday warning that globalisation required a "course correction" to keep voters from drifting to extremes. After Trump's shock victory, Merkel as the leader of Europe's top economic power expressed a desire to maintain close ties with Washington. But in an extraordinary break with tradition for Germany, which long saw the US as its protector and closest ally,

Merkel pointedly said cooperation must be based on shared democratic principles and respect for human dignity. Analysts said the meeting could be seen as a kind of passing of the torch from Obama to Merkel, who the outgoing president has called "probably... my closest international partner". He and Merkel, who took power in 2005, soon developed a strong partnership, despite rifts over revelations. Obama dined with Merkel at his hotel late Wednesday and held talks with her yesterday followed by a meeting Friday including the leaders of Britain, France, Italy and Spain. As he exits the stage, many observers say Merkel's importance as a defender of Western values will only continue to grow, assuming that as expected, she runs for a fourth term next year. "A lot about Europe's future will be determined by whether Germany has a strong leader who wishes to push things forward," said Daniela Schwarzer, director of the German Council on Foreign Relations.



People protest the appointment of Steve Bannon as chief strategist of the White House near City Hall in Los Angeles, California, yesterday.

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