

**FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL POLLS**

# How the world leaders reacted

Centrist Emmanuel Macron and far-right leader Marine Le Pen have emerged as winners of the first round presidential vote in France. Here are some of the international reactions to Sunday's vote:

**EUROPEAN UNION**

European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker congratulated the pro-EU Macron and wished him "good luck" in the run-off, Juncker's spokesman tweeted. "To see the flags of #France and the EU greet the result of @emmanuelmacron, it's the hope and future of our generation," tweeted EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini. Michel Barnier, the European Commission's chief negotiator on Britain's withdrawal from the EU, hinted at concerns Le Pen could lead France away from the bloc. "Patriot and European, I will put my trust in Emmanuel Macron on May 7. France must remain European," the Frenchman tweeted.

**RUSSIA**

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia "respects" the result, and is "in favour of building good and mutually beneficial relations". Russia has appeared as a keen backer of Le Pen, who met President Vladimir Putin in a surprise visit to Moscow ahead of the vote.

**GERMANY**

Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman wished Macron "all the best for the next two weeks". "It's good that Emmanuel Macron was successful with his course for a strong EU and social market economy," Steffen Seibert said in a tweet. Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel expressed confidence that the 39-year-old would be France's next president. "I'm sure he will sweep away the far-right, rightwing populism and the anti-Europeans in the second round," Social Democrat Gabriel said in a video posted on Twitter during a trip to Amman. Writing on Twitter, he added: "I'm glad that @EmmanuelMacron is leading the field. He was the only truly pro-European candidate."

**AUSTRIA**

The head of the Austrian far-right FPÖe, Heinz-Christian Strache, congratulated Le Pen on her "historic success". "Europe's patriotic spring can celebrate another success and step forward... The old established parties and their discredited representatives will gradually disappear into insignificance all across Europe. They have been ruining Europe for years!", he said on Facebook. Strache said that because "established French parties" were backing Macron, it would be a "wonder" if Le Pen won the second round. "But the system, like in Austria, is on the brink. It is just a question of time. More and more citizens have had enough of the system politicians responsible for the current disaster."

**BRITAIN**

Former Conservative finance minister George Osborne, recently appointed editor of London's Evening Standard newspaper, hailed a good result for the centre. "Congratulations to my friend @EmmanuelMacron. Proof you can win from the centre. At last, the chance for the leadership that France needs," he tweeted.

**DENMARK**

Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen expressed cautious optimism that former banker Macron would emerge victorious over Le Pen. "Congratulations @EmmanuelMacron. We should await the final election, but Europe needs an openminded and reform oriented France => Good luck!"

**NORWAY**

Norwegian Foreign Minister Borge Brende, whose country is not a member of the European Union, tweeted: "We need more not less cooperation in #Europe."

**THE NETHERLANDS**

Geert Wilders, Dutch MP and leader of the anti-Islam anti-immigrant Freedom Party, swung behind Le Pen, welcoming the result as a "bright day for patriots in France and elsewhere who want more national sovereignty and less EU and immigration." "I have just sent her my sincere congratulations. Now on the way to a vigorous second round, I am hoping for a President Le Pen." SOURCE: AFP



A demonstrator reacts towards French riot police during clashes, after partial results in the first round of 2017 French presidential election, in Paris, France, on Sunday evening. Inset, anti-fascists demonstrate in Nantes, western France, following the announcement of the results.



## Le Pen attacks Macron

Calls him 'weak' on terrorism as campaign for May 7 run-off gets under way in France

REUTERS, Paris

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen yesterday accused Emmanuel Macron, her inexperienced opponent in next month's runoff for the presidency, of being weak in the face of Islamist terrorism.

Global markets reacted with relief to Sunday's first round of voting, which broke the dominance of established parties of the centre-left and centre-right but still left a pro-European Union centrist and former economy minister in pole position to become France's next leader.

The latest opinion polls indicate that Macron, a 39-year-old who has never held elected office, will win at least 61 percent of votes.

Le Pen, 48, has touted her pledges to suspend the EU's open-border agreement on France's frontiers, and to expel foreigners who are on the watch lists of intelligence services, as the right response to a series of Islamist attacks in France.

Seeking to exploit Macron's lack of experience in the area, she told reporters in her northern stronghold of Henin-Beaumont:

"I'm on the ground to meet the French people to draw their attention to important subjects, including Islamist terrorism, on which Mr Macron is, to say the least, weak."

France has seen a series of attacks by Islamist militants in the past two years which have killed more than 230 people; only three days before Sunday's vote, a policeman was shot dead and two others were wounded in central Paris in an attack claimed by the Islamic State jihadist group.

But despite this, opinion polls consistently found that voters were more concerned about the economy and the trustworthiness of politicians.

Meanwhile, French President

Francois Hollande called on voters to back centrist Emmanuel Macron in the second round of the presidential election, warning of dangerous consequences if far-right candidate Marine Le Pen were to win.

Macron's internal security programme calls for 10,000 more police officers, and 15,000 new prison places. He has recruited a number of security experts to his entourage, and noted that Le Pen has less experience of national government than he does.



## Maoist rebels kill 24 police in India

AFP, Raipur

Suspected Maoist rebels killed 24 paramilitary commandos and wounded six yesterday in a remote part of central India, police said, in one of the deadliest attacks of the long-running conflict.

The soldiers were guarding road workers in the Sukma district of Chhattisgarh state, a hotbed of insurgent violence, when they came under heavy fire.

"We have recovered 23 bodies from the spot and one jawan (soldier) died in Raipur during treatment," Anand Chhabra, a senior police officer, told AFP, referring to the state capital.

He said six other commandos were critically injured and had been evacuated for treatment.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the attack against the Central Reserve Police Force, saying their sacrifice would not be in vain.

"Attack on @CRPFIndia personnel in Chhattisgarh is cowardly and deplorable. We are monitoring the situation closely," Modi posted on Twitter.

Fatal attacks by insurgents on security forces in central and eastern India are frequent, but yesterday's assault was among the deadliest in years.

Last month rebels killed 11 paramilitary policemen in the same state after ambushing their convoy, while at least 20 troops died in a 2015 attack.

In 2010 Maoists ambushed a police patrol, killing 76 in the worst-ever massacre of security forces by the insurgents. The incident shook the country and led to pressure on the government to rethink its tactics.

**MALARIA PARASITE**

## Three nations chosen to test first vaccine

REUTERS, London

Ghana, Kenya and Malawi will pilot the world's first malaria vaccine from 2018, offering it for babies and children in high-risk areas as part of real-life trials, the World Health Organization said yesterday.

The injectable vaccine, called RTS,S or Mosquirix, was developed by British drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline to protect children from the most deadly form of malaria in Africa.

In clinical trials it proved only partially effective, and it needs to be given in a four-dose schedule, but is the first regulator-approved vaccine against the mosquito-borne disease.

The WHO, which is in the process of assessing whether to add the shot to core package of WHO-recommended measures for malaria prevention, has said it first wants to see the results of on-the-ground testing in a pilot programme.

"Information gathered in the pilot will help us make decisions on the wider use of this vaccine," Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO's African regional director, said in a statement as the three pilot countries were announced.

"Combined with existing malaria interventions, such a vaccine would have the potential to save tens of thousands of lives in Africa."

Malaria kills around 430,000 people a year, the vast majority of them babies and young children in sub-Saharan Africa. Global efforts in the last 15 years cut the malaria death toll by 62 percent between 2000 and 2015.

The WHO pilot programme will assess whether the Mosquirix's protective effect in children aged 5 to 17 months can be replicated in real-life.

It will also assess the feasibility of delivering the four doses needed, and explore the vaccine's potential role in reducing the number of children killed by the disease.

The WHO said Malawi, Kenya and Ghana were chosen for the pilot due to several factors, including having high rates of malaria as well as good malaria programmes, wide use of bed-nets, and well-functioning immunisation programmes.



Kashmiri students clash with Indian government forces in central's Srinagar's Lal Chowk yesterday. Hundreds of student protesters shouted "We want freedom" and "Go India, go back" as they clashed with government forces after taking to the streets.

PHOTO: AFP

## N Korea tension mounts

In call with Trump, Chinese President Xi Jinping calls for restraint from all sides

REUTERS, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping called for all sides to exercise restraint yesterday in a telephone call about North Korea with US President Donald Trump, as Japan conducted exercises with a US aircraft carrier strike group headed for Korean waters.

Trump sent the carrier group for exercises in waters off the Korean peninsula as a warning, amid growing fears North Korea could conduct another nuclear test in defiance of United Nations sanctions.

Angered by the approach of the USS Carl Vinson carrier group, a defiant North Korea said yesterday the deployment was "an extremely dangerous act by those who plan a nuclear war to invade".

"The United States should not run amok and should consider carefully any catastrophic consequence from its foolish military provoca-

tive act," Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of the North's ruling Workers' Party, said in a commentary yesterday.

"What's only laid for aggressors is dead bodies," the newspaper said.

Two Japanese destroyers have joined the carrier group for exercises in the western Pacific, and South Korea said yesterday it was also in talks about holding joint naval exercises.

Xi told Trump in their latest telephone conversation that China resolutely opposed any actions that ran counter to UN Security Council resolutions, the Chinese foreign ministry said.

China "hopes that all relevant sides exercise restraint, and avoid doing anything to worsen the tense situation on the peninsula", the ministry said in a statement, paraphrasing Xi.

Meanwhile, sales of nuclear shelters and radiation-blocking air purifiers have surged in Japan in recent weeks as North Korea has pressed ahead with missile tests.

US carrier group heads for Korean waters  
Pyongyang warns against 'provocative act'  
Japanese demand for nuke purifiers surges

## Mattis flies in Kabul to craft new strategy

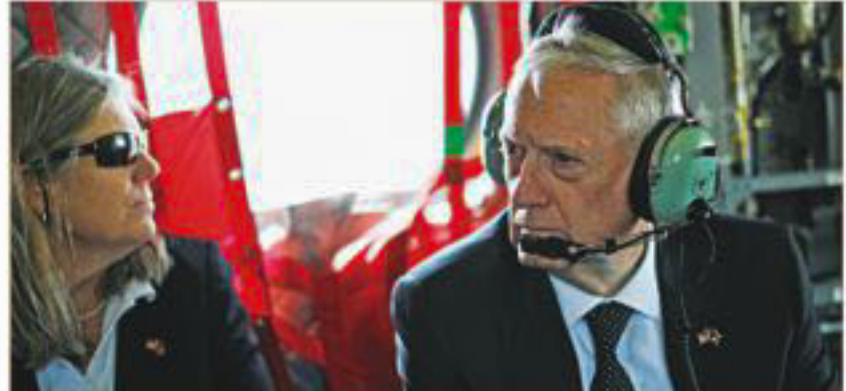
Afghan defence chief quits over deadly Taliban attack

REUTERS, Kabul

Afghanistan's defence minister and army chief of staff resigned yesterday after the deadliest ever Taliban attack on a military base, threatening to overshadow a visit by US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis as Washington looks to craft a new strategy for the country.

Mattis was expected to meet Afghan officials and US commanders who are pushing for more troops. But his arrival in Kabul came amid the fall-out from Friday's Taliban assault on a base in the north of the country in which more than 140 Afghan soldiers were killed.

Defence Minister Abdullah Habibi and Army Chief of Staff Qadam Shah Shahim stepped down with immediate effect, the office of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced in a post on its Twitter account.



Shah Hussain Murtazawi, acting spokesman for Ghani, told Reuters the resignations were because of Friday's attack on a major army base in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Ghani's office also announced that he had replaced the commanders of four army corps in response to the attack, and defence officials said as many as eight army personnel had been arrested.

The attack underlines the scale of the challenge facing the Western-backed government and its international partners more than 15 years after the United States invaded the country.

Habibi had come under intense pressure from Afghan lawmakers following an Islamic State attack on a Kabul military hospital in March. At a news conference yesterday, Habibi and Shahim insisted their resignations were voluntary.

## EUROPE'S MIGRANT CRISIS 15 drown as boat sinks off Greece

REUTERS, Athens

At least 15 people, including a child, drowned when an inflatable boat carrying refugees and migrants sank off Greece's Lesbos island, officials said yesterday.

Eight bodies were recovered in Greek territory and another seven in Turkish waters, a Greek coastguard official said. The boat is believed to have set sail from Turkey late on Sunday.

Citing survivors, the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR said 25 people were on board. Two survivors, one of whom is pregnant, were from Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the agency said.

Though fewer than 10 nautical miles separate Lesbos from Turkish shores, hundreds of people have drowned trying to make the crossing since the refugee crisis began in 2015.

In that year, Lesbos was the main gateway into the European Union for nearly a million Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans.

**CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY**

## Lawyer files complaint against Duterte at ICC

REUTERS, The Hague

A Philippines lawyer filed a complaint at the International Criminal Court (ICC) against President Rodrigo Duterte and senior officials yesterday, accusing them of crimes against humanity in a nationwide anti-drugs crackdown.

Attorney Jude Sabio said in the 77-page complaint that Duterte "repeatedly, unchangingly and continuously" committed crimes against humanity and that under him, killing drug suspects and other criminals has become "best practice".

Sabio is the lawyer for Edgar Matobato, a man who has testified in the Philippines Senate that he was part of a hit squad that operated on Duterte's orders.

It is the first publicly known communication to the ICC against Duterte and is based on the testimony of Matobato and retired policeman Arturo Lascanas, statements from rights groups and media reports, including a Reuters series on the killings.

The complaint alleges that Duterte and at least 11 senior government officials are liable for murder and calls for an investigation, arrest warrants and a trial. Lawmakers found no proof of Matobato's Senate testimony, which the president's aides have dismissed as fabrication.

Almost 9,000 people have been killed since Duterte took office last summer. Police claim a third of those killings were in self-defence during legitimate police operations. Rights groups say many of the remaining two-thirds were committed by vigilantes cooperating with the police.



## NEWSIN brief

### Denmark: Russia hacked defence ministry emails

AFP, Stockholm

Denmark yesterday denounced Moscow's "aggressive" behaviour after a report accused Russian hackers of infiltrating the defence ministry's email accounts. "This is part of a continuing war from the Russian side in this field where we are seeing a very aggressive Russia," Defence Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen told Danish news agency Ritzau.

### US-backed forces enter jihadist-held Syria town

AFP, Beirut

A US-backed alliance of Arab-Kurdish forces entered the key jihadist-held town of Tabqa yesterday as they pursued their campaign against the Islamic State group in northern Syria. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have set their sights on Tabqa and the adjacent dam as part of their broader offensive for the city of Raqa, the Syrian heart of the jihadists' self-styled "caliphate" since 2014.

### IS ambush kills 10 Iraqi forces

AFP, Habaniyah

Islamic State group fighters disguised as soldiers ambushed a government convoy in a remote desert region of western Iraq Sunday, killing 10 members of the security forces, commanders said. "Daesh (IS) members armed with assault rifles and rocket launchers attacked civilian and military vehicles carrying soldiers near Rutba," an army lieutenant colonel said.