

MOSCOW CITY ELECTION

Putin allies suffer loss after protests

AFP, Moscow

Pro-Kremlin candidates suffered major losses in a Moscow city election, results showed yesterday, following a police crackdown on a wave of anti-government protests over the summer.

But President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov played down the losses, pointing to other local and regional elections across Russia on Sunday in which the ruling party was "very successful".

Demonstrations broke out in the capital after top opposition figures were barred from standing in the city vote, but they widened in scope after a harsh response from authorities.

Kremlin-backed candidates previously held 38 of the Moscow assembly's 45 seats, but after voting that was down to 25.

Opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who called the first summer protests after his allies were kept off the ballot paper, put the losses down to his "Smart Voting" plan.

The campaign called on Muscovites to back the politician, most likely to beat a pro-Kremlin candidate, whatever their affiliation.

The beneficiaries were the Communist Party -- which took 13 seats, up from five -- as well as the liberal Yabloko party and the left-leaning Just Russia, which each won three.

The shake-up in the city parliament comes amid a stagnating economy, declining living standards and a fall in President Vladimir Putin's approval ratings.

"We fought for this together. Thanks to everyone for their contribution," Navalny said on Twitter following the Moscow results.



Palestinian protesters burn tires during a demonstration near the Jewish settlement of Beit El in the occupied West Bank yesterday, following the reported death of Bassam al-Sayeh in an Israeli prison. Sayeh, 47, from the northern West Bank city of Nablus was arrested by Israeli forces in October 2015.

PHOTO: AFP

WHO REPORT

Suicide kills 1 person every 40 seconds

REUTERS, London

Across the world, one person takes their own life every 40 seconds, and more people die by suicide every year than in war, the World Health Organization said yesterday.

Hanging, poisoning and shooting are the most common suicide methods, the WHO said as it urged governments to adopt suicide prevention plans to help people cope with stress and to reduce access to suicide means.

"Suicide is a global public health issue. All ages, sexes and regions of the world are affected (and) each loss is one too many," the WHO's report said. Suicide was the second leading cause of death among young people aged between 15 and 29, after road injury, and among teenage girls aged 15 to 19 it was the second biggest killer after maternal conditions. In teenage boys, suicide ranked third behind road injury and interpersonal violence.

Overall, close to 800,000 people die by suicide every year - more than are killed by malaria or breast cancer, or by war or homicide, the WHO said.

Global rates have fallen in recent years - with a 9.8% decrease between 2010 and 2016 - but declines were patchy. In the WHO's Americas region, for example, rates rose by 6% in between 2010 and 2016.

The report also found that nearly three times as many men as women die by suicide in wealthy countries, in contrast to low- and middle-income countries, where the rates are more equal.

"Suicides are preventable," said the WHO's director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "We call on all countries to incorporate proven suicide prevention strategies into national health and education programmes."

The WHO said restricting access to pesticides was one of the most effective ways of reducing suicide numbers swiftly.

UN rights chief concerned over India actions in J&K

Says Assam NRC list causes great uncertainty

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief yesterday voiced alarm over the situation in Kashmir, following India's decision to revoke the autonomous status of the Muslim-majority region last month.

"I am deeply concerned about the impact of recent actions by the government of India on the human rights of Kashmiris," Michelle Bachelet said in her opening statement to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

She pointed among other things to "restrictions on internet communications and peaceful assembly, and the detention of local political leaders and activists."

India imposed a military clampdown on Kashmir from August 5 to prevent unrest as New Delhi revoked the disputed region's autonomy, with mobile phone networks and the internet still cut off in all but a few pockets.

Bachelet said she had urged both India

and Pakistan to ensure that rights in the region are respected and protected.

But she said she had "appealed particularly to India to ease the current lockdowns or curfews, to ensure people's access to basic services, and that all due process rights are respected for those who have been detained."

"It is important that the people of Kashmir are consulted and engaged in any decision-making processes that have an impact on their future," she said.

Bachelet also voiced concern yesterday over India's controversial citizenship register in Assam state, which critics fear is a cover for the ruling Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party to expel Muslims.

"I appeal to the government to ensure due process during the appeals process, prevent deportation or detention, and ensure people are protected from statelessness," she said.



China slams US Xinjiang remarks as 'lies'

China yesterday lashed out at the United States after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called Beijing's treatment of the country's ethnic Uighur minority among "the worst stains on the world". Speaking at Kansas State University last week, Pompeo said Washington would use this month's UN General Assembly to rally support for the Uighurs, a mostly Muslim minority that has seen mass incarceration under the Chinese government. "The lies of American politicians can't trick people around the world and will only further expose the purpose of their hidden political motives," said Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying. "We express our strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition to these US officials who disregard the facts..." she told reporters in Beijing.

India tries to reconnect with lost lunar lander



India has located the lander from its Chandrayaan-2 mission to soft land a rover on the moon but has not yet been able to establish communication, India's space agency said. The historic mission appeared to end in failure on Saturday after scientists lost contact with the Vikram lander moments before touching down on the lunar surface. Indian Space and Research Organisation (ISRO) spokesperson Vivek Singh said that cameras from the Chandrayaan-2 orbiter had taken a thermal image of the lander and efforts were underway to establish a signal. The level of damage to the lander is unclear.

1,400 deaths linked to French heat waves

A pair of heat waves in France have been linked to the deaths of 1,435 people this summer by the country's health ministry. Two bouts of record-setting heat hit France and other parts of Europe from June 24 to July 7, and July 21 to July 27. The French Health Ministry said in a news release that the death rate during the two heat waves was 9.1% percent higher than usual. France and much of Europe saw record-breaking temperatures this summer. France recorded its highest-ever recorded temperature -- 45.9 degrees Celsius -- on June 28 in the southern town of Gallargues-le-Montueux, according to the French national weather service. Experts worry heat waves such like these, driven by rising temperatures caused by greenhouse gas emissions, could become the new normal for Europe.

SOURCE: CNN, AFP

HK tells US to stay out

Students form human chains in support of anti-govt protesters; top activist on way to US, Germany

AP, Hong Kong

Thousands of students yesterday formed human chains outside schools across Hong Kong to show solidarity to push for democratic reforms after violent weekend clashes in the semiautonomous Chinese territory.

The silent protest comes as the Hong Kong government condemned the "illegal behavior of radical protesters" and warned the US to stay out of its affairs.

Thousands of demonstrators held a peaceful march Sunday to the US Consulate to seek Washington's support, but violence erupted later in the day in a business and retail district as protesters vandalized subway stations, set fires and blocked traffic, prompting police to fire tear gas.

Hong Kong's government agreed last week to withdraw an extradition bill that sparked a summer of protests, but demonstrators want other demands to be met, including

direct elections of city leaders and an independent inquiry into police actions.

Protesters in their Sunday march appealed to President Donald Trump to "stand with Hong Kong" and ensure Congress pass a bill that proposes



economic sanctions and penalties on Hong Kong and China officials who are found to be suppressing democracy and human rights in the city.

Hong Kong's government expressed regret over the US bill, known as the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. It said in a statement yesterday that "foreign legislatures should not interfere in any form in the

internal affairs" of Hong Kong.

The government said it was "very much in Hong Kong's own interest to maintain our autonomy to safeguard our interests and advantages under the 'one country, two systems' principle" after the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Separately, well-known Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong was released yesterday, a day after he was detained at the airport following an oversight in his bail certificate.

A court said Wong's overseas trips had been approved earlier and his detention was due to mistakes in dates in his bail certificate.

Wong, who visited Taiwan last week, said he will proceed with trips to Germany and the US to raise global awareness about Hong Kong's fight for democratic reforms.

Germany's foreign minister welcomed Wong's release and called it "a good signal."



A police officer inspects a fallen utility pole downed by winds caused by Typhoon Faxai in Kamakura, Kanagawa prefecture yesterday. The powerful typhoon that battered Tokyo overnight with ferocious winds killed two people, police said, as halted trains caused commuter chaos and more than 100 flights were cancelled.

PHOTO: AFP

'Time is of the essence' in Iran co-operation: IAEA

AFP, Vienna

The acting head of the UN nuclear watchdog yesterday called on Iran to "respond promptly" to the agency's questions regarding Tehran's nuclear programme.

Cornel Feruta was addressing the quarterly board meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) a day after meeting high-level Iranian officials in Tehran.

He said that in his meetings he "stressed the need for Iran to respond promptly to Agency questions related to the completeness of Iran's safeguards declarations", adding: "Time is of the essence."

Earlier yesterday, the IAEA confirmed that Iran was installing advanced centrifuges, a move that puts further pressure on the troubled 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

The IAEA's latest statements come a day after Tehran hit out at European powers,

saying they had left Iran little option but to scale back its commitments under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

In its statement, the IAEA added that the centrifuges had been installed at Iran's Natanz facility and all of them "had been prepared for testing with UF6 (uranium hexafluoride), although none of them were being tested with UF6 on 7 and 8 September 2019".

Iran has also informed the IAEA that it will take steps to accommodate "a cascade of 164 IR-4 centrifuges and a cascade of 164 IR-2m centrifuges".

Under the JCPOA Iran is only meant to enrich uranium using the less advanced IR-1 centrifuge model. Iran has said that notwithstanding its reduction of commitments under the JCPOA, it will continue to allow access to IAEA inspectors who monitor its nuclear programme.



Nigeria to repatriate 600 citizens from S Africa

AFP, Abuja

Nigeria will repatriate about 600 citizens from South Africa this week following a wave of xenophobic violence which sparked sharp exchanges between the two countries, a Nigerian diplomat said yesterday.

"They are about 600 now" to be flown back, Godwin Adamu, Nigerian Consul General in Johannesburg, told AFP.

A first flight will carry 320 Nigerians, he said, adding: "We will have another one immediately after that."

Johannesburg and surrounding areas were rocked by a series of deadly attacks on foreigners last week, including many directed against Nigerian-owned businesses and properties.

At least 10 people were killed in the violence and hundreds of shops destroyed while more than 420 people were arrested.

More than 100,000 Nigerians are estimated to live in South Africa, Adamu said.

Foreign workers in South Africa -- the continent's second largest economy after Nigeria -- are often victims of anti-

immigrant sentiment in a nation where almost one in three people are unemployed.

The violence prompted reprisal attacks against South African firms in Nigeria and the temporary closing of South Africa's diplomatic missions in Lagos and Abuja.

Nigeria last week summoned the South African ambassador to condemn the violence while sending an envoy to meet President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The envoy returned to Nigeria over the weekend, the presidency said.

After a week of hardening rhetoric against South Africa, Nigeria pledged to "work as brothers" with Pretoria on Thursday.

"Nigeria does not seek an escalation of the ongoing situation," a senior aide to President Muhammadu Buhari, told reporters.

South Africa is a major destination for economic migrants from neighbouring Lesotho, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. But others come from South Asia and Nigeria looking for work in the continent's second-largest economy.

XENOPHOBIC VIOLENCE