



**Conservative mayor Ghalibaf withdraws from Iran election**

## INDIA APPEALS TO UN COURT TO HALT EXECUTION OF 'SPY'



**BERLIN:** German Chancellor Angela Merkel welcomes French President Emmanuel Macron for talks on strengthening the EU, a day after the new French president took office at the chancellery in Berlin. —AFP

# PHILIPPE APPOINTED AS NEW FRENCH PM

## MACRON APPOINTS CENTRE-RIGHT PM TO WIDEN APPEAL

**PARIS:** New French President Emmanuel Macron named centre-right lawmaker Edouard Philippe as prime minister yesterday in a further effort to splinter the country's traditional parties and redraw the political map. Philippe, a little known 46-year-old MP and mayor of the northern port of Le Havre, comes from the moderate wing of the rightwing Republicans party and is seen as a pragmatist.

His appointment was seen as a strategic move by 39-year-old Macron, who is trying to woo modernizers of all stripes to his new centrist party, the *Republique en Marche* (Republic on the Move, REM). France's fervently pro-European new president who travelled to Berlin later to meet German Chancellor Angela Merkel has already won over dozens of moderate Socialist MPs.

Former investment banker Macron, who trounced far-right leader Marine Le Pen in the May 7 presidential run-off, aims to take votes from both the Republicans and Socialists in next month's crucial parliamentary election. Philippe has been presented as his Trojan horse on the right of the spectrum. Taking over from outgoing prime minister Bernard Cazeneuve during a short ceremony, Philippe

described himself as "a man of the right" who was driven by "the greater good".

### Break the right

Like Macron, Philippe is a product of France's elite ENA college who worked for a while in the private sector and has little truck with the country's fraying left-right divide. Relatively unknown outside his northern fiefdom, he has never served in national government. After campaigning for Socialist prime minister Michel Rocard as a youth, he switched to the right, becoming a close ally of centre-right former prime minister Alain Juppe.

Mayor of his hometown of Le Havre, the German-speaking father of three, who writes crime novels in his spare time, was elected to parliament in 2012. Juppe yesterday praised him as "a very talented man". His appointment as premier is a blow to the Republicans, who have been trying to regroup after the presidential vote and prevent defections to Macron's camp.

### Political transformation

Republicans secretary-general Bernard Accoyer said there were no immediate plans

to expel Philippe from the party but that he would have to "clear up the ambiguity" about his loyalties. Some in the party have argued in favor of an alliance with Macron. Around 20 MPs on Monday issued a statement urging the Republicans and centre-right UDI to "accept his outstretched hand", saying the right needed to "take the full measure of the political transformation taking place before their eyes".

Macron needs a majority to push through his ambitious plans to loosen France's strict labor laws, boost entrepreneurship and reduce class sizes in tough neighborhoods. But his year-old party faces a battle for seats, with the Republicans, Le Pen's National Front, the radical left and other losers of the presidential election all plotting revenge. Leftist firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon said that Philippe's appointment as premier showed the right had been "annexed" by the tentacular Macron.

### No arm-wrestling

At his inauguration on Sunday, Macron said he aimed to restore France's shattered self-confidence and help rebuild the flagging European Union. The talks with Merkel are

likely to focus on how Europe's power couple can drive reforms of the bloc, with Macron pushing for deeper EU ties to help it overcome the imminent departure of Britain. Later this month, he will also meet Donald Trump, when the US president-believed to have preferred Le Pen to Macron-visits Brussels for a NATO summit.

Merkel has hailed Macron's win as a blow for the eurozone to have its own budget have received a cool response from Germany, which fears it would be forced to pay the lion's share. "Many countries including France would need to organize a referendum. It's not realistic," German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble told *Le Figaro* newspaper. French MEP Sylvie Goulard, an ally of Macron who has close ties to Berlin, predicted he would avoid causing any tensions with Germany.

"There will be no arm-wrestling," she said. Breathing new life into the EU is just one of a host of challenges Macron faces. On the home front, he will have to work quickly to tackle stubbornly high unemployment, combat the jihadist threat and heal divisions exposed by an often vicious election campaign.—AFP



**PARIS:** Newly appointed French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe delivers a speech after the handover ceremony with outgoing Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve, in Paris, France. — AP



**NORTH KOREA:** This picture released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) shows North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un inspecting a ground-to-ground medium long-range strategic ballistic rocket Hwasong-12 at an undisclosed location. — AFP

# NORTH KOREA: NEW LONG-RANGE MISSILE CAN CARRY HEAVY NUKE

**SEOUL:** North Korea yesterday boasted of a successful weekend launch of a new type of "medium long-range" ballistic rocket that can carry a heavy nuclear warhead. Outsiders also saw a significant technological jump, with the test-fire apparently flying higher and for a longer time period than any other such previous missile. Amid condemnation in Seoul, Tokyo, Washington and Moscow, a jubilant North Korean leader Kim Jong Un promised more nuclear and missile tests and warned that his country's weapons could strike the US mainland and Pacific holdings.

North Korean propaganda must be considered with wariness - Pyongyang has threatened for decades to reduce Seoul to a "sea of fire," for instance - but Monday's claim, if confirmed, would mark another big advance toward the North's goal of fielding a nuclear-tipped missile capable of reaching the US mainland. Some experts, including officials in Tokyo, estimate that Sunday's launch successfully tested a new type of missile, potentially the longest in North Korea's arsenal.

The test is also an immediate challenge to South

Korea's new president, Moon Jae-in, a liberal elected last week who expressed a desire to reach out to North Korea. Pyongyang's aggressive push to boost its weapons program also makes it one of the Trump administration's most urgent foreign policy worries, though Washington has struggled to settle on a policy. North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency called the missile a "new ground-to-ground medium long-range strategic ballistic rocket," and said the "Hwasong-12" was "capable of carrying a large, heavy nuclear warhead."

Kim witnessed the test and "hugged officials in the field of rocket research, saying that they worked hard to achieve a great thing," according to KCNA. The rocket, "newly designed in a Korean-style," flew 787 kilometers and reached a maximum altitude of 2,111 kilometers, the North said, and "verified the homing feature of the warhead under the worst re-entry situation and accurate performance of detonation system."

South Korea's Defense Ministry said more analysis is needed to verify the North's claim on the rocket's technological features. Spokesman Moon Sang Gyun

said it's still unlikely that North Korea has re-entry technology, which would return a warhead safely back into the atmosphere. Japanese officials said Sunday that the missile flew for half an hour and reached an unusually high altitude before landing in the Sea of Japan.

Several South Korean analysts, including Lee Illwoo, a Seoul-based commentator on military issues, said the missile flew higher and for a longer period than any other the North has ever test-fired. North Korea has also launched satellites into orbit on long-range rockets that share some of the same technology as missiles. North Korea is not thought to be able yet to make a nuclear warhead small enough to mount on a long-range missile, though some outside analysts think it can arm shorter-range missiles with warheads.

Each new nuclear and longer-range missile test is part of the North's attempt to build a nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile. Kim said North Korea would stage more nuclear and missile tests in order to perfect nuclear bombs needed to deal with US "nuclear blackmail." —AP