

World News Roundup

Europe

DSK firm under suspicion: French investigators have opened a preliminary probe into a bankrupt investment company partly run by the former head of the International Monetary Fund, **Dominique Strauss-Kahn**, a judicial source said on Friday.

The investigation was opened on July 28 after a former shareholder in the now-defunct Luxembourg-based firm, LSK, lodged a formal complaint.

Strauss-Kahn, once tipped as a future French president, was forced to resign from his role as head of the IMF in 2011 after being accused of sexual



Strauss-Kahn

assault by a New York hotel maid.

Those criminal charges were dropped in 2012 and the case was settled in a civil suit.

He was also dragged through French courts earlier this year, accused of being at the centre of a prostitution ring, but was found not guilty.

The probe into Strauss-Kahn's business dealings in Luxembourg focuses on a former shareholder, Jean-Francois Ott, who pumped 500,000 euros (\$570,000) into the company.

Ott claims he was given a misleading impression of the firm's financial situation when he made the cash injection. (AFP)

German parliament OKs law:

German telecom companies will be obliged to keep telephone and Internet data for up to 10 weeks to help fight crime under a new law passed by parliament on Friday in Berlin after a long political wrangle over possible infringements of individuals' rights.

Under the data retention law, companies will be required to keep data on the timing and duration of telephone calls, as well as online traffic through IP addresses. Location data from mobile phones may only be stored for four weeks.

Telecom and Internet companies will be forbidden from storing the content of communications, while email traffic is excluded from the new law. Data retention centres will also be located in Germany, Justice Minister Heiko Maas told parliament.

Privacy is a particularly sensitive issue in Germany because of the surveillance by the Gestapo in the Nazi era and by communist East Germany's Stasi secret police.

Disclosures by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden about widespread espionage in Germany by the United States caused outrage in Germany.

The debate over the new law set Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives (CDU) at loggerheads with her Social Democrat (SPD) junior coalition partner, while opposition parties and critics argued the law violated human rights and would put millions of citizens under general suspicion.

Last year, the European Union's highest court overthrew a rule that required telecoms companies to store the communications data of EU citizens for up to two years on the grounds it infringed human rights. (RTRS)

PM ready to fight EU: Italy's Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said Saturday that Europe was not "a teacher with a red pen" which could send back the country's 2016 budget like homework to be corrected.

"We have to stop considering Europe the teacher with the red and blue pen," he said, after asserting Friday that Rome would resubmit the budget "as is", should it be rejected by the European Commission.

Renzi said he did not think problems would be found with the tax-cutting budget because "we respect the rules, even those we think are wrong", and in any case Europe "is not the wicked stepmother".

The centre-left government on Thursday approved an expansionary budget designed to ensure a fledgling economic recovery takes wing in 2016 at the cost of slowing the reduction of the country's massive 2.2-trillion-euro debt.

Despite the slippage, Renzi insisted debt would fall and Italy would respect the European Union's rules.

But in a radio interview on Friday he warned the package would not be changed to please the Commission, the EU's executive arm. (AFP)

Breivik sues Norwegian state:

Mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik will take the Norwegian state to court in March over his prison conditions, which he likens to "torture", Norwegian legal sources said Friday.

Breivik, who killed 77 people in a bombing and shooting rampage in July 2011 because he was opposed to Norway's multiculturalism, has complained repeatedly about being held in isolation.

"We believe that his rights are being violated. He is isolated from the other inmates, from other people, and only has contact with health care workers and guards," Breivik's lawyer Oystein Storvik told AFP.

The case will be heard by the Oslo district court between March 15 and 18, the court said. It was not immediately known whether Breivik will appear before the court.

The right-wing extremist, 36, has repeatedly threatened to go on a hunger strike if his conditions don't improve, most recently in a letter sent to several Norwegian media in September, but he has never carried through on his threat. (AFP)

Greece adopts reforms:

Greece's parliament on Friday narrowly adopted further reforms demanded by the country's international creditors in return for further bailout funds.



In this Oct 15 photo the facade of Swiss federal palace 'Bundeshaus' is illuminated on the occasion of the light event 'Rendez vous Bundesplatz', in Bern, Switzerland. The light show runs from Oct 16 to Nov 29, 2015. (AP)

France

'High taxes forcing people to flee'

More young say 'au revoir' to homeland

PARIS, Oct 17, (AFP): Jessica caught the travel bug and never came back, Frederic wanted a bigger market for his start-up and Nicolas was just tired of the vexing daily grind in France that was eating away at his joie de vivre.

So they left to Australia, New York or Canada, becoming part of the growing wave of young French citizens seeking a future elsewhere.

The official statistics agency INSEE said this week that between 2006 and 2013, the number of French emigrating jumped from 140,000 a year to 200,000, 80 percent of them between 18 and 29 years old.

In a globalised world the French have been slow to jump on the expat train that has long seen thousands of young Australians or Brits fit across continents and put down roots abroad.

Openness

But "a greater openness to the world, better language skills and more international study options" have lured more French to explore the globe, said Jean-Christophe Dumont, head of international migration at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

France's stagnating economy, high taxes and soaring unemployment have also been cited as factors.

"It is curiosity and the desire to explore that pushed me to leave," said Jessica Viven-Wilkisch, 31, who studied in Ireland and Germany before settling in Australia as a law professor where she met her husband.

She tried to return to France in 2008 but at the peak of the financial crisis there were no jobs, and now she does not plan on leaving Australia with its "quality of life (and) give-it-a-go attitude".

The conservative opposition has seized on the rising number of departures as proof that Socialist government policies, such as high taxes, are forcing people to flee.

A parliamentary inquiry launched by the centre-right party The Republicans last year sparked a furor just over its title, "The Exile of France's Lifeblood", leading the Socialists to accuse them of "French-bashing".

Nicolas Poirier, 32, a legal consultant, is an example of the opposition's concerns, running away from "stifling taxes" and "administrative hell".

"I only saw France as a country of constraints and irritation, and else-

where I saw joie de vivre and above all, freedom," added Poirier.

He said he adopted a "scorched-earth policy", selling everything and never looking back when he left for Montreal four years ago.

The parliamentary report found that there are at least two million French living abroad.

However Dumont said this is a relatively small diaspora, with 2.6 percent of the French population living abroad, compared to 4.6 percent for Germany and 6.7 percent for Britain.

Increase

He said that France was experiencing a similar increase in emigration to the United States, while departures have slowed from Germany and Britain in recent years.

France is expected to grow at just 1.1 percent in 2015, and unemployment is hovering at 10 percent, though Dumont said it was not in the same situation as Italy, Spain or Greece which has seen much higher levels of departures linked to the economic crisis.

"Instead, we are seeing a catch-up phenomenon compared to the history of French emigration which has always been very weak."

Frederic Montagnon, 38, an entrepreneur who has created several start-ups and now lives in New York, is one of those kicking back against the attitude that France is a sinking ship.

Montagnon says he moved to New York for a "personal adventure" and to access a much bigger market. "If you don't have access to a wider area when you develop technology you lose out to your competitors who do," he said.

However, he keeps his technical teams in France and remains very positive about his homeland, saying he is one of a large community of French entrepreneurs in New York taking advantage of globalisation to grow their businesses.

And Montagnon maintains it is "really much easier to start a company in France" than in New York, and that he pays much higher taxes in the Big Apple.

"The cost of living here is much higher. Here nothing is free — education, healthcare — and it is very expensive," he told AFP.

He sees the growing French diaspora as a positive thing.

"Having a presence elsewhere, that is when you can really talk about an influential culture," he said.

tion as a whole, even though some of their members had approved specific articles.

The vote was only narrowly carried by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras's left-wing Syriza party and its coalition partner, the nationalist Independent Greeks (ANEL), after a stormy debate.

Conservative leader Vangelis Meimarakis accused the government of clobbering the country with taxes that he said would prolong a recession.

Tsipras retorted that the reforms were "not new". (AFP)

Pope to meet poor in Africa:

Pope Francis will tour a Kenyan slum, meet with Muslims and evangelical Christians and visit a refugee camp in the conflict-torn Central African Republic during his first trip to Africa next month, the Vatican said Saturday.

Francis will also pay tribute to Uganda's martyrs during the three-day trip Nov 25-30 that will bring him face to face for the first time with the effects of Islamic extremism and Christian-Muslim violence on the continent.

The Vatican on Saturday unveiled the itinerary of the whirlwind trip that will pose security risks that have largely been absent from Francis' foreign trips to date.

Francis arrives first in Nairobi, where highlights include a tour of the Kibera slum and a meeting with representatives of Kenya's multi-faith community.

Kenya has been facing the threat of attacks from al-Shabab Islamic militants ever since it sent troops to fight Somali rebels in 2011. Al-Shabab, which is linked to al-Qaeda, has conducted major attacks in Kenya, including the 2013 attack on Nairobi's Westgate mall and an April attack on a university in Garissa that killed nearly 150 people, many of them Christians and non-Muslims. (AP)

Former Portugal PM freed:

Portuguese authorities on Friday said former socialist prime minister Jose Socrates, jailed on corruption, money laundering and tax charges last year, had been released from house arrest but may not leave the country.

"The house arrest has been replaced by a ban on unauthorised leaving of the country," the public prosecutor's office said, adding Socrates may also not contact fellow suspects under investigation.

Arrested on Nov 21 2014, Socrates, prime minister from 2005 to 2011, spent nine months in jail on remand before his release into house arrest early last month.

He was allowed out to vote in Portugal's Oct 4 general election, however, and has denied any wrongdoing.

Businessman and Socrates associate Carlos Santos Silva, accused of handling large sums of cash on behalf of Socrates, was also Friday released from house arrest. (AFP)



Police are busy at the site where independent candidate for the mayor of Cologne Henriette Reker was wounded in a stabbing during her election campaign, on Oct 17, in Cologne, Germany. (AP)

Cologne 'mayoral' candidate stabbed

BERLIN, Oct 17, (AP): A candidate to be mayor of Cologne was wounded in a stabbing as she campaigned on Saturday, a day before an election in the western German city.

Candidate Henriette Reker was wounded along with a member of her campaign team, aide Frederik Schorn told news agency dpa. He said he didn't know how seriously she was hurt.

The suspected attacker, a man apparently aged between 30 and 40, was arrested.

Police said the incident happened at a campaign stand set up by Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats at a market. They said that two people were seriously injured and three lightly in a scuffle.