VOA NEWS

November 7, 2018

VOA news. I'm Christopher Cruise reporting.

The first polls are closing at this hour in U.S. midterm elections where voters will decide who will lead Congress over the next two years.

All 435 seats in the House of Representatives are up for grabs and 35 of 100 Senate seats along with many state offices and varied issues.

Voter turnout has been reported to be high after a record number of early votes were cast in the past week.

President Trump is not on the ballot but many voters across the country see this election as a referendum on his first two years in office.

Party leaders are voicing confidence as they wait for results.

Associated Press correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi says her party will regain the House, confident even after ???feeling Hillary Clinton would win two years ago.

"This is different."

The electoral college doesn't matter today.

"The popular vote rules."

The key House races this year are in America's suburbs where more affluent voters have soured on the Trump presidency. But he is arguing his two years have helped everyone.

"If the radical Democrats take power they will take a wrecking ball to our economy and our future."

He is watching returns and making calls at the White House today.

Facebook says it has blocked 115 pages tied to U.S. election meddling.

Associated Press correspondent Warren Levinson reports.

Facebook says it shut down 30 Facebook accounts and 85 Instagram accounts for what it described as "coordinated inauthentic behavior" linked to foreign groups attempting to interfere in U.S. elections. It says it acted on a tip from law enforcement.

Facebook reports nearly all the suspicious Facebook pages were in Russian or French while the Instagram posts were mostly in English and focused on celebrities or political debate. It gave no further details.

Last month, it says it took down 82 accounts traced back to Iran. In August, it blocked 652 connected to Iran and Russia.

This is VOA news.

Russia is facing another round of U.S. sanctions over the poisoning of an ex-Russian spy and his daughter in Britain.

The Trump administration informed Congress Tuesday that Russia failed to prove it is abiding by a global treaty outlawing biological and chemical weapons.

A federal jury in New York City has found an immigrant from Bangladesh guilty of terrorism for setting off a pipe bomb in the New York City subway system last year.

Twenty-eight-year-old Akayed Ullah could be sentenced to spend the rest of his life in federal prison.

The December 11 explosion slightly injured three people.

French security agents say they have arrested six people and charged them with plotting to attack French President Emmanuel Macron.

Officials did not say if the six were working together or separately.

A U.N. expert on Myanmar urged Bangladesh Tuesday to hold off on repatriating Rohingya refugees to Myanmar's Rakhine state this month to avoid persecution.

Nearly three-quarters of a million of Myanmar's Rohingya fled Rakhine state in August, 2017 after a military crackdown.

Cameroon's President Paul Biya, the second longest serving African president, has been inaugurated for another seven-year term.

Correspondent Moki Edwin Kindzeka reports from the capital, Yaoundé.

Biya has been in power in Cameroon for over four decades - serving seven years as prime minister and 36 as president.

In 2008, he removed term limits from the constitution, allowing him to serve indefinitely. When his new term is finished, he will be 93 years old.

Biya is now the second longest serving African president.

In his inauguration speech, he promised to defeat terrorism but he made no mention of 82 people kidnapped Monday in Cameroon's restive Anglophone region.

The Taliban has confirmed it will attend a multilateral meeting hosted by Russia to discuss Afghanistan.

But a spokesman for the terrorist group clarified Tuesday that its delegates will not engage in any peace and reconciliation talks at the meeting.

Zabihullah Mujahid said a high-ranking delegation from the Taliban's Qatar-based office will travel to the Russian capital to "partake" in the Friday meeting.

Russia has invited 12 nations and the Taliban to the meeting. The U.S. and the Afghan government have both turned down the invitation.

The top story of this hour, voters in the United States cast ballots in record numbers Tuesday, the non-presidential midterm election widely seen as a referendum on the first two years of the Trump presidency.

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