VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. Via remote, I'm Diane Roberts.

Russian President Vladimir Putin bestowed a $1.5 billion loan on Belarus Monday after its embattled leader Alexander Lukashenko flew to entreat his patron for more support. A day after more than 100,000 protests took to the streets of Minsk for the fifth straight weekend to demand his removal, Lukashenko flew to the Black Sea resort of Sochi to ask Putin for help.

In addition to the loan, the Russian president signaled support in other ways for the man who has led Russia's closest ally for 26 years, saying defense cooperation would continue between the two countries.

Putin also backed plans Lukashenko has previously announced for constitutional reform, which the opposition has dismissed as a stunt to cling to power after a election it says was rigged.

Partial results Monday showed the ruling United Russia party secured landslide wins at weekend regional elections but lost its majority in a Siberian city council contested by supporters of stricken Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Supporters of the opposition politician made rare gains and won seats in some cities.

The German government says specialist labs in France and Sweden have now confirmed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was poisoned with a Soviet-era nerve agent Novichok. AP correspondent Zaria Shaklee reports.

"... the substance in his samples. German government spokesman Steffen Seibert said that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has also received samples and is taking steps to have those tested at its reference laboratories.

Navalny fell ill on a Russian domestic flight on the 20th of August and was transferred to Germany two days later for specialist treatment in hospital.

I'm Zaria Shaklee.

From Washington, this is VOA news.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Monday Israel should not protect a former Mexican official believed to be residing there. He added Israel had been informed of an arrest warrant against the individual.

Tomas Zeron is an official in the previous administration who is wanted for tampering with evidence and torture in the case of 43 missing students, among other crimes. López Obrador said Zeron was not (quote) "politically persecuted." (end quote)

The Lebanese military killed a wanted militant leader during a raid in the country's north that also left four of its troops dead, the army said Monday.

The raid near the northern town of Minyeh occurred late Sunday and targeted the house of one of Lebanon's most-wanted extremists, Khaled Tellawi, who was blamed for an attack last month that killed three men in a northern village. The Lebanese national was a member of an extremist group that had links to the Islamic State group.

Authorities blamed Tellawi and his aides for a shooting last month in a predominantly Christian village in north Lebanon that left three men dead.

Monday, the European Union ramped up pressure on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to step back from breaking the Brexit divorce treaty, delaying a key decision on London's euro clearing just as he faces a rebellion in the British parliament.

The European Union says Johnson's plan would wreck trade talks and propel the United Kingdom towards a messy Brexit while former British leaders have warned that breaking the law is a step too far that will tarnish the country's image.

The House of Commons is due to vote on moving the Internal Market Bill, which the EU has demanded London scrap by the end of the month to its next amendment stage after a debate that Johnson will introduce.

TikTok has chosen Oracle over Microsoft as its partner in the United States that could help keep the popular video-sharing app running in the U.S., according to a source familiar with the deal. AP correspondent Julie Walker reports.

The Trump administration has threatened to ban TikTok by September 20 and ordered its parent company ByteDance to sell its U.S. business, claiming national security risks and spying concerns because it's Chinese-owned.

TikTok denied the charge and sued the Trump administration. At the same time it started discussions with possible U.S. partners.

Microsoft said Sunday its bid was rejected. No word yet from Oracle or TikTok.

I'm Julie Walker.

Tropical Storm Sally is poised to turn into a hurricane Monday and send a life-threatening storm surge along the northern Gulf of Mexico.

Sally is expected to reach shore by early Tuesday, bringing hurricane conditions to a region stretching from Louisiana to Mississippi. Tropical storm conditions were expected in the region by Monday.

Forecasters say Sally could produce rain totals up to 24 inches by Monday.

Via remote, I'm Diane Roberts, VOA news.