

French President's Popularity Drops to 36 Percent



Paris, August 10 (RHC)-- French President Emmanuel Macron heads into the summer break faced with falling popularity ratings after tough debates in parliament over labor reform and a public ethics law, a standoff with the military and cuts to housing assistance.

A new YouGov poll published showed 36 percent of voters held a favourable view of the 39-year-old, a fall of seven points on the previous month and echoing the downward trend seen in other surveys.

Emmanuel Macron, France's youngest leader since Napoleon, was elected in May on a promise to usher in sweeping economic and social reforms to haul France out of its economic malaise. The main concern of voters was the same as before the election -- unemployment -- the YouGov survey showed.

On the jobs reform front, Macron's government scored a victory this week when it won the Senate's backing to deregulate the labor market that will now go back to company bosses and trade unions before being written into law. Parliament's lower house is also expected next week to approve a new public ethics bill, over-ruling Senate objections to a proposal scrapping a constituency fund for lawmakers. The bill is designed to clean up French politics.

But a reduction in housing aid, controversy over the timing of promised tax breaks for tenants, and allegations of financial scandal against members of his government that led to some early ministerial

resignations have tainted Macron's first months in the Elysee.

The resignation of his armed forces chief after a row between the two men over defense budget cuts was another early blow, and the standoff was seen by Macron's critics as evidence of an over-controlling nature.

With Macron and his prime minister both suffering declining popularity ratings in past weeks, the president issued a warning to his ministers at a cabinet meeting in July.

"Don't get caught up in the comfort of the documents written up for you by your civil servants. It might seem easy for you to be placed into their hands. But if you continue like this, in six months you will be nobodies," Macron said in a comment widely published by French media.

The Yougov poll showed a 14-point slide in backing for Macron among his party's supporters, although a huge 81 percent still said they held a favorable opinion of the president.

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