Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

By: TA | AP Insight

Could a veteran of France's traditional right be the answer to Marine Le Pen's surge?



Former French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin announced his candidacy for president on Friday, invoking Charles de Gaulle's legacy and pledging to strengthen France's international standing and defeat political extremism.

The 73-year-old, who served as prime minister under President Jacques Chirac, announced his plans at a news conference in Paris.

He condemned the country's direction under President Emmanuel Macron, whose second and final term ends next year.

He also described a potential victory by far-right leader Marine Le Pen next year as a grave threat to the nation.

He said France finds itself at a time of "social decay" and listed an accumulation of problems, including environmental backsliding and rising public debt.

"The coffers are empty," he said.

A veteran of France's traditional right, de Villepin has also appealed to voters on the left with his criticism of growing inequality and Israel's war in Gaza.

Internationally, he is probably best known for an eloquent 2003 speech at the United Nations in which he declared French opposition to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

In order to stand, de Villepin must still gather 500 sponsorship signatures from elected officials, as required by French law.

France will pick its next president at a time of tensions and protests

Protest marches have been drawing huge crowds for weeks in Paris and elsewhere across France as demonstrators demand higher wages and back the country's student protest movement.

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He denounced Macron as a "ghost president" whose failure to address the country's problems has strengthened Le Pen and hard-left leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

Polls have for months suggested that Le Pen is the front-runner and could possibly advance to the runoff on May 2 as the first-round vote leader, which would be a first for her.

She trailed Macron in the 2017 and 2022 first-round voting and then lost decisively to him in round two.

De Villepin warns against a Le Pen victory

De Villepin said he does not view Le Pen's National Rally and Mélenchon's France Unbowed as equal threats, insisting Le Pen's party carries a legacy of xenophobia, racism and antisemitism.

"Who can seriously believe that Marine Le Pen's planned election next May would unfold peacefully?" he asked.



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Detailing his priorities, De Villepin pledged to address France's public debt, which has climbed to a record, unsettling investors and emerging as a defining issue ahead of next year's presidential election.

It now stands at 119% of gross domestic product, leaving the country's strained public finances likely to dominate the campaign.

He also called for a new "night of August 4," referring to the historic abolition of feudal privileges during the French Revolution, with the goal of tackling modern privileges by scrutinizing tax breaks and social exemptions.

"The French people need to be convinced that it is not a case of the richest 1% on one side and the remaining 99%, who are always the ones being asked to make sacrifices, on the other," he said.

De Gaulle, who organized the French resistance movement during World War II, led the creation of France's current constitution in 1958.

De Villepin proposed to move away from the model of what he called the "hyper-president" embodied by Macron and to restore the head of state's role advocated by De Gaulle as "an arbiter, a guide for the country."