

Germany is at a crossroads now, says Merkel

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel highlighted her government's economic achievements in a speech to Parliament Tuesday, positioning herself as the leader who can cope with rapidly changing technology as she seeks election to a fourth term later this month.

Merkel, whose conservative Christian Democratic Party (CDP) is currently leading in polls ahead of the national election on Sept. 24, listed a strong economy, low unemployment, and the introduction of a mandatory minimum wage as some of her administration's achievements.

But she stressed that Germany is "at a crossroads now" especially in digital development and technological progress.

"We don't want Germany to end in the museum of technology," she told lawmakers, referring to the Berlin museum housing historical artifacts. The rest of the world "doesn't sleep" when it comes to digitalization, she warned.

Pitching herself as the one who can deal with future challenges, she promised that if re-elected as chancellor, she would invest more money into research so that Germany would not fall behind on technological development.

Turning her attention to international affairs, Merkel condemned North Korea's latest nuclear test as a "flagrant violation" of international conventions, but also said there can only be a "diplomatic and peaceful solution" of the crisis.

Merkel spoke by telephone Monday night with US President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in, expressing Germany's support for tougher sanctions on North Korea, according to her office.

Turning to the issue of migration, Merkel said a summit between Europe and several African nations will be held later in the year, aimed at finding solutions to stem the flow of refugees by better addressing the causes that force people to flee.

Her speech came two days after the only televised live debate between Merkel

and main challenger Martin Schulz of the center-left Social Democrats.

Merkel has been governing Germany in a coalition with the Social Democrats for the last four years. Both candidates have run lackluster campaigns, and Sunday's debate was widely criticized because the two were seen as not being aggressive enough.

During the debate, both candidates refused to rule out continuing their current coalition at the national level after the election.

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