

# I did not exonerate Donald Trump, says Mueller

The Special Counsel, however, says that they 'did not reach a determination as to whether the President committed a crime'

**REUTERS**  
WASHINGTON  
Former U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller on Wednesday said in dramatic U.S. congressional testimony he had not exonerated President Donald Trump of obstruction of justice and defended the integrity of his inquiry under repeated attacks by conservative Republican allies of the President.



**Straight talk:** Robert Mueller said his inquiry was conducted in "a fair and independent manner". •REUTERS

Mr. Mueller initially testified he would have sought to indict Mr. Trump were it not for a Justice Department policy against charging a sitting President. But hours later he corrected himself and said "we did not reach a determination as to whether the President committed a crime."

The former FBI director, who spent 22 months investigating what he concluded was Russian interference in a "sweeping and systematic fashion" in the 2016 U.S. election to help Mr. Trump and the President's conduct, appeared for more than three-and-a-half hours before the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee.

Mr. Mueller then appeared before the House Intelligence Committee for more questioning. Democrats control the House, while Mr. Trump's fellow Republicans control the Senate.

The Judiciary Committee's Democratic chairman, Jerrold Nadler, praised Mr. Mueller and said no one, including Mr. Trump, is "above the law." The Intelligence Committee's Democratic chairman, Adam Schiff, ac-

used Mr. Trump's 2016 campaign of "disloyalty to country". But Mr. Trump's Republican allies on the committees tried to paint Mr. Mueller's investigation as unfair to the President, with Louie Gohmert heatedly telling him "you perpetuated injustice" and conservative Congressman Guy Reschenthaler calling the manner in which the inquiry was conducted "un-American."

Mr. Mueller's 448-page re-

## 'A national embarrassment'

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
WASHINGTON  
President Donald Trump on Wednesday described Robert Mueller's testimony to Congress as an "embarrassment" to the nation, mocking his Democratic rivals for asking the former Special Counsel to appear on Capitol Hill.

"I would like to thank the Democrats for holding this morning's hearing," Mr. Trump tweeted. "Now, after

3 hours, Robert Mueller has to subject himself to #ShiftySchiff - an Embarrassment to our Country," he added, referring to the Democratic Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Adam Schiff.

Just before Trump's tweet, his spokeswoman Stephanie Grisham weighed in. "The last three hours have been an epic embarrassment for the Democrats," she said.

port, released in redacted form on April 18, did not reach a conclusion on whether Mr. Trump committed the crime of obstruction of justice in a series of actions aimed at impeding the inquiry, but did not exonerate him.

Democratic Representative Ted Lieu asked Mr. Mueller during the first hearing whether the reason he did not bring a criminal indictment against Mr. Trump

was the Justice Department's policy against bringing criminal charges against a sitting president. "That is correct," Mr. Mueller said.

But Mr. Mueller at the outset of the second hearing backed off that testimony. "I would like to go back to one thing that was said this morning by Mr. Lieu who said, and I quote, you didn't charge the president because of the OLC opinion." That is not the correct way to

say it. As we say in the report and as I said at the opening, we did not reach a determination as to whether the President committed a crime."

Mr. Trump has claimed that the Mueller inquiry resulted in the President's "complete and total exoneration." "Did you actually totally exonerate the President?" Mr. Nadler asked Mr. Mueller. "No," Mr. Mueller replied. Mr. Mueller, accused by Mr. Trump of heading a "witch hunt" and trying to orchestrate a "coup" against the Republican President, said his inquiry was conducted in "a fair and independent manner". Mr. Trump has accused Mr. Mueller of having conflicts of interest. Mr. Mueller noted that Justice Department ethics officials confirmed he had no such conflicts.

"Over the course of my career, I have seen a number of challenges to our democracy. The Russian government's effort to interfere with our election is among the most serious," Mr. Mueller said.

# China says it wants security & stability along India border

Ties with India improving, signals paper

**ATUL ANEJA**  
BEIJING

China's military on Wednesday signalled that ties with India were improving, but warned the U.S. that it should not test Beijing's one-China policy over Taiwan.



Chinese President Xi Jinping

A white paper titled 'China's National Defence in the New Era', released by the Chinese Defence Ministry, said Beijing was striving to promote security and stability along the India-China border. It has also created "favourable conditions" to peacefully resolve the Doklam military standoff - a reference to the military tensions between the two countries in the summer of 2017.

China has "taken effective measures to create favourable conditions for the peaceful resolution of the Donglang (Doklam) standoff", the paper said.

But on the U.S., with which China is already engaged in a trade war, the white paper has gone ballistic, specially regarding the status of Taiwan, over which Beijing asserts its de jure sovereignty.

Beijing has called Taiwan "the most important and sensitive issue in China-U.S. relations".

### 'We will fight'

Addressing a press conference after the paper's release, Defense Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said the threat of Taiwan separatism is growing. He warned that attempts by those seeking Taiwan's independence were futile. "If anyone dares to separate Taiwan from

China, the Chinese military will certainly fight, resolutely defending the country's sovereign unity and territorial integrity."

Tensions between China and the U.S. heightened earlier this month, after the State Department cleared \$2.2 billion worth weapons sales, including 108 General Dynamics Corp. M1A2T Abrams tanks and 250 Stinger missiles, apart from other weapons.

In turn, China has threatened to impose sanctions on U.S. companies engaged in arms trade with Taiwan.

The paper pointed out that the U.S. deployment of a missile defence system in South Korea had severely undermined the regional strategic balance.

China also stressed its resolve to counter supporters of separatism in Tibet as well as the Xinjiang region.

The paper accused the U.S. of adopting "unilateral policies", adding that Washington "has provoked and intensified competition among major countries, significantly increased its defence expenditure, pushed for additional capacity in nuclear, outer space, cyber and missile defence, and undermined global strategic stability".

## In peace push, Imran says he will meet the Taliban

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
WASHINGTON

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Tuesday he would meet with the Taliban after returning to his country, as part of efforts to end 18 years of war in Afghanistan.

Mr. Khan spoke in Washington on his first official trip to the U.S.

He said he had also spoken with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, and now, when he goes back, "I will meet the Taliban and I will

try my best to get them to talk to the Afghan government."

Speaking at the U.S. Institute for Peace, Mr. Khan said he had been contacted by the Taliban "a few months back", after his election win in July 2018, but did not take a meeting at that time because Kabul was not in favour of it.

The militants reached out to him "because I always maintained there was no military solution" to the war in Afghanistan, he said.

## Facebook fined \$5 bn for privacy violations

It has been asked to submit to new restrictions

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
WASHINGTON

U.S. regulators on Wednesday slapped a record \$5 billion fine on Facebook for privacy violations in a settlement requiring the world's biggest social network to "submit to new restrictions and a modified corporate structure."

Federal Trade Commission Chairman Joe Simons said: "Despite repeated pro-



promises to its billions of users worldwide that they could control how their personal information is shared, Facebook undermined consumers' choices."

"The magnitude of the \$5 billion penalty and sweeping conduct relief are unprece-

ented in the history of the FTC. The relief is designed not only to punish future violations but, more importantly, to change Facebook's entire privacy culture to decrease the likelihood of continued violations."

The agreement establishes an independent privacy committee within Facebook's board of directors, "removing unfettered control by CEO Mark Zuckerberg over decisions affecting user privacy," the FTC statement said.

Two commissioners of the five-member FTC dissented

in the settlement, saying the penalty was insufficient. "The proposed settlement does little to change the business model or practices that led to the recidivism," FTC commissioner Rohit Chopra said.

In a separate agreement with stock market regulators, Facebook agreed to pay a \$100 million penalty for making "misleading disclosures regarding the risk of misuse of Facebook user data" in an investigation into the hijacking of data by political consultancy Cambridge Analytica.

### IN BRIEF



#### 13 dead, 35 missing after China landslide

**BEIJING**  
Thirteen people have died and 35 are missing after heavy rain triggered a landslide in China's southwestern Guizhou province, state broadcaster CCTV said on Wednesday. AFP

#### Human sacrifice rumours fuel Bangladesh lynchings

**DHAKA**  
Eight people have been killed in vigilante lynchings in Bangladesh sparked by rumours on social media, mostly Facebook, of children being kidnapped and sacrificed as offerings for the construction of a megaproject, the police said on Wednesday. AFP

## British PM Johnson brings in new team for Brexit challenge

Indian-origin Priti Patel appointed Interior Minister

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
LONDON

New Prime Minister Boris Johnson sacked most of Britain's Cabinet on Wednesday as he took office vowing to get a new divorce deal with the European Union or leave without one by October 31.

The former London Mayor has pledged to break the political deadlock that has left Britain in crisis and forced his predecessor Theresa May to delay Brexit twice. But he faces opposition from within his own Conservative party and across Parliament to his threat of a "no deal" exit,



Priti Patel

while EU leaders warn they will not renegotiate the divorce agreement they struck with Ms. May.

Within hours of taking office, Mr. Johnson signalled his new approach by sacking around a dozen Ministers, while several others announced their resignations.

"We are going to fulfil the repeated promises of Parliament to the people and come out of the EU on Oc-

tober 31, no ifs or buts," he declared outside Downing Street.

His first Cabinet appointment was Sajid Javid, the son of Pakistani immigrants who has been moved from the Interior Ministry to become Finance Minister. He replaces Philip Hammond, who quit hours earlier.

Brexit hardliner Dominic Raab, who like Mr. Johnson quit Ms. May's government over her strategy, was named Foreign Minister to replace Jeremy Hunt.

Indian-origin Priti Patel, another fierce Brexiteer who had to resign from government in 2017 after holding unofficial meetings with top Israeli officials during a holiday there, was named as Interior Minister.

## UN meeting with Sri Lanka judges blocked

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Parliament has blocked a visiting UN human rights expert from meeting with judges hearing war crimes cases, citing fears of foreign interference.

Clement Voule, an envoy of the UN Human Rights Council, was to discuss civil rights protections in Sri Lanka. But Opposition leader Mahinda Rajapakse told Parliament on Tuesday that Mr. Voule's plans to meet with judges overseeing cases of military excesses during his tenure amounted to foreign interference.

On Wednesday, Speaker Karu Jayasuriya said he had "stopped the meeting".

## We will deploy Army if Hong Kong seeks it: China

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
BEIJING

China issued a stark reminder on Wednesday that its Army could be deployed in Hong Kong if city authorities requested support in maintaining "public order" after weeks of protests.

Hong Kong has been plunged into its worst crisis in recent history after millions of demonstrators took to the streets - and sporadic violent confrontations between the police and pockets of hardcore protesters.

The demonstrations were triggered by a bill which would have allowed extraditions to mainland China but have evolved into a call for wider democratic reforms.

Beijing has labelled the protests as "extreme illegal violence", but has left it to

the city's semi-autonomous government to deal with the situation.

Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said at a news conference in Beijing that the Ministry has been "paying close attention" to the situation in Hong Kong.

Asked how his Ministry would handle it, Mr. Wu noted that there are "clear stipulations" in Article 14 of Hong Kong's garrison law - without elaborating. According to the article, the city's authorities may ask, "when necessary", the Central government for assistance from the garrison "in the maintenance of public order and in disaster relief".

This is the first time Beijing has hinted that it could use its Army to deal with the unrest in Hong Kong.

## 'No IS links to Sri Lanka Easter attacks'

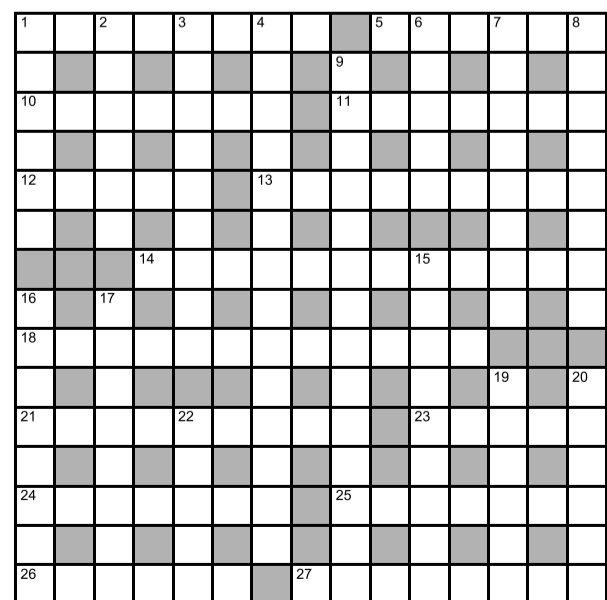
**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Easter attacks were carried out by local Islamists who drew inspiration from the Islamic State but were not linked to it, an investigator said on Wednesday.

Ravi Seneviratne, the head of the Criminal Investigations Department, told a Parliamentary panel that the suicide bombers "followed the IS ideology, but our investigations have not shown any link between them."

He said the remnants the local group identified as National Thowtheeth Jama'ath had persuaded IS to claim the attack two days after the deadly events in Sri Lanka.

### THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12687



#### ACROSS

- Justify seizing incorporated territory (8)
- America almost destroyed peninsula annexed by Russia (6)
- Slight commotion around dais perhaps (7)
- Wise men love quests to gain knowledge essentially (7)

- Bodily cavities conserved by organ transplant (5)
- He knocks over maids with élan? (6,3)
- Fast means of protest? (6,6)
- Clashing with policeman? Bit idiotic (12)
- Give up a small sum of money to snatch in America (4,1,4)
- Cherish a perfectly maintained physique (5)
- Silly inane Republican takes time to get on board (7)
- Perplexed fool arrests a lot incorrectly (2,1,4)
- Creeps loiter aboard steamer (6)
- Reports of guru in trouble (8)

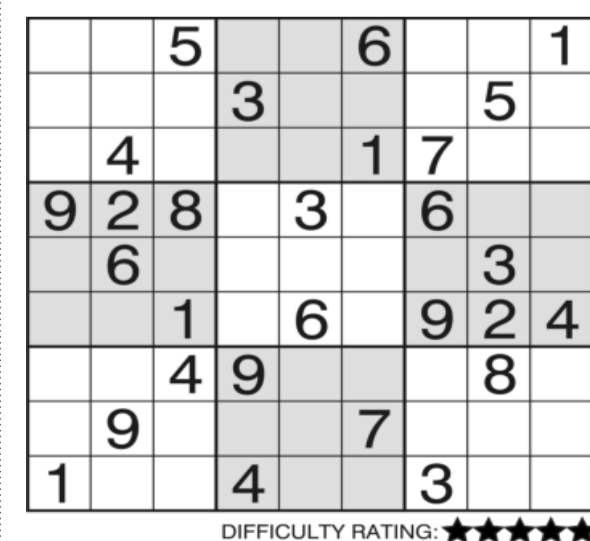
#### DOWN

- Dolt every so often interrupts a fruit vendor (6)
- Unit about to meet for a type of inspection (2-4)

(set by Dr. X)

- Where dirt might be isolated from external influences (2,1,6)
- Fires cheat to lessen issues (14)
- Forcibly seize ecstasy found in party (5)
- Character retained by messieurs to assist dairy worker (8)
- One who agrees with simpleton on board (8)
- Request strip club in headquarters? That is touch-and-go (10,4)
- Charms fellow in fancy A-list society (9)
- Love to canoodle around new exotic den (8)
- Approached brilliant director to take charge (8)
- Musical composition about a queen's garment (6)
- Stops crates filled with ecstasy (6)
- Associate delivered succulent plant (5)

### SUDOKU



**Solution to puzzle 12686**      **Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

B	L	O	W	H	A	R	D	A	S	S	E	N	T
E	N	A	E	C	P	X	R						
S	A	T	I	N	D	R	O	P	A	L	I	N	E
I	H	D	R	S	N	L	A						
D	R	I	L	L	T	E	A	M	T	N	E	P	T
E	N	I	S	I	S	T							
F	R	I	E	N	D	S	C	H	O	S	T	S	
S	C	G	H	O	D	O	E						
T	H	E	A	T	R	E	R	E	M	O	V	E	
R	I	N	A	N	E	E	R						
I	N	A	N	E	W	R	I	L	A	R	G	E	
P	L	L	B	R	M	E	E	V					
P	U	L	L	A	F	A	C	E	T	R	I	P	E
O	E	O	L	P	N	T	G	R					
D	O	W	E	L	L	S	T	E	L	L	I	B	

### FAITH

## Experience of reality

The credo 'Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya' epitomises the entire Advaita teaching of Adi Sankara. It states that Brahman alone is Satyam, the only Reality; all else, including the entire jagat, is Mithya, that is 'non real'. In Brahman, which is of the essence of Sat, Existence, Chit, Consciousness and Ananda, Bliss, all else is subsumed. In a discourse, Nanniam Sri Rajagopala Ganapadigal drew attention to the Dakshinamurthy Stotra that teaches and inspires one to analyse the reality behind all human experience. This exercise can make one realise the true essence of the immortal self as the only everlasting consciousness and hence the only Reality. Like a magician or a great yogi the Lord is able to bring into existence the entire creation when He casts the spell of Maya. Like a sprout within a seed, the entire universe appears as manifold within the concepts of Time and Space that lend it extraordinary credibility.

What an infinite variety in the form of colour, shape, guna, etc is there to keep us engrossed in this world? Such is the power of Maya that what is not real is made to appear as real and what is real is well hidden behind this seemingly authentic display. It can make a single object appear as two or many. This is the greatest catch that is the cause of delusion. Then we think the experience of joy and sorrow is also real. A jnani knows that the universe is equal to a city perceived in a mirror where the images projected are not true and that worldly experience has only a dream like existence. When one wakes up, the dream is no more. The Lord's Maya is the most difficult to cross and keeps us tied to the world. Viveka jnana that can sift the real from the unreal alone can overpower Maya and this is gained only through God's grace.