

Ukraine seizes Russian ship in Black Sea

Crew were freed after Moscow warned of consequences if any Russian citizens were 'taken hostage'

REUTERS
KIEV

Ukraine on Thursday seized a Russian tanker for its alleged involvement in the capture of three Ukrainian Navy vessels by Russia, prompting Moscow to warn of consequences if any Russian citizens were "taken hostage".

The crew members were later freed by Ukraine and were on their way home, but the tanker remained in Ukrainian custody in the Danube river port of IZMAIL, a spokesman for the Russian Embassy in Kiev said by telephone.



Maritime tension: The Russian tanker, called 'Nika Spirit', detained by the Ukrainian security service in the Black Sea port of IZMAIL on Thursday. ■ REUTERS

Delicate negotiations

The seizure threatens to upset delicate negotiations on a possible prisoner swap between the two countries and came weeks after Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's new President, spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin for the first time.

The incident is also certain to further sour relations

between Kiev and Moscow, which remain blighted by Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and its backing for pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.

The Ukrainian prosecutor's office said 10 Russian crew were detained for questioning. Russian news agencies said around 15 Russians

had been on board at the time of the seizure.

Ukraine's security service alleged that the tanker, the 'Nika Spirit', used to be called 'NEYMA' and was placed beneath a bridge near Crimea in November in order to block three Ukrainian Navy ships from entering the Sea of Azov.

Russia seized the Ukrainian ships after opening fire on them and is still holding 24 Ukrainian sailors who were on board at the time, accusing them of illegally entering its territorial waters, a charge they deny.

"The Ukrainian security service and military prosecutors' office detained a Russian tanker, the Neyma, which blocked Ukrainian warships in the Kerch Strait," Ukraine's SBU security service said in a statement.

The SBU published footage of the tanker being searched. The same footage showed the name of the detained ship, the Nika Spirit, on the vessel's bow next to a darker patch of paint that apparently covered up its old name. Two men in camouflaged uniforms with Ukrainian insignia were shown walking through the Russian-flagged vessel.

Russia's Foreign Ministry warned Ukraine "there will soon be consequences" if any Russian crew members were "taken hostage", the RIA news agency reported.

The SBU said the Russian vessel had entered Ukraine under its new name, the Nika Spirit, "to cover its involvement in illegal actions", but that it had identified the ship from its unique International Maritime Organization number.

U.S. federal government to reinstate death penalty

Executions of five death row federal inmates scheduled

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

The U.S. Justice Department announced on Thursday it was reinstating a two-decades long dormant policy to resume the federal government's use of capital punishment and immediately scheduled the executions for five death row federal inmates.

"Congress has expressly authorised the death penalty through legislation adopted by the peoples representatives in both houses of Congress and signed by the President," Attorney General William Barr said in a statement.

"The Justice Department upholds the rule of law and we owe it to the victims and their families to carry forward the sentence imposed by our justice system."

U.S. President Donald Trump has called for increasing use of the death pe-



U.S. Attorney General William Barr. ■ AFP

nalty for drug traffickers and mass shooters. The Justice Department said it has scheduled executions for five federal inmates who have been convicted of horrific murders and sex crimes.

Those inmates include Daniel Lewis Lee, a white supremacist who was convicted in Arkansas for murdering a family of three, including an eight-year-old girl.

Another one is Lezmond Mitchell, who was found guilty by a jury in Arizona of stabbing a 63-year-old grandmother and forcing her young granddaughter to sit next to her lifeless body on a car journey before slitting the girl's throat.

"Each of these inmates has exhausted their appellate and post-conviction remedies," the department said, adding that the executions will take place in Indiana.

Billionaire Epstein found injured in prison cell

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

U.S. billionaire Jeffrey Epstein, who is accused of sexually assaulting underage girls, was found injured in his jail cell after a possible suicide attempt, according to sources cited in multiple media reports.

Epstein was found semi-conscious with marks on his neck, anonymous law enforcement sources told U.S. media.

The injuries are not believed to be serious, they added. Guards are also investigating whether he was the victim of a possible assault as they piece together what happened.

The financier was denied bail last week after appearing at a New York court charged with one count of sex trafficking of minors and one count of conspiracy to commit sex trafficking of minors.

At least 11 killed as 3 blasts rock Kabul

The attacks come amid U.S. General's meeting with top U.S. and NATO officials

REUTERS
KABUL

Three bombs rocked the Afghan capital of Kabul on Thursday, killing at least 11 people and wounding 45, officials said, as the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff was meeting top U.S. and NATO officials in the city.

A suicide bomber blew himself near a minibus carrying employees of the mi-

nistry and mines and petroleum, killing five women and a child.

Video footage shared with reporters by security officials showed the bodies of the women and a child lying on the road in the eastern part of city as bystanders tried to help the wounded.

Health officials said at least 20 people were taken to hospital by civilians, some on wheelbarrows.

A second bomb exploded on a road parallel to the site of the bus attack, killing five people and injuring police who were trying to manage the traffic after the first blast.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the two attacks.

The third blast, about 3 km away, wounded at least 17 civilians, for which the Taliban claimed responsibility.

The Taliban, fighting to restore strict Islamic law after their 2001 ouster at the hands of U.S.-led troops, said their fighters had used a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device to kill nine foreign forces and destroy two vehicles.

On Wednesday, a Croatian soldier serving in Afghanistan was killed and two were seriously wounded in a suicide attack on their convoy outside Kabul,

U.K. Cabinet has three Ministers of Indian-origin

All of them are Brexit supporters



(From left) Alok Sharma, Priti Patel and Rishi Sunak. ■ AFP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has appointed three Indian-origin leaders in his top ministerial team in what has been dubbed as Britain's most diverse Cabinet.

Hours after Mr. Johnson was appointed by the Queen as Britain's new Prime Minister, he named Priti Patel Home Secretary, Alok Sharma as the International Development Secretary and Rishi Sunak as the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. They attended their first Cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street on Thursday morning.

The Prime Minister's fellow pro-Brexit campaigner Ms. Patel will now be in charge of the U.K.'s security, immigration and visa policies.

The 47-year-old has vowed to fight the scourge of crime and will be in the hot seat to fulfil some of her past promises of a fairer post-Brexit visa regime for everyone around the world, free of the freedom of move-

ment norms imposed by the European Union (EU).

Fellow Brexiteer Mr. Sunak had also issued similar open letters in favour of fairer visa norms for everyone in the world.

The 39-year-old Conservative Party MP, who is married to Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy's daughter Akshata, is an MBA graduate and investment expert who takes charge of one of the most important jobs in the U.K. Treasury, serving under the new Chancellor, Sajid Javid.

The U.K.-born son of a pharmacist mother and a National Health Service general practitioner father is an Oxford and Stanford graduate.

India-born Alok Sharma, 51, backed Mr. Johnson in the Conservative Party leadership contest as the leader best placed to launch a coherent unambiguous plan to deliver Brexit and take us out of the European Union.

The Conservative Party MP, who was serving as Employment Minister, has been promoted to a Cabinet post.

IN BRIEF



Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi is dead

TUNIS
Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi, the North African country's first democratically elected leader, died on Thursday at the age of 92, his office said. The veteran politician, the oldest head of state after Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, came to power in 2014. ■ AFP

N. Korea fires missiles in latest provocation

SEOUL
North Korea fired two short-range missiles into the sea on Thursday, complicating efforts to resume stalled nuclear talks with Washington and signalling its anger over planned U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises. One had a range of 430 km while the other travelled 690 km. ■ AFP

Afghan Taliban ready to visit Pakistan on invitation

They are willing to talk to end conflict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD/DOHA

The Afghan Taliban on Thursday expressed willingness to travel to Pakistan and meet Prime Minister Imran Khan if he invites them for negotiations to end the 18-year conflict in Afghanistan, according to a media report.

The statement by the Taliban came hours after Mr. Khan returned to Islamabad after his maiden official visit to the U.S., where he discussed the Afghan peace process with President Donald Trump on Monday and agreed to work together to end to the conflict.

During the meeting, Mr. Trump said that Pakistan would help the U.S. "extricate" itself from Afghanistan, adding that there was "tremendous potential" in the relationship between

Washington and Islamabad. Interestingly, Mr. Khan was accompanied by Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lt. Gen. Faiz Hameed during the talks at the White House.

Sohail Shaheen, a spokesman for the Taliban's political office in Qatar's capital Doha, told the BBC Urdu that if PM Khan extended a formal invitation, they will accept it.

"We frequently visit countries in the region and would surely go to Pakistan, too, which is our Muslim neighbour, if there is a formal invitation from Islamabad," he said.

Media reports say the U.S. is negotiating for a deal by September 1 that would see international forces pull out of Afghanistan in return for Taliban security guarantees.

Paris records its hottest day as heatwave sears Europe

Temperature is rising as hot, dry air comes in from N. Africa

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PARIS

A new record high temperature was recorded in Paris on Thursday, as Europe sweltered in what was its second heat wave this summer.

Climate scientists warn this could become the new normal in many parts of the world. But temperate Europe where air conditioning is rare isn't equipped for the temperatures frying the region this week.

On Thursday afternoon the Paris area hit 42.4 degrees Celsius, beating the previous record of 40.4 C set in 1947. Authorities said the temperature was still rising, as a result of hot, dry air coming from northern Africa that's trapped between cold stormy systems.



Beating the heat: People cool off next to the fountains at Louvre Museum in Paris on Wednesday. ■ AP

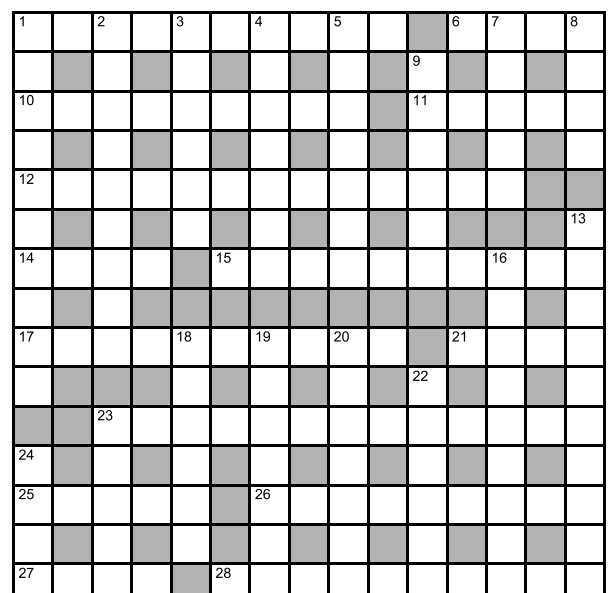
The Netherlands and Belgium also reported new record heats and Britain is expected to do so later.

The Netherlands' meteorological institute said 40.4 C was recorded on Thursday in the municipality of Gilze Rijen, near the border with Belgium. In Belgium the new all-time high rose to 40.6 C.

Britain also expects to breach the 39 C mark for the first time after London recording its hottest day on record for July, with the mercury climbing to 36.9 C at Heathrow Airport.

The previous July record was 36.7 C in 2015, while the all-time record is 38.5 C recorded in August 2003.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12688



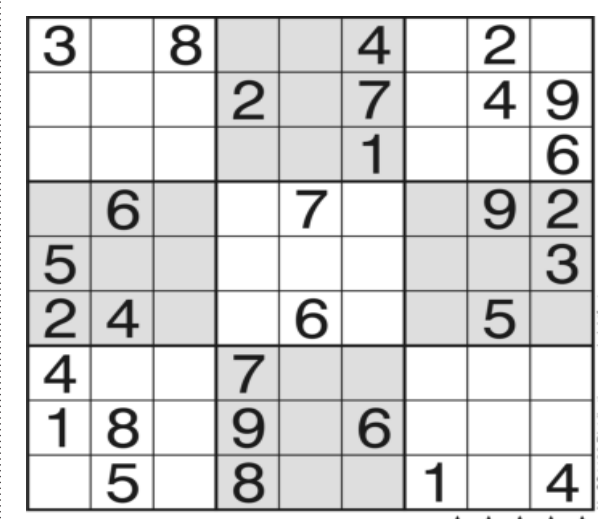
- **ACROSS**
- Determined to transfer director to British capital; dejected and overwhelmed (6,4)
 - Soldiers coming back after end of fight capturing a plant (4)
 - Boy! Louis is mad to cross the middle of river. Evidently (9)
 - Counter opening earlier, runs out of stock of calling device (5)

- Drawback! Book despatched for capital of Canada takes time, internal mix up at Germany. Get a courier (7,6)
- Chilled daiquiri, cognac, absinthe at the end leads to dysentery primarily (4)
- Perhaps extra zone Congress eventually conceded to Left in the poll for vacant seat (2-8)

(set by Afterdark)

- Teacher is strict, our group got notified first (10)
 - Man, say is skeletal essentially (4)
 - Five missing; servant covers up mysterious clash necessitating a court order (6,7)
 - Small bird found in the lot we let fly (5)
 - Fluctuating returns, large discrepancy found in the centre, covered up (9)
 - Worst owner to retain place (4)
 - Decreased flow around Chennai in the middle, rose again (10)
- **DOWN**
- Born in difficulty, child is bearing a trouble from the start, leading to a complaint (10)
 - Teacher manages to control errant students at the beginning (9)
 - Sweetheart's hugs and kisses and stroke is almost sensational (6)
 - Elders royal, tucked in and put to sleep (7)
 - Receipt for wife's account features an unknown quantity (7)
 - Gas in car gone (5)
 - Vegetable is good, recipe's awesome primarily (4)
 - A regular pint with ice flakes can be connected to breathlessness (6)
 - Father to learner; be free and ignorant (10)
 - Everything in street kept before often needs to be fixed (9)
 - Property of earl at the outskirts of Tilbury right in the front (6)
 - Company! Can it be endless and in the middle gain energy with drug? (7)
 - Drawback to have son following and no turning back in the front and beyond (7)
 - Shoe found in Britain, at Oxford's good, high class and cheap essentially (6)
 - Attack is almost ending, to retreat against third front (5)
 - Cast is primarily terrific, gets Oscar for keeping spectators on the edge repeatedly (4)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to puzzle 12687

PROVINCE	CRIMEA	7	3	5	8	4	6	2	9	1
ENIN	OBELIS	6	1	2	3	7	9	4	5	8
DISDAIN	ORACLE	8	4	9	2	5	1	7	6	3
LIVFRV	KEE	9	2	8	5	3	4	6	1	7
ANTRALADIES	MAN	4	6	7	1	9	2	8	3	5
RECAE	AT	4	6	7	1	9	2	8	3	5
HUNGER	STRIKE	3	5	1	7	6	8	9	2	4
KAU	RLA	DR	4	6	7	1	9	2	8	3
NING	COMPARTIBLE	3	5	1	7	6	8	9	2	4
NG	TNITIS	2	7	4	9	1	3	5	8	6
DROPA	DIME	SHAPE	5	9	3	6	8	7	1	4
NSG	OC	M	R	A	1	8	6	4	2	5
ENTRAIN	ATALLOS	1	8	6	4	2	5	3	7	9
SE	V	S	N	N	E	S				
SIDLES	ME	S	A	G	E	S				

FAITH

The Lord's Sankalpa

The youngest of the Pandava brothers, Sahadeva is known for his wisdom and his exceptional devotion to Krishna though he maintains a low profile. Krishna is keen to elicit Sahadeva's opinion about His mission to Hastinapura that He has undertaken with the hope of averting a war if possible, pointed out Nagai Sri Mukundan in a discourse.

As a Pandava warrior, Sahadeva, smarting under the humiliations they have faced, is all out for war even if his brothers seek peace. He tells Krishna that He should talk in Dhritarashtra's court in such a way that war and only war should be the result. But the jnani in him surfaces when he says that regardless of what any of them may think or want, it is what He ordains that will come to pass.

Whether Krishna goes as a messenger, whether the kingdom may or may not be given to the Pandavas, or whether it is going to be war or compromise, no one can divine what is in store for all. The entire world is maintained by His Sankalpa. People may think that they are the ones who control their lives and also make an impact and influence on others. But the truth is that even the down-to-earth activity of breathing is not under one's control and is sustained by His will.

In the Ramayana, the auspicious time and date for Rama's coronation is decided by none other than the Kula Guru Vasishtha and with Dasaratha's blessings. But it did not happen then and took place only when Rama had planned it to happen. Sahadeva indicates that if Krishna has decided to carry out the war and fulfill the purpose of His avatar, namely to reduce the burden on earth, His own peace mission will not be able to stop it. The future of the Pandavas is in His hands and they are happy it is so.