est incident there in recent

months. Graphic lists some

major attacks in Kabul in

the recent past

July 23, 2016 Twin explosions rip through crowds of Shia Hazaras in Kabul. killing at least 84 people. It marks the first major IS assault on the capital

claimed by IS, gunmen disguised as doctors storm Afghanistan's largest military hospital in a six-hour attack. More than 100 are feared to have died

March 8, 2017 In an attack

May 31, 2017 More than 150 are killed and 400 wounded when a massive truck bomb rips through Kabul's diplomatic quarter

October 20 A suicide attack during Friday evening prayers at a Kabul Shia

mosque sees 56 people killed. The IS claims

April 22, 2018 An IS bomber kills 57 people, all civilians, outside a voter registration centre amid preparations for legislative elections

Nov. 20, 2018 A suicide bomber blows himself up among religious scholars inside a Kabul wedding hall, killing at

ittacks on government targets and Afghan and international security

Taliban vis-a-vis IS

The two are sharply divided over

65% of the

country's districts

52% of its popu-

lation, are either in

Taliban control or

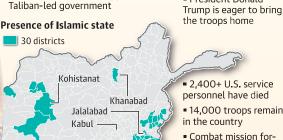
Districts

President Donald

mally ended in 2014

While the U.S. and the Taliban say they following talks that have excluded the Afghan government, the growing prominence of a local IS affiliate is complicating efforts at peace

1) United States It is more than 18 years since the U.S. invaded Afghanistan in the wake of the 9/11 attacks to topple the



2) Taliban The Taliban now controls roughly half of Afghanistan and is at its strongest since its

Govt. control Contested

TALIBAN CONTROL IN AFGHANISTAN

3) Afghan government President Ashraf Ghani is openly frustrated at his

government's

exclusion from the

U.S.-Taliban talks, and he insists that next month's presidential election in which he is seeking a second term is crucial for giving the government a strong

1,34,85,811

Taliban control Unconfirmed

37,04,229

4) IS affiliate

Population

- 2,500-4,000 members-strong as per a recent UN report
- Present in around 30 districts (13% of the country)
- The IS appeared in the country shortly

after sweeping across vast regions of Iraq and Syria in 2014

SOURCE: AFP, AP, LONG WAR JOURNAL, GRAPHIC NEWS

Joy turns into mourning for groom who lost kin, friends

Sunni extremist bomber targeted Shia wedding when the bride and groom were exchanging vows

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Joy and celebration turned into horror and carnage when an Islamic State suicide bomber targeted a packed Afghan wedding hall, killing at least 63 people in the deadliest attack to rock Kabul in months.

The massive blast, which took place late Saturday in west Kabul, came as Washington and the Taliban try to negotiate a deal to reduce the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and hopefully build a roadmap to a ceasefire.

The groom recalled greeting smiling guests in the afternoon, before seeing their



Scene of carnage: Workers looking at the damage caused by the explosion at a wedding hall in Kabul on Sunday. • REUTERS

bodies being carried out hours later.

young man, who gave his name as Mirwais, told local

The attack "changed my happiness to sorrow", the

TV station Tolo News. "My family, my bride are

adding that two engineering

teams had been flown to

in shock, they cannot even speak. My bride keeps fainting... I lost my brother, friends, relatives. I will never see happiness in my life again," he said.

Interior Ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said a suicide bomber carried out the attack, with at least 63 people killed and 182 injured. "Among the wounded are women and children," Mr. Rahimi said

"The wedding guests were dancing and celebrating the party when the blast happened," recounted Munir Ahmad, 23, who was seriously injured and whose cousin was among the dead.

"Following the explosion,

there was total chaos. Everyone was screaming and crying for their loved ones," he said from his bed in a hospital, where he was being treated for shrapnel wounds.

The wedding was largely a gathering of Shia Muslims, who are frequently targeted in Sunni-majority Afghanistan, particularly by IS.

Sunni extremist group's Afghan affiliate claimed responsibility for the blast, saying the bomber targeted the wedding because it was Shia.

Wedding guest Hameed Quresh said the young bride and groom were exchanging vows when the bomb went

Fears in U.S. of bad peace deal with the Taliban

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

An Afghanistan peace agreement that the U.S. seems close to reaching with the Taliban has prompted worries that President Donald Trump's desire to quickly withdraw U.S. troops could further plunge the country into civil war.

Mr. Trump said on Friday he was pleased with talks on ending the 18-year-long war.

The U.S. negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad, will return to the region soon to further talks with the rebel force.

"Under no circumstances should the Trump administration repeat the mistake its predecessor [under Barack Obama] made in Iraq and agree to a total withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan," retired general David Petraeus warned in a piece for The Wall Street Journal.

A lot "will depend on the details," said Laurel Miller, former senior U.S. State Department official. For instance, it seems the Taliban are prepared to call a ceasefire with U.S. troops but not with the Afghan army.

Thousands march in Hong Kong

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

A sea of democracy activists flooded the streets of Hong Kong on Sunday in a show of defiance to the city's leaders that their movement still pulls wide public support, despite mounting violence and increasingly stark warnings from Beijing.

Hundreds of thousands of protesters carrying umbrellas poured across the heart of Hong Kong island, defying torrential rain and a police order not to march from a park where they had gathered earlier for a

The political crisis was triggered by an Extradition Bill that allowed extraditions of criminal suspects in Hong Kong to the Chinese mainland.

Weeks of demonstrations have plunged the financial hub into crisis, with images of masked black-clad protesters engulfed by tear gas during street battles against riot police stunning a city once renowned for its stability.

Sunday's action, which organisers the Civil Human Rights Front said drew more than 1.7 million in the largest rally in weeks, was billed as a return to the "peaceful" origins of the leaderless protest movement.

"It's been a long day and we're very tired, but to see so many people out in the rain marching for Hong Kong gives strength to everyone," said Danny Tam, 28, a graphic designer.

Late in the evening, hundreds of masked protesters milled outside the government headquarters shouting "Reclaim Hong Kong, revolution of our times.'

ELSEWHERE



fire razes Dhaka slum

At least 10,000 people were left homeless after a massive fire swept through a crowded slum in Bangladesh's capital and destroyed thousands of shanties. The fire broke out at Dhaka's Mirpur neighbourhood late on Friday and razed around 2,000

U.K. strips 'Jihadi Jack' of British citizenship: report

A former Islamic State recruit, referred to as Jihadi Jack, has been stripped of his U.K. nationality, U.K. media reported. Jack Letts, 24, travelled to Syria in 2014 and fought with the IS before leaving the group later. PTI

Gibraltar rejects request to seize Iranian tanker

Iran renames ship, raises its flag

GIBRALTAR

Gibraltar refused on Sunday a U.S. request to seize the and the West, as the stationary vessel raised an Iranian flag ahead of its expected departure from the British territory.

shipping routes via the Gulf. leave tonight," Iran's Am-

Gibraltar. Iranian tanker caught in a stand-off between Tehran

seized the tanker in Gibraltar in July on suspicion that it was carrying oil to Syria, a close ally of Iran, in violation of European Union sanctions. That triggered a series of events that have heightened tensions on

British Royal Marines a statement.

The vessel is expected to bassador to the U.K. Hamid Baeidinejad said on Twitter,

The Grace 1's detention ended last week, but on Friday a federal court in Washington issued a warrant for the seizure of the tanker, the oil it carries and nearly \$1 Gibraltar said on Sunday

it could not comply with that request because it was bound by EU law. "The EU sanctions regime against Iran which is applicable in Gibraltar - is much narrower than that applicable in the US," the government said in

Tehran said it was ready to dispatch its naval fleet to escort the tanker – now renamed the 'Adrian Darya-1' if required.

JVP announces Dissanayake as presidential candidate

The leftist party offers a third alternative to Sri Lankan voters

MEERA SRINIVASAN

Sri Lanka's leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (IVP) or the People's Liberation Front on Sunday said it would field party leader Anura Kumara Dissanavake as presidential candidate, effectively offering a third option to Sri Lankan voters in the polls scheduled later this year.

announcement comes a week after the Rajapaksa camp named former defence secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa its candidate contesting from the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP or People's Front). Amid much tension among different factions within, the in-



Anura Kumara Dissanayake

cumbent United National Party (UNP)-led alliance is

yet to name its candidate. Mr. Dissanayake enters the fray through the JVP-led 'National People's Power' alliance, challenging two mainstream political camps, and promising an alterna-

SUDOKU

tive. While the JVP has not electorally threatened mainstream parties – the UNP, Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and SLPP - in recent national or local elections, it has remained a significant voice of dissent in the legislature, frequently taking on the big parties on allegations of corruption and nepotism.

During the nearly twomonth political crisis last year, the six JVP MPs proved a crucial block in the Parliament. Along with the Tamil National Alliance legislators, they resisted the illegal power grab by the Rajapaksas. Mr. Dissanayake's speeches, hailed by many as powerful and persuasive, drew wide attention at that time.

Memos warn of food shortages in Brexit chaos +

Grim outlook if U.K. leaves EU sans deal

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Secret British government documents have warned of serious disruptions across the country in the event that the U.K. leaves the European Union without a trade deal on October 31, according to a report.

The Sunday Times newspaper published what it said was what the British government expects in the case of a sudden, "no-deal" Brexit. Among the most serious are disruptions to the supply of drugs and medicine, fresh food. Water shortages can be expected due to interruptions of imported water treatment chemicals.

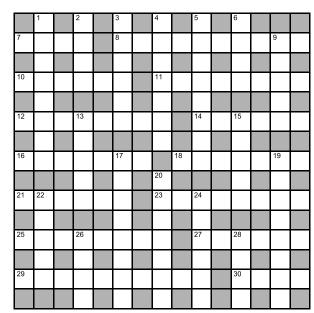
Although the grim scenarios reportedly outlined in the government documents



have long been floated by academics and economists, they've been repeatedly dismissed as scaremongering by Brexit proponents.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said he is ready to leave the EU regardless of whether he is able to renegotiate the Brexit deal struck with Brussels by his predecessor, Theresa

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12708



ACROSS

- 7 Feel absence of young lady (4) 8 Crossed old port (6,4)
- 10 Composing, O great poet? (6) 11 Grow where batsmen stand?
- 12 Succeed endlessly at court, giving hope (8) 14 Snake curled around general is

dozing (6)

CM YK

16 Engineers' cryptic clues for hermit (7)

18 Stains flower parts (7)

21 Young lady's assorted medals

23 Cynthia's at sea with girl,

- doing this (8) 25 Tell fib, "German loses right to
- 27 Admits: "Snowstorm's increasing" (4,2)
- 29 Naval officer's additional spouse (6,4)
- 30 Oregon's tailless feline is a large animal (4)
- DOWN
- 1 Composed sea dirge? Don't think so (8)
- 2 Capital invested in Waldo's lodge (4)

3 Ball's special at this place (6)

4 Helps Charlie sit awkwardly at beginning of show (7)

(set by Incognito)

- 5 Trader's sea song (8)
- 6 Northern European's stick (4) **9** Follow nurse and take to court
- 13 Disposes of small lengths (5)

15 Sunny is not heavy (5)

- 17 Fed meals prepared and achieved success by own efforts (4-4)
- 20 Many violently spoil Burma

Munnar" (8)

(7)

19 State publicly: "A wild cat's

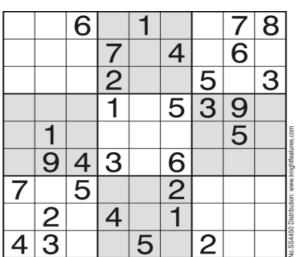
going around centre of

22 Starting to ail by 54, European's not yet dead (5)

24 Near model storage facility

26 Where returning convict may consume eqq (4)

28 It's middle of the day, anyway



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku Solution to puzzle 12707

DIFFICULTY RATING:

М	Α	S	Т	П	F	F	S		Т	S	W	Α	Ν	Α	6	2	1	a	7	5	3	1	Ω
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I		R		0		Κ		М		Ρ		Н		Α	5	7	3	0	4	-	Ċ	0	6
F	Α	Т	Н	0	М		D	Ι	Ν	0	S	Α	J	R		/		Q	4		Э	2	O
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G	0	L	D	М	Ε	D	Α	┙		Α	Z	Т	Е	С	2	4	7	2	_	Ō	6	0	1
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FAITH

Association with the pious

Most people's lives are governed by worldly parameters, that is, they are preoccupied with matters such as one's personal and professional life, physical well being, etc, though they are aware that sastras talk of the atma. But is this something that gives contentment or peace? How long can one these sustain people? Is it possible to escape disease or old age? Can one's possessions give happiness? The jnana that all these are temporary factors and that whatever is material and physical does not belong to us and that only the atma is enduring is what has to be aspired for. All what we think we gain in life will have to be renounced at some point of time. The only way to rethink and internalise these truths is by seeking the association with realised souls who are oriented towards the spiritual rather than the laukika way of life, pointed out Sri B. Damodhara Dikshitar in a discourse. This is the greatest challenge for an individual and as stated in yoga sastras and in the Gita it demands patient practice and vairagya towards worldly pulls. Since the deeper transcendental awareness of the atma is present at all times in the pious, their company can influence the spiritual aspirant. Krishna calls those who always perceive the truth with perfect clarity and remain in that state as 'Tatva darsinaha,' the 'seers' of Tatva. Ramana Maharishi has inspired many towards atma tatva vichara by his very presence. His way of life reflects the truth that spiritual journey is an inward process in each being and that atma jnana is the goal. In fact, his silence itself has proved to be more eloquent and effective than rhetoric and argument to instill this enquiry. The Gita reiterates the Upanishads' views in this regard and states that atma jnana is to be gained through modest seeking, determined effort, and through serving realised souls.