

Syria's Kurdish militia'

Turkey and the U.S. were on a collision course on Tuesday as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to "eliminate" a Kurdish militia in northern Syria — a move deemed "unacceptable" by the Pentagon. AFP

12 injured in Russia's military depot fire

Powerful explosions at a military depot in Siberia have injured 12 people and left one missing, and forced over 16,500 people to leave their homes. The blasts took place at an ammunition depot near the city of Achinsk. AP

French boy thrown from gallery has broken spine

A six-year-old French boy thrown off a 10th-floor viewing platform at London's Tate Modern gallery has suffered a broken spine, legs and arm. Police have charged a 17-year-old with attempted

Trump freezes all Venezuelan government assets in U.S.

President says he's considering a quarantine of the South American nation

REUTERS

President Donald Trump imposed a freeze on all Venezuelan government assets in the U.S. on Monday, sharply escalating an economic and diplomatic pressure campaign aimed at removing socialist President Nicolas Maduro from power.

The executive signed by Mr. Trump goes well beyond the sanctions imposed in recent months against Venezuela's Staterun oil company PDVSA and the country's financial sector, as well as measures against dozens of Venezuelan officials and entities.

Mr. Trump's action, the toughest yet against Mr. Maduro, not only bans U.S. companies from dealings with the Venezuela government but also appears to open the door to possible sanctions against foreign firms or individuals that as-



wife Cilia Flores and other officials in Caracas. ■REUTERS

Russian and Chinese companies are among those still doing significant business in the South American OPEC nation.

"All property and interests in property of the Government of Venezuela that are in the United States... are blocked and may not be transferred, paid, exported, withdrawn, or otherwise dealt in," according to the executive order released by the White House.

The U.S. and most West-

ern nations have called for Mr. Maduro to step down and have recognised Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido as the country's legitimate President.

Coup attempt

Mr. Guaido, accused by Mr. Maduro of mounting a U.S.directed coup attempt, appointed a board for Citgo Petroleum. Venezuela's most important foreign asset, earlier this year.

Mr. Trump said on Thurs-

day he was considering a quarantine or blockade of Venezuela, although he did not elaborate at the time on when or how such a blockade would be imposed.

He is taking more dramatic action after numerous rounds of sanctions failed to turn Venezuela's military against Mr. Maduro or make significant progress in dislodging him.

Venezuela's Foreign Ministry said the freeze was designed to "formalise a criminal economic, financial, and commercial blockade" of the country but said the government would continue politidialogue with the opposition.

Mr. Trump said in a letter to Congress the decision was necessary "in light of the continued usurpation of power by the illegitimate Nicolas Maduro regime, as well as the regime's human rights abuses and arbitrary detention of Venezuelan citizens.'

Toni Morrison, Nobel laureate and beloved author, dies at 88

Her work explored the experiences of African Americans

MARGALIT FOX

Toni Morrison, the 1993 Nobel laureate in literature, whose work explored black identity in America and in particular the experience of black women, died on Monday in New York City, her publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, said in a statement. She was 88.

The first African American woman to win the Nobel in literature, Ms. Morrison was the author of several novels, children's books and essays. Among them were celebrated works like Song of Solomon, which received the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1977, and Beloved, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988. Ms. Morrison was one of the rare American authors whose books were both critical and commercial successes.

Her novels appeared regularly on The New York Times best-seller list, were featured multiple times on Oprah Winfrey's book club and were the subject of my-



A file photo of Toni Morrison. • NYT

riad critical studies.

A long-time faculty member at Princeton University, Ms. Morrison lectured widely and was seen often on television.

Unique style

In awarding the Nobel to Ms. Morrison, the Swedish Academy cited her "novels characterised by visionary force and poetic import," through which she "gives life to an essential aspect of American

reality." Ms. Morrison animated that reality in a style resembling that of no other writer in English.

Her prose, often luminous and incantatory, rings with the cadences of black oral tradition.

Her plots are dreamlike and non-linear, spooling backward and forward in time as though characters bring the entire weight of history to bear on their everv act. NY TIMES

N. Korea threatens more launches after fourth test

U.S., S. Korea military drill is under way

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

North Korea threatened on Tuesday to carry out more weapons tests after it fired its fourth pair of projectiles in less than two weeks following the start of joint exercises between the U.S. and South Korea.

The move threatens to derail negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington, with the North saying the combined drills were a "flagrant violation" of the

Pyongyang has always been infuriated by military exercises between South Korea and U.S., seeing them as rehearsals for invasion, but in the past it has tended to avoid carrying out missile tests while the war games were taking place.

North Korea fired "two projectiles that are assumed to be short-range ballistic missiles" from South Hwanghae province on its west coast, Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a

Taliban asks voters to stay away

Electoral rallies and gatherings could become potential targets, warn insurgents

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

The Taliban warned Afghans on Tuesday to keep away from election rallies and ordered its fighters to "stand against" the planned September vote.

The militants and other insurgent groups conducted frequent attacks during previous elections, and this year's campaign season has already been rocked by deadly violence.

The presidential election is slated for September 28, but the race has got off to a

lacklustre start and some candidates have yet to launch their campaigns.

Peace talks

Many observers think the poll will be postponed again it has already been pushed back twice this year - to create space for a peace deal to be finalised between the U.S. and the Taliban.

The Taliban said its fighters should "stand against this theatrical and sham of a process to their full capabilities" – a clear instruction to

"To prevent losses, God forbid, from being incurred by our fellow compatriots, they must stay away from gatherings and rallies that could become potential targets," a message posted on the Taliban's website stated.

The Taliban said Afghan elections do not "hold any value", referring to the 2014 presidential poll that was mired in fraud allegations and saw the U.S. broker a power-sharing deal between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah

Last month, on the first day of the campaign season, suicide bombers and gunmen stormed the Kabul office of Amrullah Saleh, Mr. Ghani's running-mate, killing at least 20 people.

In a statement, Mr. Ghani's office said security forces are "fully prepared" to protect Afghans against Taliban threats and would not allow anyone to disrupt polls.

"Participation in elections and choosing a leader through direct voting is the religious and legal right of

China vows to counter U.S. missile plans range Nuclear Forces Trea-

REUTERS BEIJING

> China threatened countermeasures on Tuesday if the United States deploys intermediate-range. groundbased missiles in Asia and warned U.S. allies of repercussions if they allow such weapons on their territory.

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said on Saturday he was in favour of placing ground-launched, intermediate-range missiles in the region soon, possibly within months.

U.S. pulled out last week the Intermediatety, a 1987 pact with the former Soviet Union that banned ground-launched nuclear and conventional ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500-5,000 km. The withdrawal also allows the Pentagon to develop new weapons to counter Fu Cong, Director Gener-

al of the Arms Control department at China's Foreign Ministry, said Beijing "will not stand by idly " and not stand by idly warned "China will be forced to

Don't play with fire, China tells Hong Kong protesters

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

China warned Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters on Tuesday that "those who play with fire will perish by it", a day after the most widespread unrest of the twomonth crisis.

In its harshest warning yet Beijing said the immense strength of the Central government should not be underestimated as police in the semi-autonomous city announced they had arrested 148 people in connection with Monday's violence.

The city has been plunged into chaos by weeks of protests triggered by opposition to a planned law that would



Yang Guang

have allowed extraditions to mainland China. The protests have since evolved into a wider movement for democratic reform and the protection of freedoms.

At a press briefing in Beijing, Yang Guang, spokesman for the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, said the "radical protests... have severely impacted Hong Kong's prosperity and stability, pushing it into a dangerous abyss".

Mr. Yang said the government still "firmly supports" both the Hong Kong police force - who have been criticised for their handling of the protests – and Carrie Lam, the city's pro-Beijing leader, whose resignation the protesters demand.

"We would like to make it clear to the very small group of unscrupulous and violent criminals and the dirty forces behind them: Those who play with fire will perish by it," Mr. Yang said.

'No satisfactory answer on Easter day lapse'

Sri Lankan PM tells inquiry panel that he was not informed about the terror threat despite prior intel

MEERA SRINIVASAN

'I am yet to get a satistactory response on why I was not briefed about the Easter Sunday terror threat," Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has said, suggesting that the Sri Lankan government may still not have identified the reasons for the security lapse, over three months after the bombings shook the country.

Neither he nor his security division was informed about the terror threat, despite prior intelligence being available with senior security officials, Mr. Wickremesinghe on Tuesday told a parliamentary panel probing the Easter bombings. "I went

to Nuwara Eliya [Central Province] for a few days, but I was in the country. No one informed me about the [possible] attacks," he said.

The Prime Minister is so far the highest official to testify before the Parliament Select Committee (PSC) that President Sirisena has accused of endangering "national security". However, resisting the pressure, the panel has continued inquiring top security officials, politicians, bureaucrats and religious leaders.

Extremist activities

Queried about his knowledge of "extremist" activities in the country, Mr. Wickremesinghe said while he



Ranil Wickremesinghe

had received reports earlier of extremist groups that had "embraced IS ideology", he did not receive any specific information on "terrorist" activity in the past. "We only received reports of a person [Sri Lankan fighter] killed in

Following the public fallout between the President and the Prime Minister last October – when Mr. Sirisena controversially sacked PM Wickremesinghe and later reinstated him - the PM had not been invited to the national security council meetings chaired by Mr. Sirisena.

"The last [NSC] meeting I attended was in October 2018," Mr. Wickremesinghe

To members' questions on why he didn't raise the matter, he said: "There was one meeting in February that I learnt about later. When I

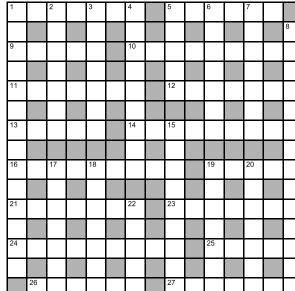
enquired, I was told the

Syria and intelligence agen- council meetings weren't gocies were instructed to ing to be held thereafter."

On whether his being kept out of the crucial meetings was a consequence of the differences with the President, he said: "no," adding that it would be difficult to conclude so.

Asked if he was aware of reports about Zahran Hashim, the alleged mastermind of the terror attacks, Mr. Wickremesinghe said reports with authorities indicated that radical preacher Zahran had been absconding. "There was one analysis that he could have gone to India by sea via Mannar, but no specific information about terrorist activities in the country."

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12698



1 Rolling on, hamara Jack has become a big shot (7)

5 Overcharge, Pir? (3-3)

9 Bird to steal one nest, to begin with (5)

extremely light singer (9) 11 I, with regent, cooked up a

10 Funny cartoon about

number (7)

12 Dear, once out, becomes thoughtful (7)

13 My incomplete group of birds 14 Won't give baksheesh. That's

level! (2,7)

16 Supporter not out to flag an inspiration (9)

19 See, I missed a prospect (5) 21 Abroad, there's good line.

Move on! (7) 23 Dismiss dens? (4.3)

24 Fellows, don't start table fight

25 Sage mantris high, to a certain extent (5)

26 Came upon hesitancy over old 27 Abandons no southern sweets

DOWN

(7)

1 One whose business is to make matches (8,6)

(7)

3 Deny Green's faltering and beginning to use drug (7)

4 And Raja goes round saving up

5 Quickly approach crazy pun by Russian (3,2)

6 Standard cut vegetable (7) 7 Film director's cruel with

endless note (7)

8 Yet these shenanigans will reverberate back home (7,7)

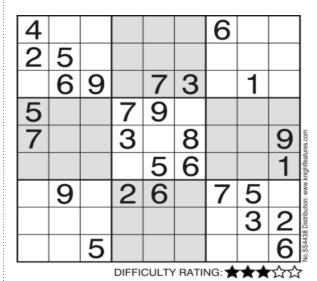
18 Run back, true to form, to promote growth (7)

19 Jury panels even I respect from within (7)

22 Server, I spilled what's sought

underprivileged surroundings

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12697 Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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FAITH

Relief from stress

The Nava Yogi Upakhyana in the Bhagavata Purana contains the instruction of the Nava Yogis who are Yogeshwaras known for their highest state of realisation. Well-versed in the knowledge of the Self, they impart their wisdom to the people in the different regions that they visit. Once they arrive at the Videha kingdom where King Nimi is in the midst of performing a great sacrifice and the people, sages and rishis assembled there are privileged to listen to their teachings. Though they are Siddha purushas, they speak at length on the efficacy of devotion and of the untold merits it can confer on the devout rather than on the essence of voga marga, pointed out Sri B. Damodhara Dikshitar in a discourse. In the quest for liberation, whatever path one chooses to tread, the goal is the same.

The highest attainment that yoga or jnana is capable of conferring on the aspirant is also equally attainable through the path of bhakti. Ashtanaga yoga speaks of yama, niyama, pranayama, pratyahara, asana, dharana, dhyana and Samadhi as the steps for the spiritual aspirant and also emphasises the need to cultivate virtues or atma gunas. When the bhakta entrusts his entire being to the Lord with total faith and belief, all these are automatically imbibed by him. Every moment of his life is blended with the unseen presence and guidance of God and this helps him to control inherent tendencies towards sin and evil. By reposing total faith in God, the bhakta is relieved of stress and strain and is able to handle his daily life experiences of momentary joys and sorrows with equanimity.

It is like a child who walks safely while holding on to the mother's hand. Even if it falls down, the mother immediately picks it up.

CM YK

ACROSS

2 Regular colour about a piece

(set by Gridman)

account of tree (9)

15 Cherished use trader exploited

17 Diplomat's briefcase (7)

20 Stand for special partners in

after in Chennai (5)