

Boris denies lying to the Queen

British PM says he didn't mislead Queen Elizabeth II over proroguing Parliament

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LONDON
British Prime Minister Boris Johnson denied on Thursday that he had lied to Queen Elizabeth II when requesting the suspension of Parliament this month in the run-up to Brexit.

Mr. Johnson asked the British head of state to shutter Parliament for five weeks from last Tuesday, claiming it was necessary ahead of rolling out a new domestic agenda.

The unusually long suspension – known as prorogation – was widely seen as a bid to thwart opposition to a no-deal departure on the October 31 Brexit date, and provoked uproar across the political spectrum as well as legal challenges.

Asked if he had misled Queen Elizabeth over his motives for the suspension, which will see the House of Commons closed until October 14, Mr. Johnson said: "Absolutely not".

Meanwhile in Brussels, EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier said there was "no reason to be optimistic" about striking a possible di-



Opposing stance: An anti-Brexit campaigner outside the Houses of Parliament in London on Thursday. • AP

voiced deal with Britain before a summit next month.

Mr. Johnson is adamant that the U.K. must leave the European Union on October 31 – with or without a withdrawal agreement to smooth over the separation.

Problems are mounting for Mr. Johnson, who finds himself increasingly boxed in on Brexit. Mr. Johnson's government was forced on Wednesday to release its no-deal Brexit contingency plans after a parliamentary vote.

Scotland's highest civil court on Wednesday sided with critics of the prorogation, ruling it was "unlawful"

and intended to "stymie parliament".

Tom Brake, Brexit spokesman for the pro-EU Opposition Liberal Democrats, said the government was withholding internal documents, messages and emails about the decision to prorogue parliament.

"I suspect that those documents... will confirm that the Prime Minister lied about the reason why," he said. "We all know that the reason he wanted to shut down parliament is because he didn't want parliament holding him to account."

Mr. Johnson also vowed on Thursday that Britain will be ready for a no-deal depar-

ture from the EU on October 31, despite his own government's assessment that planning remained "at a low level".

'Worst-case scenario'

The Prime Minister insisted the government had been "massively accelerating" its preparations since the August 2 internal report, which was disclosed on Wednesday after MPs voted for its release. He called the "Operation Yellowhammer" forecast, which warned of possible civil unrest and shortages of food and medicines following no deal, a "worst-case scenario".

"All the industries that matter will be ready for a no-deal Brexit," Mr. Johnson said.

The documents painted a grim picture of possible "public disorder and community tensions" as well as logjams at Channel ports, threatening supplies, after a no-deal departure.

Mr. Johnson insisted he remained "very hopeful" of a deal. "It will be hard, but I think we can get there," he said.

Water found in atmosphere of habitable exoplanet

K2-18b is 8 times the mass of earth and twice as big

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

Water has been discovered for the first time in the atmosphere of an exoplanet with earth-like temperatures that could support life as we know it, scientists have revealed.

Eight times the mass of earth and twice as big, K2-18b orbits its star's "habitable zone" at a distance – neither too far nor too close – where water can exist in liquid form, they reported in the journal *Nature Astronomy*. "This planet is the best candidate we have outside our solar system" in the search for signs of life, co-author Giovanna Tinetti, an astronomer at University College London, said on Wednesday. "We cannot assume that it has oceans on the surface but it is a real possibility."

Of the more than 4,000 exoplanets detected to date, this is the first known to combine a rocky surface and



An artist's rendering shows exoplanet K2-18b, foreground, its host star and an accompanying planet in the system. • AP

an atmosphere with water. Most exoplanets with atmospheres are giant balls of gas, and the handful of rocky planets for which data is available seem to have no atmosphere at all.

Discovered in 2015, K2-18b is one of hundreds of so-called "super-Earths" – planets with less than ten times the mass of ours – spotted by NASA's Kepler spacecraft.

"Finding water in a potentially habitable world other than earth is incredibly exciting," said lead-author Angelos Tsaras, also from UCL.

Working with spectroscopic data captured in 2016 and 2017 by the Hubble Space Telescope, Mr. Tsaras

and his team used open-source algorithms to analyse the starlight filtered through K2-18b's atmosphere. They found the unmistakable signature of water vapour. Exactly how much remains uncertain, but computer modelling suggested concentrations between 0.1 and 50%.

By comparison, the percentage of water vapour in earth's atmosphere varies between 0.2% above the poles, and up to 4% in the tropics.

K2-18b orbits a red dwarf star about 110 light years distant – a million billion kilometres – in the Leo constellation of the Milky Way.

Russia targets Navalny with mass raids

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE MOSCOW

Russian investigators on Thursday raided dozens of regional offices of top protest leader Alexei Navalny as well as the homes of his supporters after mass Opposition rallies this summer.

Mr. Navalny said the raids were the result of Kremlin "hysteria" after allies of President Vladimir Putin suffered major losses in local elections in Moscow on Sunday.

Mr. Navalny, who had instructed supporters to vote strategically to push out pro-Kremlin candidates, said on YouTube: "Putin got upset and is stomping his feet." "That's what we're seeing in 41 cities across the whole country."

He said the raids were being carried out at more than 200 addresses in "the biggest police operation in Russia's modern history".

Police, investigators, national guard and security services were all involved and seized equipment such as phones and computers, he said.

U.S. top court allows Trump govt.'s asylum restrictions

The curbs prevent Central American migrants from entering country



Donald Trump

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

The U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed President Donald Trump's administration to implement asylum restrictions that prevent most Central American migrants from applying at the U.S. border.

Democrats said the ruling puts people's lives at risk.

The decision – temporarily in effect while lower court proceedings play out – is a victory for Mr. Trump's res-

trictive immigration policies, which he has made a central pillar of his presidency but which have been repeatedly challenged in court.

The top court stayed a decision by a lower court that had blocked the restrictions, which declare ineligible for asylum any migrants who enter the U.S. from the southern border and who

have not asked for asylum protection in any of the countries they crossed to get to there.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor, dissenting from the decision, wrote that: "Once again the Executive Branch has issued a rule that seeks to upend longstanding practices regarding refugees who seek shelter from persecution."

"In effect, the rule forbids almost all Central Americans... to apply for asylum in the United States if they enter or seek to enter through the southern border, unless they were first denied asylum in Mexico or another third country," she wrote.

Mr. Trump took to Twitter to hail the move, saying,

"BIG United States Supreme Court WIN for the Border on Asylum!"

The decision "greatly helps build on the progress we've made addressing the crisis at our southern border and will ultimately make American communities safer," White House Principal Deputy Press Secretary Hogan Gidley said in a statement.

'Life and death'

Lee Gelernt, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union, one of the groups challenging the asylum restrictions, expressed hope that "we'll prevail at the end of the day."

"The lives of thousands of

families are at stake," Mr. Gelernt said in a statement.

Democrats in the House of Representatives made a similar point. "Lives will be lost. This rule will result in those fleeing fear and persecution to be turned away at our doorstep and will only exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the region," House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler and Zoe Lofgren, who chairs the immigration and citizenship subcommittee, said in a joint statement.

"The United States can and must do better."

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel said that "for many refugees, this is life and death."

Taliban warns U.S. President

'He has yet to grasp the type of nation he is dealing with'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE KABUL

The war of words between the Taliban and President Donald Trump escalated on Thursday as the Afghan insurgents warned that the U.S. leader had failed to grasp "what type of nation he is dealing with".

The latest salvo comes a day after Mr. Trump boasted during a 9/11 anniversary ceremony that American forces have "hit our enemy harder than they have ever been hit before and that will continue" just days after peace talks between the two sides collapsed.

"Trump (@realDonaldTrump) must tread carefully," tweeted Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.

"He has yet to grasp the type of nation he is dealing with. His advisers must make him understand & introduce the Graveyard of Empires #Afghanistan to him."

Until this weekend there had been steadily mounting expectations of a deal that would see the U.S. draw down troop levels in Afghanistan. In return, the Taliban would offer security guarantees to keep extremist groups out.

But then on Saturday, Mr. Trump revealed on Twitter that he had cancelled an unprecedented meeting between the Taliban and himself at Camp David and later said the talks with the militants were "dead".

The spokesman's tweet comes just hours after the group launched a suicide attack that killed at least four soldiers, as the insurgents ramp up attacks on security forces. The incident occurred at a special forces base in Char Asiab district where an insurgent driving a car packed with explosives detonated near the facility.

ELSEWHERE



Google to pay €945 mn to end French tax dispute

PARIS
U.S. Internet giant Google has agreed a settlement totalling €945 million to end a tax dispute in France under an agreement announced in court on Thursday. The company will pay a €500-million fine for tax evasion, as well as a further €465 million to settle claims with French tax authorities. AFP

Trump agrees to delay increase in China tariffs

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

After an apparent conciliatory move by China, U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday made one of his own, announcing that he agreed to delay an increase in tariffs on \$250 billion worth of Chinese goods by two weeks.

Speaking weeks ahead of the resumption of talks aimed at resolving a grinding trade war, Mr. Trump said the tariff delay was requested by Beijing.

"We have agreed, as a gesture of good will, to

move the increased Tariffs on 250 Billion Dollars worth of goods (25% to 30%), from October 1st to October 15th," Mr. Trump tweeted late on Wednesday.

He said the delay was requested by "Vice Premier of China, Liu He, and due to the fact that the People's Republic of China will be celebrating their 70th Anniversary," on October 1.

Early Wednesday, Beijing announced it was temporarily exempting some U.S. exports from tariff increases, a gesture that lifted equity markets.

Scarlett Johansson takes the limelight at TIFF

The actor plays lead roles in *Marriage Story* and *Jojo Rabbit* that were screened at the film festival

NAMRATA JOSHI TORONTO

It's a Scarlett Johansson special at TIFF this year with the actor featuring in two of the most rewarding films of the festival so far: Noah Baumbach's *Marriage Story* and Taika Waititi's *Jojo Rabbit*. The actor is the luminous soul who personifies the spirit of resistance and humanity deeply embedded in Waititi's sharp and funny takedown of totalitarianism. In contrast, in Baumbach's *Marriage Story*, she is the vulnerable but decisive wo-



Scarlett Johansson

man who wants to move on in life, away from a "happy" marriage to find herself again.

Baumbach puts a collaps-

ing marriage under the microscope, something that has often been attempted in cinema before, from Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage* to Derek Cianfrance's *Blue Valentine*. Baumbach's gaze is distinguished by its warmth, tenderness and sympathy.

While Charlie (Adam Driver) is a theatre director, Nicole (Johansson) is an actor. The demands of their respective jobs and the necessity to relocate, the urgency to plumb the depths of one's own self and the need to fol-

low one's calling pulls them apart and puts their seemingly perfect relationship under strain. With theatre in the backdrop, Baumbach stages the disintegration of the relationship itself like a play but with the cinematic fluidity in tact.

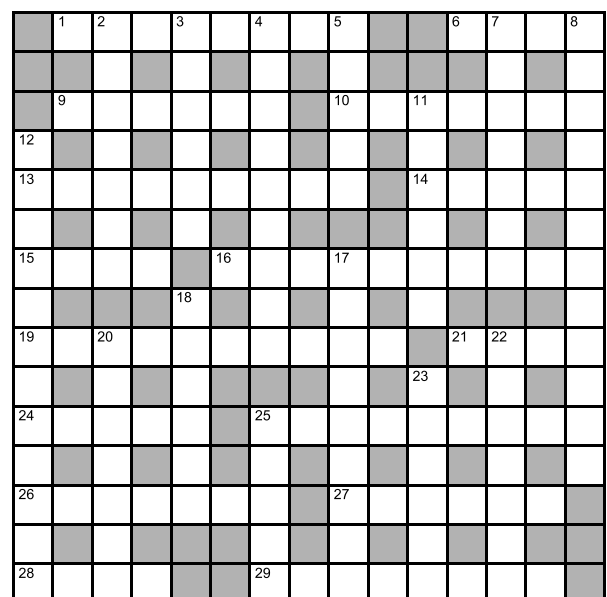
A treat to watch

The surprise of the festival has been the hugely enjoyable Jennifer Lopez-starrer, Lorene Scafaria's *The Hustlers*. Based on a *New York* magazine article, the film is about a team of strippers

who get the better of their Wall Street clients in the face of the economic collapse of 2008. Scafaria subverts the essential power play in the world driven by money and sex, that objectifies women and panders to the male desire. In *The Hustlers*, the game is all about the women owning their lives, bodies and financial independence. Lopez is delightfully effortless in inhabiting the role of Ramona, the leader of the pack.

(The writer is in Toronto at the invitation of TIFF)

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12729



ACROSS

- 1 By accident, tramp finds temporary accommodation (5,3)
- 6 Breezed through publicity about church (4)
- 9 Mind endlessly to delve over colour (6)
- 10 Castle puts together French water with Indian dish (7)

- 13 Quiet operation to defeat workers (4,5)
- 14 Interrogate cook (5)
- 15 Exceptional artist's on (4)
- 16 Enthralled female travelled a distance (10)
- 19 Anon exists thus (10)
- 21 Preserve society head's key (4)
- 24 Join by just taking a bit of glue (5)
- 25 Distressed diner's into bad performance (9)
- 26 Fancy ring given to gran heartily (7)
- 27 Therefore congregant withdrew party (6)
- 28 Cover old Venetian resort (4)
- 29 The man is taking mafia leader to a bit of mad pursuit of pleasure (8)

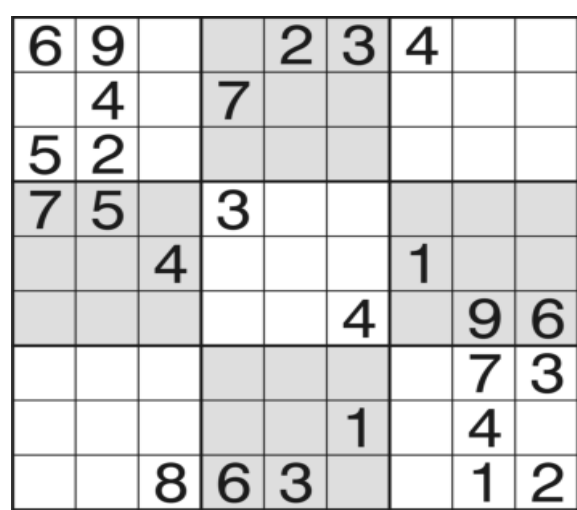
DOWN

- 2 Prominent person's pronounced bitterness (7)
- 3 Disdainful section extremely tentative (6)

(set by Gridman)

- 4 Support also different small offers (9)
- 5 Design scheme of French company's right (5)
- 7 Revolutionary to return and keep six sheep (7)
- 8 Activity of foursome – seeing, seeing! (6-6)
- 11 Pain anew with 'Dennis the Menace' friend (6)
- 12 Huge moral actions pulled off (12)
- 17 Complaint about crude noise is settled (9)
- 18 Overcharge for wool (6)
- 20 United male made it without a trace of vanity (7)
- 22 A new mail's about wild bunch in zoo (7)
- 23 Container, container, container (3,3)
- 25 Come to the limit of tether, everyone (5)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12728

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

7	5	4	8	1	2	3	9	6
8	3	9	4	6	5	7	2	1
1	6	2	9	7	3	5	8	4
3	4	8	6	5	7	2	1	9
9	1	5	2	3	4	8	6	7
6	2	7	1	8	9	4	3	5
4	9	6	7	2	8	1	5	3
5	8	1	3	4	6	9	7	2
2	7	3	5	9	1	6	4	8

FAITH

When Pranava walked

Valmiki says that seeing Rama, Sita and Lakshmana walk, was like seeing the Pranava mantra walking. This observation contains a significant philosophical message, said Akkarakkani Srinidhi, in a discourse. The Pranava has three syllables – akAra, ukAra and makAra (aum). 'A' stands for the Supreme One Vishnu. Parasara Bhatta, in his *Ashtasloki*, says, "akArArTo Vishnuh." The very syllable 'a' denotes Vishnu, the all-pervading One. That is why Ramanujacharya started his Sri Bhashya with the letter 'a'. The jivatma aspires to reach the abode of the Supreme One, and to serve Him there. The jivatma is connoted by the syllable 'ma.' There are said to be twenty-five tattvas, with the jivatma also being one of the tattvas. The intervening syllable 'u', denotes Sri Devi, the Goddess who takes us closer to the Supreme One. She is the One who leads us to Him. So, when Valmiki says that observing Rama, followed by Sita, followed by Lakshmana, is like the Pranava mantra walking, it is clear that Rama is the Paramatma, Sita is the Goddess who leads us to Him, and Lakshmana is the jivatma. Valmiki symbolically indicates Rama's Supremacy.

It is the jivatma which experiences joy. One example will serve to show the truth of this. After we have a good night's sleep, we say, "I enjoyed that long sleep." The question that arises is, "We do not know what happens when we are asleep. How then can we say we enjoy sleep?" The answer to that is that the jivatma is always awake.

All jivatmas are His sareera. The jivatma's duty is to serve Him. The atma also belongs to Him. That is why the divine mystic Andal says She cannot bear the suggestion of a connection with ordinary mortals. She yearns for the Lord. She cannot contemplate marriage with anyone but Krishna.