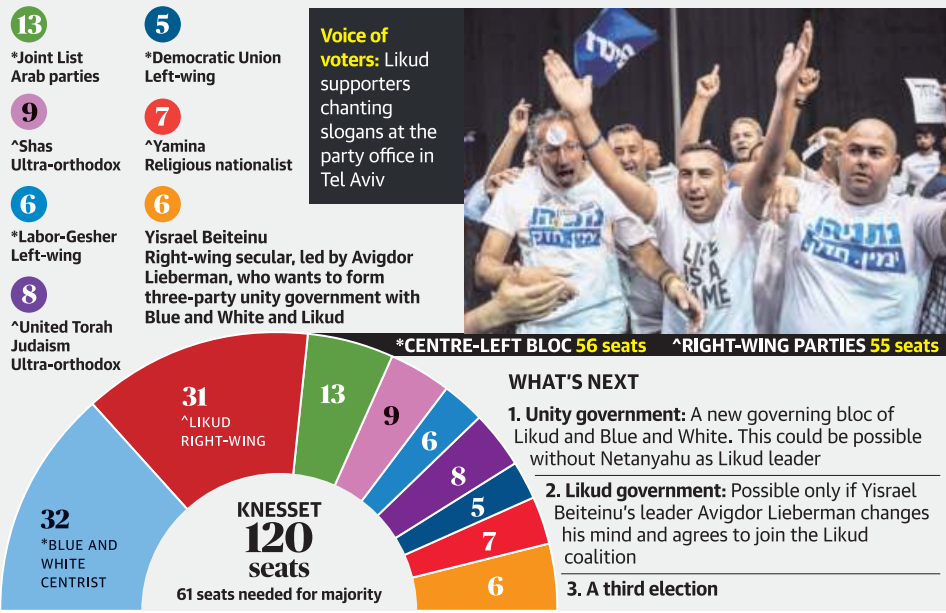


Likud, Blue and White in a deadlock

Preliminary reports suggest that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud is tied with rival Benny Gantz's centre-left Blue and White



Israel's Netanyahu fails to win majority

The right-wing coalition he leads wins 55 seats, 6 short of majority in the 120-member Parliament

REUTERS JERUSALEM
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to win a ruling majority in an election that produced a virtual tie between his right-wing bloc and a centre-left grouping that would be led by former military chief Benny Gantz.

The outcome, according to almost complete results published on Wednesday,

dealt a new blow to Israel's longest-serving leader who was already weakened by the inability to put together an administration after an inconclusive election in April.

But with coalition-building again key to forming a government, it could be days or even weeks before it becomes clear whether the wily politician hailed by supporters as "King Bibi" has been dethroned after a de-

cade in power.

With Israeli media reporting more than 90% of votes counted in Tuesday's election, the bloc led by Mr. Netanyahu's Likud party was more or less even with a likely grouping headed by Mr. Gantz's centrist Blue and White party.

A Likud-led bloc looked poised to control 55 of Parliament's 120 seats, with 56 going to a centre-left alliance,

numbers falling short of a majority government of 61 lawmakers.

A Likud spokesman said the leaders of right-wing factions met Mr. Netanyahu at the Prime Minister's office on Wednesday and pledged to work with him to form the next government.

The ballot's wildcard, former Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman, emerged as a likely kingmak-

er as head of the secular-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party, projected to capture nine seats.

Mr. Lieberman has been pushing for a unity government comprised of the biggest parties. He declined to back Mr. Netanyahu's bid to form a narrow right-wing and religious coalition after the April election, bringing about Tuesday's unprecedented repeat vote.

Sri Lanka to hold presidential election on November 16

Gotabaya Rajapaksa will face UNP and JVP candidates

MEERA SRINIVASAN COLOMBO

Sri Lanka will hold presidential elections on November 16, the Election Commission announced on Wednesday. Nominations would be called on October 7, according to the Election Secretariat.

The coming election has been drawing much interest locally and internationally, with Leader of Opposition and former President Mahinda Rajapaksa naming his brother Gotabaya Rajapaksa, a controversial former Defence Secretary accused of war-crimes, as the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna candidate.

A 2015 legislation puts a two-term cap on presidency, preventing Mahinda Rajapaksa from contesting for the highest office, but the popular leader has spoken about possibly returning to power through Parliament, as Prime Minister. Sri Lanka's general elections are due next year.

The ruling coalition led by the United National Party (UNP) is yet to announce its candidate for the presidential race, even as the battle within the party heats up, with its members divided over three contenders - UNP



Former Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa greeting supporters in Katunayake, in this file photo. •REUTERS

leader and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, deputy leader and Minister Sajith Premadasa and Speaker Karu Jayasuriya. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna has fielded Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

National security

It is widely expected that Gotabaya Rajapaksa's campaign would be centred on the theme of national security, especially in the wake of the Easter Sunday bombings that shook the island in April, killing over 250 people. Presenting himself as a "strong and decisive leader", Mr. Gotabaya has so far pitched himself as a "doer" and "efficient administrator", recalling his role in leading the Sri Lankan armed forces to victory

against the LTTE. In turn, Mr. Premadasa, said to be a popular candidate within the UNP, has said the primary motivation for him to contest was to "save the country from dictatorship", alluding to the authoritarian slant associated with the former Rajapaksa administration.

Living costs and rising unemployment are other issues that will likely dominate poll rhetoric, observers note. Meanwhile, Mr. Jayasuriya on Tuesday said his candidacy would be tied to the assurance of abolishing executive presidency, bringing into sharp focus an old but failed election promise that has been made to the Sri Lankan electorate for 25 years now, by hopefuls from across parties.

Iran sponsored attacks on oil facilities: Riyadh

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE RIYADH

Saudi Arabia said on Wednesday that strikes on its oil infrastructure came from the "north" and were "unquestionably" sponsored by Iran, but that the kingdom was still investigating where exactly they were launched from.

"The attack was launched from the north and unques-

tionably sponsored by Iran," Defence Ministry spokesman Turki al-Maliki said.

Mr. Maliki displayed pieces of what he said were cruise missiles and drones used in the strike. He said a combination of 18 drones and seven cruise missiles fired at the oil installations came from a direction that ruled out its southern neighbour Yemen as a source.

Trump orders more curbs on Iran

Tehran denies involvement in Saudi attacks, terms U.S. measures 'illegal' & 'inhuman'

REUTERS JEDDAH/DUBAI

President Donald Trump on Wednesday said he ordered a major increase in sanctions on Iran in the latest U.S. move to pressure Tehran, which U.S. officials say probably carried out the attack on Saudi oil facilities.

Mr. Trump gave no explanation in a brief Twitter post-

ing announcing the order, but the initiative follows repeated U.S. assertions that the Islamic Republic was behind Saturday's attack on the kingdom, a close U.S. ally.

"I have just instructed the Secretary of the Treasury to substantially increase sanctions on the country of Iran!" he wrote.

Iran, however, again de-

nied involvement in the September 14 raids. "They want to impose maximum ... pressure on Iran through slander," Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said. "We don't want conflict in the region ... Who started the conflict?" he added, blaming Washington and its Gulf allies for the war in Yemen.

Foreign Minister Moham-

ad Javad Zarif said the newly announced sanctions against Iran showed that the U.S. was aiming at civilians.

President Donald Trump's move was an "admission that (the) U.S. is DELIBERATELY targeting ordinary citizens," Mr. Zarif wrote on Twitter, adding that the measures were "illegal" and "inhuman".

Robert O'Brien is new U.S. National Security Adviser

He replaces Bolton, whom Trump fired

REUTERS WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday picked U.S. hostage negotiator Robert O'Brien as National Security Adviser, replacing hardliner John Bolton who was fired abruptly last week after clashing with the President on a host of issues.



Robert O'Brien

Mr. O'Brien, who will be the fourth person to hold the post in the Trump administration, has served as Mr. Trump's special envoy for hostage affairs at the U.S. Department of State since May 2018 and has a long history in Republican foreign policy circles.

"I have worked long & hard with Robert. He will do a great job!" Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter.

Mr. Trump fired Mr. Bolton after disagreements over handling foreign policy matters relating to North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia and Venezuela.

'Solid choice'

Mr. O'Brien is an attorney from Los Angeles who has served as a foreign policy adviser to several Republican presidential campaigns,

handled a number of high-profile legal cases and previously served in several State Department positions, including as an alternative representative to the UN General Assembly in 2005.

Mr. Trump recently dispatched Mr. O'Brien to Sweden for the court hearing of U.S. rapper A\$AP Rocky, who was later convicted for assault.

Senate Republicans praised Mr. Trump's pick as a solid choice.

"He understands the world for the dangerous place it is. He's got great negotiating skills as our hostage negotiator," Senator Lindsey Graham told reporters. "He'll be a very sound policy adviser."

IN BRIEF



Taliban open to new talks with U.S.

KABUL
The Taliban's chief negotiator has said their "doors are open" to resuming talks with U.S., hours after two attacks killed at least 48 people in Afghanistan. Speaking to the BBC, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai argued that the U.S. had also admitted to killing thousands of Taliban during the discussions, and that the insurgents had done nothing wrong by continuing to fight throughout the talks. AFP

Xi cites Mao as touchstone to build new China

'Maintain a fighting spirit and strengthen the ability to struggle to meet the targets set by the party'

ATUL ANEJA BEIJING

Amid a trade war with the U.S., Chinese President Xi Jinping has visited the ground zero of the revolution, pointing to the continuity of the "great struggle" to build a new China, ahead of the 70th anniversary of the formation of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

During his back-to-the-roots visits, President Xi is evoking memories associated with Mao Zedong, the founding father of the PRC, and the nascent phase of China's socialist revolution.

So far, during his carefully choreographed travels, President Xi has hardly mentioned Mao's successors, including Deng Xiaoping, as China heads to celebrate 70 years of socialism on October 1. Last week, Mr. Xi visited Fragrant Hills, briefly the headquarters of the Communist Party of China (CPC), just before the triumph of the revolution in October 1949. Accompanied by Wang Huning, the CPC's top ideologue and part of the seven-member Standing Committee of the Politburo, China's top leadership, Mr. Xi first vi-

sited Shuangqing Villa, Mao's abode at Fragrant Hills, on the outskirts of Beijing. The walk-around also included visits to living areas of the first generation of revolutionaries - Zhu De, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Ren Bishi.

After keeping a relatively low profile recently, Mr. Wang was also part of Mr. Xi's entourage that visited the CPC's Party School in Beijing on September 3. During an address at the Party School, where the CPC's elite is trained, Mr. Xi delivered a stirring back-to-the-trenches speech. In his address, Mr. Xi

cited the word "struggle", a Maoist era coinage in the context of China, over 50 times.

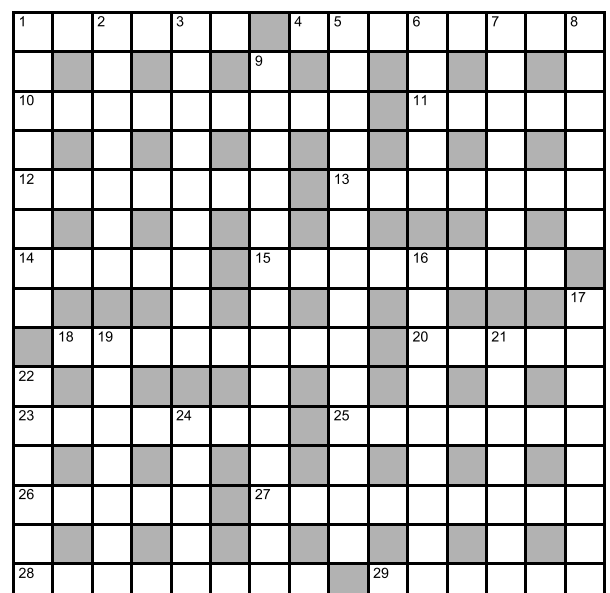
Prosperous society

The President exhorted his audience of young and middle level officials "that maintaining a fighting spirit and strengthening the ability to struggle is a must in meeting the targets set by the party," which include the two centenary goals - achieving a moderately prosperous society in the next two years and delivering an advanced socialist nation by 2050.

He warned of the "unthinkably challenging" road ahead and cited the "long-term nature of various struggles". Mr. Xi urged his audience to "notice a deer passing by, looking at the grass and leaves, see a tiger jumping out by hearing the wind in the pines, and know the coming of autumn by spotting the changed colour of a tree leaf".

At Fragrant Hills, eight revolutionary sites have been opened earlier this month, including the Shuangqing Villa, following extensive renovation since last year.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12734



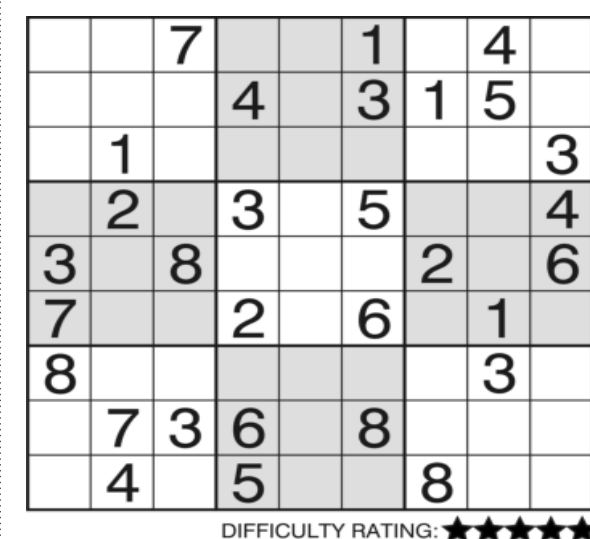
ACROSS

- 1 Consider vacating residence and pull over (6)
- 4 Complete work, current is constant but creates adverse reaction (8)
- 10 Hide under stone? He's mean (9)
- 11 Street urchin mostly gambling (5)

(set by Arden)

- 12 Wine in the making, one gallon for a horse (7)
 - 13 Stylish and neat, tailored clothing for cricket side (7)
 - 14 Material or any substitute (5)
 - 15 Tales of a disaster in the recent past (2,2,4)
 - 18 Fear grips the party, it's widespread (8)
 - 20 They're brilliant - green, vivid, seen regularly... (5)
 - 23 ...but it's fortified (7)
 - 25 It stops, follow in a series (2,5)
 - 26 Vessel takes four in turn (5)
 - 27 Deception is in - even beer comes in any container (9)
 - 28 Left on board, in no time can be carried (8)
 - 29 Let down, bet one ends in loss (6)
- #### DOWN
- 1 Railroad added to a tourist spot in South Dakota (8)
 - 2 Dispute profits over a year (7)
 - 3 Avoided if rear end is shifted (9)
 - 5 Landlord forced out, it is a commercial document (6,2,6)
 - 6 Finally the tailender comes in time to score (5)
 - 7 Athlete gets indirect tax cover for many sports (7)
 - 8 Nice to see one accepted as King (6)
 - 9 Indian way to help lift it - a calm representation using drawings (14)
 - 16 It's on but delayed to do parliamentary work (9)
 - 17 Fish eye in two dimensions, surprised? (4-4)
 - 19 Hampshire town, a new port (7)
 - 21 Most trusting, natives are free (7)
 - 22 Support for a pet (4,2)
 - 24 'Extremist' - insult rankles somewhat (5)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12733

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Service to Guru

Among the many pleasant exchanges that take place between Krishna and Kuchela, Krishna recalling the role of their Guru Sandipani in shaping and moulding their personalities and character is of special significance, pointed out Sri Kesava Dikshitar in a discourse. The meeting of friends after years-long gap can itself be a thrilling experience. It is an occasion to savour the joyous moments of childhood days.

Both Krishna and Kuchela hark back to many unforgettable incidents during the period of training in the Gurukula days. Once they went to collect fuel from the forest for the Guru's wife. They had wandered deep into the forest and got lost. In addition, there arose a dust storm, followed by rains, thunder and lightning.

In that situation, Krishna recalls how they both held each other's hands for security, not knowing what else to do. The whole night was spent in this wilderness and in the early morning the other students came searching for them. Along with them the Guru also had come and praised them for their endurance and courage. More than that, the Guru appreciated their spirit of selfless service, an ideal quality to be cultivated by every student. The Guru blessed them with the spiritual jnana that will always help them all through their life.

The grace and blessings of the Guru will ensure lifelong happiness and peace of mind to every student, whatever may be the state of life and calling he is placed in later life. The greatest gift a Guru bequeaths to his disciple is the jnana marga by which one travels towards salvation. The real guru dakshina is selfless service to the Guru. This will pave the way for other attainments in life automatically.