

ELSEWHERE



Kremlin says Maduro will visit Russia soon... Moscow... Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro will visit Russia "soon", the Kremlin said on Friday...

Pope decries euthanasia as court moots options... Vatican City... Pope Francis on Friday again spoke out against assisted suicide and euthanasia...

Trump says no to military strike on Iran

Treasury Department imposes toughest-ever sanctions on Iranian central bank for funding terrorism

ASSOCIATED PRESS WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Friday announced new sanctions on Iran that he said were the toughest-ever against another country but indicated he did not plan a military strike...



Aftermath of attacks: Damaged refining towers at Aramco's oil plant in Abqaiq, Saudi Arabia, on Friday.

"I could do it right here in front of you. And that would be it. And then you would have a nice, big story to report," he said.

"But I think the strong-person approach and the thing that does show strength would be showing a little bit of restraint," he said.

'Iran on borrowed time' "Much easier to do it the other way. It's much easier. And Iran knows if they misbehave, they're on borrowed time," he said.

The United States already maintains sweeping sanctions on Iran, including on its central bank, with anyone who deals with it subject to prosecution...

But the Treasury Department said that it was imposing sanctions for the additional reason of "terrorism," saying the central bank had provided "billions of dollars" to two forces blacklisted by the U.S.

Such a designation may be more difficult to lift, even if

Mr. Trump loses next year's election to a Democrat who wants to ease sanctions as part of a future deal.

"Iran's brazen attack against Saudi Arabia is unacceptable," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement.

"Treasury's action targets a crucial funding mechanism that the Iranian regime uses to support its terrorist network, including the Qods Force, Hezbollah and other militants that spread terror and destabilise the region," he said.

The Qods Force conducts international operations for Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards, who are in charge of protecting the clerical regime. Hezbollah, the Shiite militant group and political party in Lebanon, is among Iran's closest regional partners.

Behnam Ben Taleblu, a senior fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, which supports tough action on Iran, said that the latest measures are a way "to

push Tehran to shun funding terrorism."

"It proves to Tehran that there will be no stopping U.S. sanctions unless Iran changes its behaviour," he said.

Development fund hit

The United States also imposed sanctions on Iran's sovereign wealth fund, a development fund whose board of trustees includes President Hassan Rouhani as well as Etemad Tejarate Pars, a company that the Treasury Department said had sent money internationally on behalf of Iran's Defence Ministry.

Mr. Trump in June authorised a military strike after Iran shot down a U.S. drone, only to call it off at the last moment. He recently said that he hopes for talks with Mr. Rouhani, who responded that Mr. Trump must first ease sanctions.

Mr. Trump last year pulled out of a nuclear accord with Iran negotiated under former President Barack Obama.

Pak. activist flees to U.S., seeks political asylum

She spoke against Army's sexual abuse

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

Gulalai Ismail's campaigns to empower Pakistani girls have won her international awards and recognition as one of her country's foremost activists.

But when she spoke out against sexual violence and disappearances allegedly carried out by the Army in northwestern Pakistan, her fortunes quickly changed.

The 32-year-old said she feared for her life. After four months on the run, she succeeded in eluding a vast hunt and has turned up in the U.S., where she is seeking asylum.

Ms. Ismail said she never sought to become an overseas dissident but sees a closing of the political space in Pakistan.

"I never wanted to leave Pakistan," she told AFP in an interview in Washington. "I believe that I can better work towards democracy and civil supremacy and



Gulalai Ismail

peace in Pakistan."

But she concluded she would be more effective abroad, saying: "If I had ended up in prison and tortured for many years, my voice would have been silenced."

Ms. Ismail believed she posed a special threat as a vocal woman. "When a man stands up, he is mostly against the State oppression. But when a woman stands up, she is fighting oppression on many levels — fighting cultural norms, fighting the patriarchy and the State oppression."

Hong Kong police tortured protesters, alleges Amnesty

REUTERS HONG KONG

Amnesty International accused Hong Kong police on Friday of torture and other abuses in their handling of more than three months of pro-democracy protests, but the police say they have shown restraint on the street in the face of increased violence.

Anti-government protesters, many masked and wearing black, have thrown petrol bombs at police and central government offices,

stormed the Legislative Council, blocked roads to the airport, trashed metro stations and lit fires on the streets of the Chinese-ruled city.

Police have responded with tear gas, water cannons, rubber bullets, bean bag rounds and several live rounds fired in the air, warning the crowds beforehand with a series of different coloured banners.

They have also been seen beating protesters on the ground with batons, with

footage of one such attack on cowering passengers on an MTR subway train going viral online and prompting widespread anger.

"The evidence leaves little room for doubt in an apparent thirst for retaliation, Hong Kong's security forces have engaged in a disturbing pattern of reckless and unlawful tactics against people during the protests," Nicholas Bequelin, East Asia director at Amnesty International, said in a report following a field investigation.

Death toll from Taliban bomb attack rises to 39

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE KABUL

The death toll from a massive Taliban bomb attack which flattened a hospital in southern Afghanistan earlier this week, has risen to at least 39, officials said on Friday.

The jump in the death toll from the blast, which took place in the town of Qalat in Zabul province on Thursday, takes the total number of people killed in just three days of violence across the war-torn country this week to at least 91.

"The toll from the hospital attack in Qalat has jumped to 39 killed, 140 others wounded," Gul Islam Seyal, the spokesman for the provincial governor, said.

Earlier, authorities had said the blast had killed 20 people.

The surge in violence, with civilians paying the heaviest price, has come after U.S. President Donald Trump called off talks with the Taliban that could have seen Washington begin withdrawing troops.

No dicey talk with anyone: Trump

Uproar over his call to a foreign leader to 'influence 2020 poll'

ASSOCIATED PRESS WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump again denied on Friday that he did anything wrong during a mysterious phone call with an as-yet unidentified foreign leader after a whistleblower in the intelligence services sounded the alarm.

The Washington Post reported that the call was to Ukraine and that Mr. Trump had made a "promise" of some kind.

"There was nothing said wrong, it was pitch perfect!"

Mr. Trump tweeted, without detailing whom he had spoken to or what was said.

He said his Democratic opponents and the media "think I may have had a 'dicey' conversation with a certain foreign leader" but this was only based on what he called "a 'highly partisan' whistleblowers statement."

However, a political storm is rapidly brewing over the refusal by Mr. Trump's Director of National Intelligence to give Congress the whistleblower's report.

The allegations could ref-

er to a call known to have been made in July between Mr. Trump and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a former comedian who was elected in May.

Mr. Trump allegedly sought to pressure the Ukrainians to pursue corruption charges against the son of his main Democratic rival in the 2020 presidential election Joe Biden.

Congressional legislators were also concerned that the Trump administration had been holding back military aid to Ukraine at the time.

U.S. students seek climate action

Days before UN summit, young Americans march across the country

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN NEW YORK

The largest climate change protests in the U.S. got under way on Friday with students and young people expected to turn out in more than 1,000 locations across all 50 U.S. States to demand action to prevent climate change.

Young Americans joined others across the world in a day of protests.

Greta Thunberg, the 16 year old from Sweden, who began weekly Friday protests outside Sweden's Parliament in August 2018 and has become the face of these protests, is participating in a rally in Lower Manhattan.

Ms. Thunberg, who does not take aeroplanes, arrived in the U.S. via a zero emis-

sions solar-powered yacht, having set sail from Plymouth on August 14. Earlier this week, she was in Washington where she testified before Congress, and met lawmakers, including Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

"I don't want you to listen to me, I want you to listen to the scientists," Ms. Thunberg told a panel of the U.S. House of Representatives earlier this week, submitting a copy of the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5° C (October 2018) as her testimony to Congress. "And I want you to unite behind the science. And then I want you to take real action," Ms. Thunberg had said.



Greta Thunberg

New York's 1.1 million public school students have been allowed to skip classes to attend the protests if they have their parents' permission, but school teachers are not permitted to attend during school hours, the New York Times reported.

Friday's protests are scheduled for days before the UN Climate Change Summit on Monday which will see world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron deliver addresses. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres had told leaders not to bring speeches but to bring plans to Monday's Summit.

Significantly, President Donald Trump, who has pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accord and undone several climate change mitigating policies, will not speak on Monday. According to a CBS News poll, 56% of Americans want climate change action to be taken right now.

Twitter shuts down fake news accounts

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

Twitter said on Friday it shut down thousands of accounts worldwide for spreading misinformation, including some artificially amplifying pro-Saudi messaging as part of a regional propaganda war.

The move affected pro-Saudi accounts coming from Egypt and the United Arab Emirates directed at Qatar and Yemen, Twitter said, as well as others from China seeking to sow discord among protesters in Hong Kong. Also, fake accounts were suspended in Spain and Ecuador.

Notably, it closed the account of Saudi royal court adviser Saud al-Qahtani.

Bill de Blasio drops out of Democratic presidential race

He was unlikely to qualify for the fourth Democratic debate

JEFFERY C. MAYS NEW YORK

Bill de Blasio, the Mayor of New York City who entered the Democratic presidential race on the premise that his brand of urban progressive leadership could appeal on a national scale, said on Friday that he was ending his candidacy.

Mr. De Blasio's announcement came as it became clear he was unlikely to qualify for the fourth Democratic debate next month, cementing the notion that he lacked the support and funds to sustain his bid.

"I feel like I've contributed all I can to this primary



Bill de Blasio

campaign, and it's clearly not my time," he said in an appearance on MSNBC's "Morning Joe." "I'm going to end my presidential campaign, continue my work as

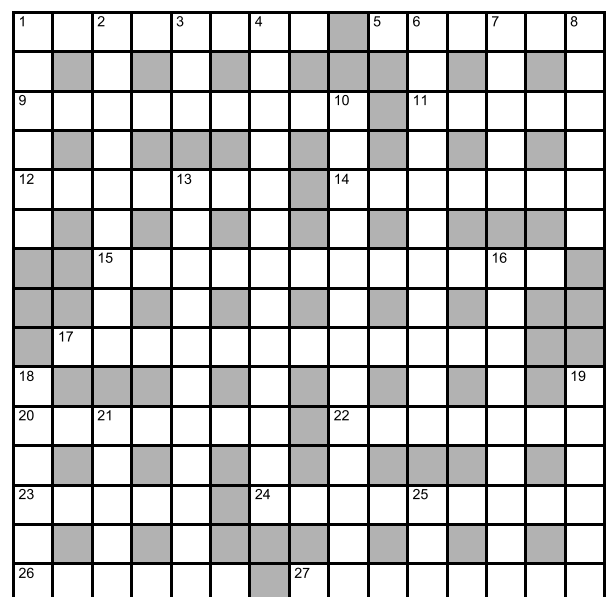
mayor of New York City, and I'm going to keep speaking up for working people."

Mr. De Blasio focused his campaign on trying to improve the lives of those working people.

He tried to position himself as the most suitable Democrat to take on President Donald Trump, given his familiarity with Mr. Trump as a real estate magnate in New York. He branded the President "Con Don".

None of it worked. Mr. De Blasio's campaign was seen as a quixotic, 100-to-1 shot from its inception and it never gained traction, not even in New York. NY TIMES

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12736



ACROSS

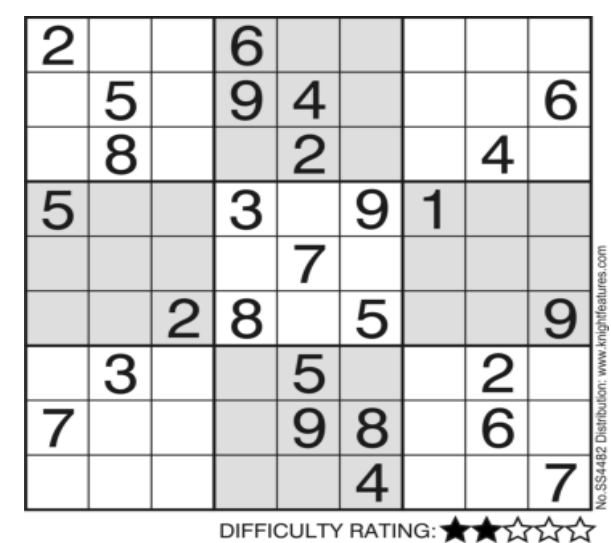
- 1 Smirking revolutionary ingesting a small amount of jellied candies (8)
5 In America, vortices make one play boisterously (6)
9 Careers off-course to capture the performing orator's vocal quality (9)
11 A chilly way to get suspended? (2,3)

- 12 Asian with a pleated sari in front of a priest (7)
14 Note about the associate sent back by the royal entourage (7)
15 Brief congregational disturbance after the removal of a good senior citizen (12)
17 Doctor annoys chorus with a description of clocks having no similarities in phase or frequency (12)
20 Oak Wani chopped up in a Japanese island (7)
22 Systematic study involves putting one at the wrong place with the beautiful Oriental (7)
23 Note included with the cut fruit from the east for the Greek storyteller (5)
24 Factory providing poor pay makes stopwatches out of Connecticut (9)
26 Lovable arrangement by the retiring sailor with an old UK school qualification (1,5)
27 Animal with flower returned after son enters with a tax official (8)

(set by Neyartha)

- 3 Dash to meet the last of the elder Bantu statesmen (3)
4 Restrain the vocal followers of a branch of Islam under the monarch with the tailoring scissors (7,6)
6 Justification requiring more than just reasoning? (1,10)
7 Vegetable from Ontario absorbs the nitrogen spread around the volcanic moon (5)
8 Rock forcing son to make way for the bridge player with a canopy (6)
10 Neo's nurse rose to correct the inaccuracy (13)
13 Head off with the chairs prior to getting enough power to replace Mark's fruit for dessert (6,5)
16 Aromatic herbs found in a banninet designed to accommodate Henry (9)
18 Sapota toasted partially with a vegetable (6)
19 Pungent seasoning lifts the salesman's spirit initially (6)
21 Proceed with the distribution (5)
25 Article given by you a long time back to the auditor (3)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12735
FOUGHT SCANDAL
BEINACOLD SWEAT
PRIG OECCT
UNDOES INUNDATE
TUGR DRSR
OMEGA ABORBTWO
NTRAVELLURRUEP
HWANNNN
EYESIGHT EGMORE
SSNAEUSSR
POORSUBSTITUTE
OMEEAAAII
TWEETED LUNACY

FAITH

Plea from the heart

The Lord and His consort descend together to fulfil the purposes of their incarnations. In Rama avatar, out of compassion for humanity, the divine mother as Sita allows herself to be taken away forcibly to Lanka. This is to enable the killing of Ravana who is a great Siva devotee and a ruler who has consolidated extraordinary prowess through boons obtained by austere practices. She subjects herself to untold miseries when in captivity. In Krishna avatar, the divine mother as Rukmini pleads with Krishna to save her from the onward marriage with Sisupala before he can approach her, pointed out Sri B. Damodhara Dikshitar in a discourse. Her brother Rukmi entertains enmity to Krishna and wants to give Rukmini in marriage to the evil minded Sisupala. But Rukmini has heard of the Lord's glories and her heart is filled with His thoughts. She represents the true devotee who is only driven by a desire to be with the Lord. She sends a Brahmin as a messenger to Krishna to inform Him of her desperate situation. The famed letter she reaches out to Krishna has tremendous significance as showcasing the plight of the jivatma for whom the Paramatma is the rightful owner. All jivatmas belong to the Lord and are His property. She also alludes to Narasimha avatar, and states that He has to make His appearance at the right moment to claim her, lest the Chedi king like a jackal takes away the possession meant for the lion. A jivatma earns the right to be with the Lord through acquiring merit by worship and spiritual practices, sacrifices, charities, religious rites, and adoration of holy men, elders and teachers. She suggests that Krishna should come incognito to her presence during the procession for worship at the temple of Goddess Parvati and by force of arms should marry her with all chivalry and glory.