

Boris Johnson loses Parliament majority

Rebel lawmaker Phillip Lee defects to pro-European Liberal Democrats; MPs seek to delay Brexit

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON
Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday lost his working majority in Parliament ahead of a showdown with rebel MPs over Brexit that could lead to a snap election within weeks.

Mr. Johnson condemned a plan by lawmakers to block his Brexit strategy as "surrender" and said it would undermine his intention to negotiate a new divorce deal with the EU.

He said the move by opposition MPs and members of his Conservative party to try to delay Brexit beyond October 31 if he cannot agree exit terms with Brussels was like "running up the white flag".

Ahead of a first vote in the House of Commons on Tuesday evening, Mr. Johnson

said: "There are no circumstances in which I will ever accept anything like it". His aides had already warned that defeat would force him to call a snap election ahead of a crucial EU summit on October 17-18 - and a mere fortnight before Brexit.

Delay plan
The rebels believe they have the numbers to force through the plan, which is backed by the main opposition Labour party and could delay Brexit to January 31.

In a theatrical show of defiance, Conservative MP Phillip Lee crossed the floor of the Commons while Mr. Johnson was making his statement, to defect to the pro-European Liberal Democrats.

As a result, the Prime Minister no longer has a major-



In limbo: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaking in the Parliament in London on Tuesday. • PARLIAMENT TV/REUTERS

ity in the 650-seat chamber - but the defection does not automatically bring down the government.

This can only happen if the government loses a formal confidence vote.

On a day of high drama,

an Edinburgh court, meanwhile, heard a legal challenge against Mr. Johnson's decision to suspend Parliament next week for more than a month, which critics said was a bid to silence MPs. Mr. Johnson took office

less than six weeks ago, after his predecessor Theresa May was forced out over her failure to get her Brexit divorce deal through parliament.

From the start, he faced opposition from his own MPs who fear his threat of leaving the EU without an agreement with Brussels risks severe economic disruption.

Former Finance Minister Philip Hammond is among those who have joined with Labour to draw up legislation that could force the delay. They will first try to make room in the parliamentary agenda for a debate of the bill by putting forward a motion set to be voted on by MPs on Tuesday evening.

If they succeed, they will introduce their Bill on Wednesday and seek to get it through before Parliament is suspended next week.

Explosion rocks Kabul as U.S. peace deal with Taliban nears

16 civilians killed and 119 wounded in suicide attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KABUL

The death toll from a late-night Taliban suicide attack in the Afghan capital rose to 16 civilians on Tuesday, with 119 people wounded, an official said. Angry Kabul residents climbed over the wall into the international compound, which has been targeted frequently, and set part of it on fire.

Thick smoke rose from the Green Village, home to several international organisations and guest houses.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told that "we understand that peace talks are going on... but they must also understand that we are not weak and if we enter into talks... we enter from a



Terror-hit: Afghan firefighters at work after a suicide attack at a parking lot in Kabul on Tuesday. • AFP

strong position."

Interior Ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said some 400 foreigners had been rescued. Five attackers were shot and killed by security forces after the bomber detonated a tractor packed with explosives, he added.

The attack occurred just

hours after the U.S. envoy briefed the Afghan government on an agreement "in principle" with the Taliban that would see 5,000 U.S. troops withdraw from five bases in the country within 135 days of a final deal. Between 14,000 and 13,000 troops are currently in the country.

Carrie Lam says she will stay on

Hong Kong leader clarifies she never considered resigning

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HONG KONG

Hong Kong's embattled leader insisted on Tuesday she had no intention of stepping down after an audio recording emerged of her saying she wanted to quit over three months of unrest in the southern Chinese city.

Hong Kong has endured dozens of pro-democracy protests triggered by opposition to Chief Executive Carrie Lam's bid to pass a law allowing extraditions to mainland China.

The protests have evolved into a wider democracy campaign involving clashes between protesters and police, in the biggest challenge to China's rule of Hong Kong since its 1997 handover from the British.



Carrie Lam

"I told myself repeatedly in the last three months that I and my team should stay on to help Hong Kong," Lam told a press conference on Tuesday morning.

Ms. Lam said she had "not even contemplated" discussing her resignation with the Chinese government, which gives Hong Kong a restricted form of autonomy. "The

conflict that I myself want to quit, but cannot quit, does not exist," she said.

Ms. Lam was speaking after Reuters news agency released an audio recording of her telling business leaders last week that she wanted to step down and take responsibility for the unrest.

"For a chief executive to have caused this huge havoc to Hong Kong is unforgivable," an emotional Lam said in the audio recording. "If I have a choice," she said, speaking in English, "the first thing is to quit, having made a deep apology."

On Tuesday, Beijing repeated its support for the leader, but warned it would "never allow the situation in Hong Kong to continue unabated".

No water storage projects in Tibet, says China

'One hydro power plant has been built & two others are under construction on Yarlung Zangbo River'

AMIT BARUAH
BEIJING

China has built one and is constructing two more run-of-the-river hydro power plants on the Yarlung Zangbo River, which is known as the Brahmaputra in India, a top Chinese official told a group of visiting Indian journalists recently.

"There is no storage involved in these projects," Yu Xingjun, Consul in the Chinese Water Resources Ministry, said in response to a specific question from *The Hindu*. There have been unverified media reports from time to time that the Chinese government was building some major dam projects on the Yarlung Zangbo in Tibet. According to him, one 510



China says it is using less than 1% of the Yarlung Zangbo [Brahmaputra] as an upper riparian State. • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

MW hydro power plant had been built and two others were under construction. The generating capacity of the two under-construction plant was not immediately available, said Mr. Yu.

The top Chinese official dealing with India on water

issues was at pains to emphasise that China was using less than 1% of the Yarlung Zangbo as an upper riparian state. "There is enough water to sustain the lower riparian states. The outbound quality of the water is also excellent," Mr. Yu claimed.

However, the Tibetan people had a basic right to use their water resources.

Information sharing
According to the official, China was sticking to a bilateral agreement with India to supply data on water flow levels at a time of possible floods. As of now, this information sharing on flood information was confined to two rivers - the Yarlung Zangbo and the Sutlej.

Mr. Yu added that, like India, the Chinese government had plans to divert river waters to those provinces that were suffering from scarcity. This was part and parcel of China's transition from "high speed to high quality development".

Asked whether a large country like China had issues between provinces when it came to water sharing, he replied in the affirmative. China faced water-sharing issues especially in regard to the Yellow River, Mr. Yu said. "These provinces [along the Yellow River] would like to have more water for themselves."

There were, he said, seven commissions to manage water basins in China, which were also responsible for allocating individual share for the provinces as well. "They [the commissions] will allocate the quota for every province," Mr. Yu added.

(This writer was in China at the invitation of the Chinese Foreign Ministry)



FB brings face recognition to all users

REUTERS
CALIFORNIA

Facebook Inc said on Tuesday its face recognition technology will now be available to all users with an option to opt out. It will, however, discontinue a related feature called "Tag Suggestions".

Face recognition, which was available to some Facebook users since December 2017, notifies users if their profile photo is used by someone else or if they appear in photos where they have not been tagged.

25 killed, 9 missing in California boat fire

REUTERS
SANTA BARBARA

Divers have found a total of 25 bodies on Monday after a pre-dawn fire sank a scuba diving vessel off a Southern California island, leaving nine people unaccounted for as the search continued, media reported.

The boat had embarked for California's Channel Islands on Saturday morning with 39 people on board. Five crew members who were above deck on the bridge escaped the fire as passengers slept in the ship's lower quarters.

Authorities were trying to determine the best way to recover the sunken vessel.

The surviving crew members sought refuge on a fishing boat moored a few



The boat on fire off the coast of Santa Cruz Island, California. • AFP

hundred feet away.

U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, a Democrat who represents California, called for an investigation. "It happened quickly enough so many people could not get off," U.S. Coast Guard Lieutenant Commander Matthew Kroll told CNN.

War crimes committed in Yemen: UN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

Horrific rights violations, including killings, torture and sexual violence, are being committed with impunity by all sides in Yemen's brutal conflict, UN war crimes investigators warned on Tuesday.

The investigators, appointed by the UN Human Rights Council in 2017, said they had "identified, where possible, individuals who may be responsible for international crimes".

If confirmed by an independent court, many of the violations identified "may result in individuals being held responsible for war crimes," they said in a statement.

On exorcists' advice, priest bans Harry Potter books in school

It is feared the novels could be used to 'summon spirits'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Exorcists advised a Nashville school priest to ban the Harry Potter books, over fears the popular children's novels could be used to summon spirits.

Reverend Dan Reehil contacted exorcists in Rome and the U.S., who recommended removing the fantasy novels from St. Edward Catholic School's library in Tennessee.

The series of books spins an epic tale of good and evil focused on the adventures of a young wizard as he struggles against the dark wizard Lord Voldemort.



A copy of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling. • REUTERS

"The curses and spells used in the books are actual curses and spells; which when read by a human being risk conjuring evil spirits into the presence of the per-

son reading the text," the reverend said in an email obtained by local media.

Rebecca Hammel, the superintendent of schools for the Catholic Diocese of Nashville, told *The Tennessean* that Reverend Reehil had "canonical authority to make such decisions."

Although the school used to stock the books, it will not offer them to pupils in its newly opened library, Ms. Hammel said.

The Potter series has been repeatedly banned from schools in the U.S. and Britain, mostly for allegedly promoting satanic values or black magic.

U.S. boy shoots, kills 5 family members

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MIAMI

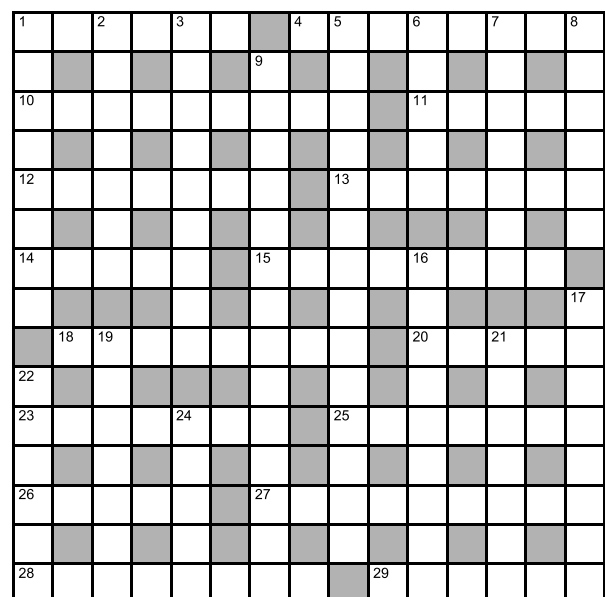
A 14-year-old boy shot and killed all five members of his family in the U.S. state of Alabama and then called police and confessed to the crime, local law enforcement said on Tuesday.

Three of the victims were found dead at the scene and the other two died later after being airlifted to a regional hospital.

"The caller confessed to shooting all five members of his family in the residence," Limestone County sheriff said on Twitter.

"He is currently assisting investigators in locating the weapon, a 9mm handgun that he said he tossed nearby," it said.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12721

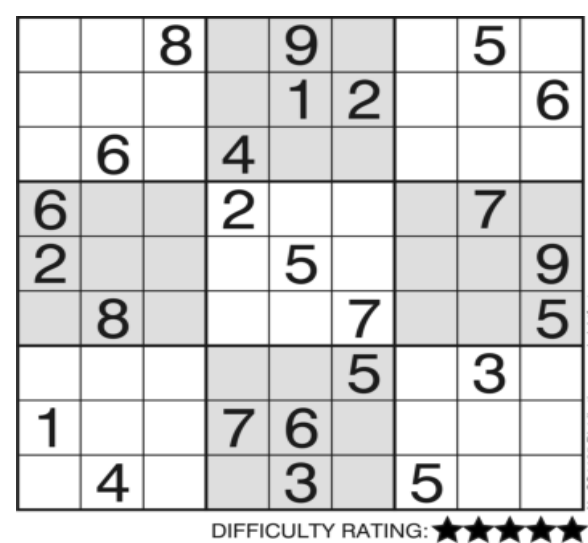


■ ACROSS

- 1 Old American about to drink coffee from the East (6)
- 4 Member of Jewish community with hospital in capital city, extremely expensive (8)
- 10 Theatre is much abused by everyone (5,4)
- 11 Enter popular place (5)

- (set by KrisKross)
- 12 Doctor Grant on vacation, ordered Charlie to go for jog (7)
 - 13 Pain after stretching exercise, without a healthy drink (7)
 - 14 Primarily dry area in warmer country (5)
 - 15 Submarine, reportedly in good shape, reaches America (8)
 - 18 "Missing love": Another novel about Arizona's old city (8)
 - 20 Promise from Sicily's first Don (5)
 - 23 Character from Athens at cricket match is most tense (7)
 - 25 Reject ads, possibly adulterous (4,3)
 - 26 Ark wrecked near US state - it's destiny (5)
 - 27 Online Oracle lies to leaders fighting about polls (9)
 - 28 Thinness of mineral found near Bhilai, say (8)
 - 29 Stand up for a picture (6)
 - DOWN
 - 1 Man playing around with maids perhaps, wandering around (8)
 - 2 Faced holy man in See, mostly (7)
 - 3 Pot carried around with a plant (9)
 - 5 Sorry - household under renovation. Be patient (4,4,6)
 - 6 After bankruptcy, government's feeling sorry (5)
 - 7 Engineer pukes outside English University, killing himself (7)
 - 8 Being prudent, I typically save (6)
 - 9 Fellow when worried, chewed tablet as a safety instruction (6,4,4)
 - 16 Plastic wire, for example, wound over a central core (9)
 - 17 President, shaken badly, spoke nonsense (8)
 - 19 Tanks in a harbour, shortly bearing back (7)
 - 21 Demagogue ultimately won epitaph saying "I'm the greatest" perhaps (3,4)
 - 22 Supports contests (6)
 - 24 Can retired man finally pass tests? (5)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12720

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

Solution to Monday's Sudoku

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

FAITH

Humility and devotion

Gnanasambandar's advent is occasioned by the sacred will of God at a time when Saivism was being suppressed owing to the dominance of other faiths. Sekkizhar describes how one Sivapadahridayar, who like many Siva devotees during that period, felt that God should help to reestablish Saivism and make people adopt the Vedic way of life. He prayed to the Lord to be blessed with a child who would be able to achieve these goals. Gnanasambandar is born and is also endowed with exceptional jnana through the direct intervention of Siva and Parvati.

In a discourse, Purasai Sri Natarajan drew attention to the recurring references to special instances in his hymns when the saint wishes to inculcate important values in life. The eighth stanza in every pathigam alludes to the incident pertaining to Ravana's attempt to uproot Mount Kailasa along with Siva and Parvati and have them in Lanka under his personal care and devotion. It shows Ravana's arrogance as well as his devotion. Siva presses down Mount Kailasa with His big toe, and this crushes Ravana's twenty arms till he cries in agony and seeks the Lord's pardon. The greatness of Saivism is the compassion of Siva towards those who feel for their wrong acts and seek pardon with heartfelt remorse.

There is also mention of the incident when Vishnu and Brahma vie with each other to see who is greater among them. Neither of them is successful in their effort to unravel the limits of the Lord who appears as an endless column of brightness. The lesson to be learnt is that the Lord always remains beyond reach to those filled with ego and pride while He readily reaches out to the humble and the devout. The 10th stanza affirms that Siva's grace alone can remove ignorance and put an end to false spiritual values.