

White House steps up impeachment fight

Won't cooperate with inquiry, says Trump administration, setting the stage for a constitutional battle

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC

In an eight-page letter fulminating against the Democrats' impeachment inquiry into U.S. President Donald Trump, the White House told the House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Democrat leaders that it would not cooperate with them, setting the stage for a constitutional battle between the Democrats and the administration. Tuesday's letter was signed by White House Counsel Pat Cipollone, and sent to Ms. Pelosi and the Chairmen of three House Committees heading an impeachment inquiry into the extent to which Mr. Trump had sought to pressure President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine to investigate former Vice-President Joseph R Biden Jr., a serious contender for the Presidency in 2020, and his son Hunter Biden. Mr. Cipollone said Mr. Trump's due process rights had been violated and that the inquiry "violates fundamental fairness". "The effort to impeach President Trump - without regard to any evidence of his

actions in office - is a naked political strategy that began the day he was inaugurated, and perhaps even before," Mr. Cipollone wrote, accusing the Democrats of seeking to overturn Mr. Trump's 2016 electoral victory and influence the elections in 2020. The letter, which echoed some of Mr Trump's views on the impeachment process, said that for the inquiry to be legal, the full House should have voted on it - a position counter to Ms. Pelosi assertion that such a vote was not constitutionally required. 'Normalise lawlessness' "Consistent with the duties of the President of the U.S., and in particular his obligation to preserve the rights of future occupants of his office, President Trump cannot permit his Administration to participate in this partisan inquiry under these circumstances," Mr. Capillone wrote. Ms. Pelosi responded to Tuesday's letter by calling it "manifestly wrong" in a statement and warned that



Bumpy procedure: U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. ■ AFP

the White House not cooperating could be seen as obstruction. "For a while, the President has tried to normalise lawlessness. Now, he is trying to make lawlessness a virtue," she said. "The White House should be warned that continued efforts to hide the truth of the President's abuse of power from the American people will be regarded as further evidence of obstruction," she added. "Mr. President, you are not above the law. You will be held accountable." House Democrats are con-

sidering ways in which to get the whistleblower, whose complaint forms the basis of the impeachment inquiry, to testify without revealing his or her identity. *The Washington Post* reported. Establishing further evidence of the administration's determination to impede the inquiry, the State Department ordered the U.S.'s Ambassador to the EU, Gordon Sondland, from deposing before the House on Tuesday. Mr. Sondland was scheduled to voluntarily present himself before the House panel on Tuesday, to discuss

text messages, released by Democrats last Thursday, that showed that State Department officials and Mr. Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, sought to trade a meeting between Mr. Trump and Mr. Zelensky in exchange for the Zelenksy administration investigating Hunter Biden and Ukraine's role in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. "I would love to send Ambassador Sondland, a really good man and great American, to testify, but unfortunately he would be testifying before a totally compromised kangaroo court," Mr. Trump had said on Twitter on Tuesday. Following his failure to appear before them, Democrats subpoenaed Mr. Sondland on Tuesday, asking him to testify on October 16 and also ordered him to comply with their document requests by October 14. Given the position the White House has taken, it is unclear whether the deposition of former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, on Friday, will proceed without hassles.

Turkey launches offensive on Kurdish fighters in Syria

Erdogan says assault is aimed at eliminating 'terror corridor'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
AKCAKALE

Turkey launched airstrikes and fired artillery aimed at crushing Kurdish fighters in northern Syria on Wednesday, a day after U.S. troops pulled back from the area, paving the way for an assault on forces that have long been allied with the U.S. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the launch of the attack on Twitter, labelling it "Operation Peace Spring". "Our mission is to prevent the creation of a terror corridor across our southern border, and to bring peace to the area," Mr. Erdogan said in a tweet. Minutes before his announcement, Turkish jets began pounding suspected positions of Syrian Kurdish forces in the town of Ras al Ayn, according to Turkish media and Syrian activists. Mr. Trump's move, which has drawn harsh bipartisan opposition at home, represented a shift in U.S. policy



Military push: A woman passes by as smoke billows following bombardment by Turkish forces in Syria. ■ AFP

that essentially abandoned the Syrian Kurdish fighters who have been America's only allies inside Syria in the fight against the Islamic State group. After Turkey's offensive began, there was sign of panic on the streets. Cars raced to safety, although it was not clear if they were leaving the town or heading away from border areas. Near the town of Qamishli, plumes of smoke were seen rising from an area close to the border. At least one member of the Kurdish-led force known

as the Syrian Democratic Forces was killed in the Turkish bombardment, Kurdish activists and a Syria war monitor said. "Coalition forces are not near the places Turkey has struck so far," an official with the U.S.-led coalition said. Meanwhile, Mr. Trump on Wednesday sought to distance himself from the Turkish move. "The U.S. does not endorse this attack and has made it clear to Turkey that this operation is a bad idea," said a statement released by the White House.

U.S. curbs China officials' visas

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The U.S. said on Tuesday it would curb visas for Chinese officials until Beijing ends its "repression" of Uighurs and other Muslims in the western region of Xinjiang, a day after imposing commercial restrictions. The one-two punch by President Donald Trump's administration marks the most forceful attempt by a foreign power to address what some rights groups call a historic crisis in Xinjiang.

"China has forcibly detained over one million Muslims in a brutal, systematic campaign to erase religion and culture in Xinjiang," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo wrote on Twitter. "China must end its draconian surveillance and repression, release all those arbitrarily detained and cease its coercion of Chinese Muslims abroad," he said. Mr. Pompeo said that the State Department would restrict visas granted to government and Communist Party

officials involved in "detention or abuse" of Uighurs, Kazakhs or members of other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in Xinjiang. The order will also affect their family members, including children who may be seeking to study in the U.S. The State Department did not specify which officials were affected due to U.S. confidentiality laws. But lawmakers have specifically asked for action against Chen Quanguo, the Communist Party chief for Xinjiang.

Chemistry Nobel to trio for work on batteries

Lithium batteries have transformed cars and phones, cut use of fossil fuels

ASSOCIATED PRESS
STOCKHOLM

Three scientists won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry on Wednesday for their work developing lithium-ion batteries, which have reshaped energy storage and transformed cars, mobile phones and many other devices and reduced the world's reliance on fossil fuels. The prize went to John B.

Goodenough, 97, a German-born engineering professor at the University of Texas; M. Stanley Whittingham, 77, a British-American chemistry professor at the State University of New York; and Japan's Akira Yoshino, 71, of Meijo University. The three each had a set of breakthroughs that laid the foundation for the development of a commercial rechargeable battery. Lithium-ion batteries, the first truly portable and rechargeable batteries, took more than a decade to develop. The work had its roots in the oil crisis in the 1970s, when Mr. Whittingham was working on efforts to develop fossil fuel-free energy technologies. He harnessed the enormous tendency of lithium, the lightest metal, to

give away its electrons to make a battery capable of generating over two volts. By 1980, Mr. Goodenough had doubled the capacity of the battery to four volts by using cobalt oxide in the cathode one of two electrodes, along with the anode, that make up the ends of a battery. But that battery remained too explosive for commercial use and needed to be tamed. That's where Mr. Yoshino's work in the 1980s came in. He substituted petroleum

coke, a carbon material, in the battery's anode. This step paved the way for the first lightweight, safe, durable and rechargeable commercial batteries to be built and enter the market in 1991. "We have gained access to a technical revolution," said Sara Snogerup Linse of the Nobel committee. "The laureates developed lightweight batteries with potential to be useful in many applications - truly portable electronics: mobile phones, pacemakers, but also electric cars."

ELSEWHERE



Russia declares Navalny's group 'foreign agent'

MOSCOW Russia on Wednesday upped the pressure on opposition leader Alexei Navalny, declaring his organisation, Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), a "foreign agent" that will be subject to increased State monitoring. ■ AFP

China slams NBA, Apple over Hong Kong

SHANGHAI China on Wednesday cancelled National Basketball Association (NBA)'s event in Shanghai over its official's defence of Hong Kong protests. It also slammed Apple for an app that tracks police in Hong Kong. ■ AFP

Is this the beginning of the political demise of SLFP?

With no candidate in fray, Sirisena's party extends support to Gotabaya

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

President Maithripala Sirisena's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) on Wednesday pledged support to Gotabaya Rajapaksa, candidate of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (People's Party or SLPP) in the November 16 presidential election. President Sirisena also "temporarily" stepped down from the position of party leader, as the SLFP appointed senior member and academic Rohana Lakshman Piyadasa as "acting chairman". The move, according to party seniors, is to allow Mr. Sirisena to "remain neutral" in the run-up to the presiden-

tial poll. The SLFP's decision to back Gotabaya Rajapaksa - a powerful ex-Defence Secretary and younger brother of former President Mahinda Rajapaksa - was little surprise to Sri Lankans, even as the Rajapaksa camp consolidates political power. The more significant development for the party - from which Presidents Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, Mahinda Rajapaksa and Maithripala Sirisena rose to the country's highest office - is that this is the first time that the SLFP is not fielding a candidate in Sri Lanka's presidential election. Breaking the decades-long contest between the SLFP-United



Gotabaya Rajapaksa

National Party (UNP), the Rajapaksas' SLPP has emerged as a relatively new, but politically significant player.

Powerful force

Capturing over 40% of the vote share in the February 2018 local government elections, the SLPP emerged a powerful force, pushing the ruling UNP to the second spot, and the SLFP rump - since much of the party joined the Rajapaksas' SLPP

- to a distant third spot.

At this juncture, the SLFP's future is a major question, according to V. Thanabalasingham, a senior journalist and political commentator. In his view, the shift began as early as 2015.

NEWS ANALYSIS

"When Sirisena took over the leadership of the SLFP after winning presidency in 2015, [Mahinda] Rajapaksa knew that the newly elected President could not consolidate and retain support of the party base," he told *The Hindu*.

Over the last five years, the party has been divided between two power centres - one in government [until Mr. Sirisena decided to pull the SLFP out of it in October

2018] and another, led by Mr. Rajapaksa, in Opposition. "Much of the turbulence in the Sirisena-Ranil [Wickremesinghe] national unity government was also about Sirisena being unable to carry his party along with him, with the constant threat of SLFP-ers shifting loyalty to the Rajapaksa camp," said Mr. Thanabalasingham

Growing unpopularity

The formation of the SLPP in 2016, and the resurgence of the Rajapaksas, coincided with the growing unpopularity of the ruling coalition, coupled with the current administration's inability to complete probes into Rajapaksa-era killings and corruption. In Mr. Thanabalasingham's view, the question was

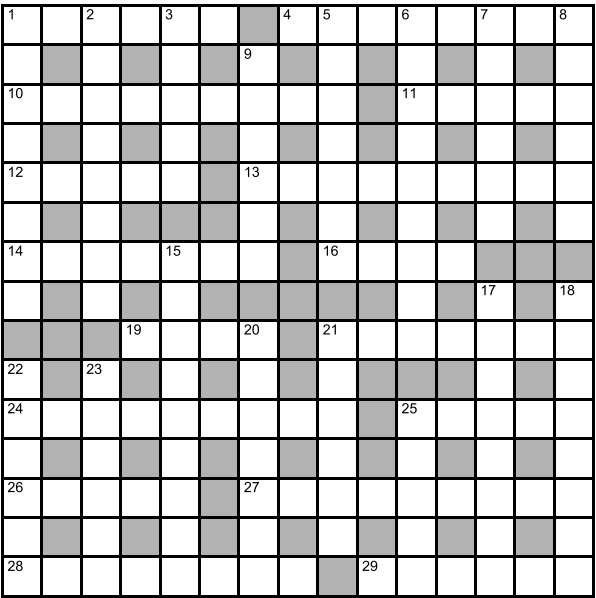
never "whether" SLFP-ers would eventually gravitate towards the Rajapaksas, and by extension their new party, it was only a question of "when" they will. However, senior political scientist Jayadeva Uyangoda has a different take. The SLFP fashioned itself with a politics of assertive Sinhala-nationalist, post-colonial ideology. "It was a progressive, social democratic, centre-left political party, that made tremendous contribution to social change and democracy." The Rajapaksa brand of politics, according to him, has mainly inherited the party's Sinhala-nationalist assertion, and much less of its economic outlook. "The SLPP today is a right wing, neo-conservative party that favours authoritarianism."

Two killed in Germany shooting

REUTERS
BERLIN

Two people were killed in shooting attacks on a synagogue and a kebab bistro in the eastern German city of Halle on Wednesday and one suspect was arrested, but two others fled in a hijacked a car, officials said. The shooting took place in front of a synagogue, and a hand grenade was also thrown into a Jewish cemetery. A second burst of gunfire targeted a kebab shop in Saxony. The violence occurred on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the calendar in Judaism. German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer called the shooting anti-Semitic.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12751



■ ACROSS

- 1 Last employee gets kiss before joining duty? Too much (6)
- 4 Berating the state of winter in Singapore; vent out (8)
- 10 Magazines and papers covered the scandal involving this (9)
- 11 Genetic unit found by college academic uses oxygen (5)
- 12 Presently at Netherlands, a liberal democrat's

- rising above leaders (5)
- 13 America claims right on unknown constellation (4,5)
- 14 Maybe Don Corleone gets high endlessly after dark in the company of Scotsman (7)
- 16 Place to rest at home finally (4)
- 19 Endless time needed to produce body fluids (4)
- 21 Leader in second position lives in the past, ones in party earlier ignore (7)
- 24 Do self-serving lawyers chase this? (9)
- 25 Wife's cooperation is needed to get a child (5)
- 26 Existence of bribe in government suppressed (5)
- 27 Say, Uncle Brown protects half of Arab insurgents, primarily from someone from Israel (9)
- 28 Extra over? Upset about team captain, Hall exits first incidentally (2,3,3)
- 29 Well, master is upset (6)

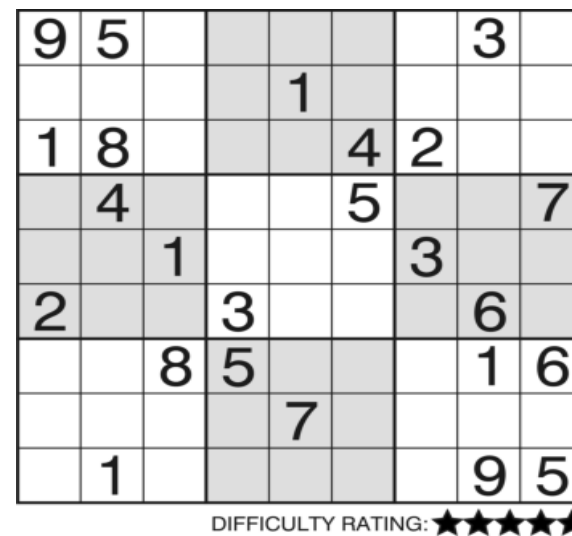
■ DOWN

- 1 At the heart, director's stable but delirious (8)
- 2 A foreign national can harm India, obliterate its capital and seize area (8)

(set by Afterdark)

- 3 Colour of sea stays constant (5)
- 5 Police Sergeant in middle, primarily searching for bodies (7)
- 6 Moves close to fight; overcomes Mike on second round (9)
- 7 I played ODI in England (6)
- 8 Support girl's attempt to go over a mountain's edge (6)
- 9 Workdog, say faces new dispute (6)
- 15 Perfect fraud foregoes resistance and becomes an intellectual (9)
- 17 A bishop (Bengali perhaps) needing support becomes no-show (8)
- 18 Part of the ear and tummy upset? Have pan (8)
- 20 Repayments failed? Take rep out for immunity (7)
- 21 Boring, each man is boring and vague (6)
- 22 Saint in India, filled with love holding bible seen at a tree (6)
- 23 Hobo is transfixed, captivated by instrumentalist (6)
- 25 Defeat? Win or split heartlessly (5)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12750

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Compassion personified

Nammazhvar, after listing Lord Narayana's qualities, which make Him Supreme, orders his heart to worship Him. It is important to practice something before preaching. So Nammazhvar first instructs his heart to worship the Lord. He then gives us many verses, through which he shows us the One we should be devoted to for liberation. Nammazhvar's opening verse in Thiruvaimozhi extols His feet. Nampillai writing about this verse gives Ramanujacharya's explanation for this verse. Nammazhvar's choice of words shows that He thinks of our sorrow as His own, elaborated Kidambi Narayanan in a discourse. We see this concern for His devotees in the Rama avatara. Sugriva wants his brother Vali to be killed by Rama and Rama agrees, for He and Sugriva have become friends. Besides, Vali by taking away Sugriva's wife and making her his own has committed a grave sin. So Rama kills Vali. Vali's wife Tara and his son Angada are grief stricken. Even Sugriva becomes emotional. But everything comes to an end, even grieving for a loved one. And so, everyone stops crying after some time. But one sobbing voice continues to be heard. That is the voice of Rama! Rama cries because he is unable to bear Sugriva's sorrow. If His devotees are unhappy, so is He. He sees their sorrow as His own. Dasaratha fixes a date for Rama's coronation and his subjects cannot wait for the happy event. Dasaratha asks them why they want to see Rama on the throne soon. He wants to know if he (Dasaratha) has done anything wrong, and that is why they want Rama to be king soon. Here Valmiki talks of a quality of Rama's. He says if anyone in Ayodhya is sorrowful, Rama treats it as His own sorrow, and wants to help them. Such compassion also characterises a true Vaishnava.