

ELSEWHERE



Hunter Biden denies doing anything wrong

WASHINGTON
U.S. Presidential candidate Joe Biden's son Hunter denied any wrongdoing in his engagements in Ukraine and China. In an interview, he said he may have made a mistake "in the grand scheme of things" for failing to see the political repercussions for his father. But he added, "Did I make a mistake based on some ethical lapse? Absolutely not." **AP**

Putin signs deals worth over \$1.3 billion with UAE

ABU DHABI
Russian President Vladimir Putin signed deals worth over \$1.3 billion with the UAE on Tuesday, wrapping up a tour of the Gulf where he also courted investment in Saudi Arabia. Deals worth over \$1.3 billion, notably in the energy, advanced technology and health sectors, were tabled during the visit. **AFP**

EU, U.K. scramble to reach deal before summit

LUXEMBOURG
British and EU negotiators on Tuesday scrambled to put together a draft text for a Brexit deal with just two days to go before a key European summit. Both sides voiced cautious optimism that an outline agreement could be reached this week and the upbeat mood saw the pound rally on currency markets. **AFP**

Pak. PM to visit Riyadh to ease Saudi-Iran tensions

ISLAMABAD
Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan will travel to Riyadh on Tuesday, two days after his visit to Tehran to help mitigate tensions between bitter regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran. Tehran and Riyadh came close to blows after damaging September 14 attack on oil facilities in the Gulf Kingdom. **PTI**

Russia moves to fill void left by U.S. withdrawal in north Syria

Moscow says its troops are patrolling territory between Syrian and Turkish forces

CARLOTTA GALL
PATRICK KINGSLEY
CEYLANPINAR, TURKEY
Russia said on Tuesday that its military units were patrolling territory in northern Syria between Syrian and Turkish forces after the U.S. withdrawal from the area, underscoring the sudden loss of U.S. influence in the area and illustrating how the power balance in the region has shifted rapidly in the past week.

The announcement that Russian forces were now patrolling an area where the U.S. had until Monday maintained two military bases appeared to signal that Moscow was moving to fill a security void left by the withdrawal of both the U.S. military and its partners in an international counterterrorism mission.

Videos circulating on social media appeared to show a Russian man filming himself walking around a recently evacuated U.S. military base in northern Syria.

The Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement that its military police, which had already established a presence in other parts of Syria, were patrolling "the northwestern borders of Manbij district along the line of contact of the Syrian Arab Republic military and the Turkish military."

It added that its troops were coordinating "with the Turkish side" and that "the Syrian government Army has taken full control of the city of Manbij and nearby populated areas."

The developments on Tuesday came as a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition said on Twitter that its forces, which include French and British soldiers, had left



Forces at play: Russian and Syrian national flags flutter on military vehicles near Manbij, Syria, on Tuesday. **REUTERS**

the formerly Kurdish-held town of Manbij. "Coalition forces are executing a deliberate withdrawal from northeast Syria," Col. Myles B. Caggins wrote. "We are out of Manbij."

Russia and Turkey will shortly be the only international armies in the area.

Turkish and Syrian troops are racing to control large parts of northern Syria that were run by an autonomous Syrian Kurdish regional government until a Turkish-led invasion began October 9, under the protection of U.S. troops stationed in the region.

Syrian government troops were deployed inside the northern city of Manbij, a Syrian state broadcaster said on Tuesday, as Turkish-led forces advanced in the countryside outside the city.

Heavy fire
Elsewhere in northern Syria, Kurdish-led fighters attempted to retake the strategic border town of Ras al-Ayn from Turkish-led forces.

Heavy fire from machine guns could be heard to the south and southwest of Ras al-Ayn and from the Turkish border town of Ceylanpinar, which is less than a mile from the fighting. Turkish ar-

tillery pounded an eastern suburb of the Syrian settlement mid-morning, raising clouds of smoke above low farmhouses and pistachio groves.

As of Tuesday, fighting in Ras al-Ayn and other areas in northern Syria has forced at least 160,000 people from their homes, according to UN estimates. Kurdish authorities put the figure at 270,000.

The battle highlighted the fluctuating nature of the Turkish incursion, which began after President Donald Trump ordered the evacuation of U.S. troops from the Turkish-Syrian border, opening the door for Turkish troops and their Syrian Arab proxies to enter Kurdish-held territory in northern Syria.

Abandoned by the Americans, and quickly losing land to the Turkish force, Kurdish authorities sought protection from the Syrian government and its largest backer, Russia. Since Kurdish authorities asked the government of President Bashar Assad for assistance, thousands of Syrian troops have flooded into northern Syria for the first time since the government lost control of the region a few years ago. **NY TIMES**

U.S. slaps sanctions on Turkey

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump announced economic sanctions aimed at re-training the Turks' assault against Kurdish fighters and civilians in Syria.

"I am fully prepared to swiftly destroy Turkey's economy if Turkish leaders continue down this destructive path," Mr. Trump said.

The U.S. called on Turkey to declare a cease-fire. Vice-President Mike Pence and National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien will be visiting Ankara as soon as possible for talks.

Offensive will continue, says Erdogan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ISTANBUL

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday that Turkey's operation against Kurdish militants in northern Syria would not stop until "our objectives have been achieved".

Turkey is in the seventh day of its assault against the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which it sees as a "terrorist" off-shoot of Kurdish insurgents. "God willing, we will quickly secure the region stretching from Manbij to our border with Iraq," Mr. Erdogan said.

Will not honour UN deal on accountability, says Gotabaya

'I can't recognise what UN has signed with past governments'

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's presidential hopeful Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Tuesday said that if elected, he would not honour the country's commitments to the UN Human Rights Council on post-war accountability and reconciliation.

"We will always work with the United Nations, but I can't recognise what they [UN] have signed with past governments," he told a press conference at the plush Shangri-La Hotel here. It was his first media interaction since being declared candidate of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (People's Party, or SLPP) for the November 16 presidential election.

The 70-year-old contestant, who has drawn wide support from professionals and others seeking a "strong leader", took questions alongside his brother and former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, leader of the SLPP. Mr. Gotabaya's candidacy has caused concern among critics of the Rajapaksa-era – a decade marked by an authoritarian slant.

In his first campaign rally last week, Mr. Gotabaya said he would release members of the armed forces held "falsely" charged with killings and abductions.

On the question of war-time accountability, Mr. Gotabaya said Sri Lanka ought to look ahead without hanging on to "old allegations", as he questioned the credibility of reports by "foreign investigators". A powerful Defence Secretary during the war, Mr. Gotabaya is accused of violating human rights. He has denied the charges.



Gotabaya Rajapaksa, left, and his brother Mahinda at a press conference in Colombo. **AP**

"You're talking about the past all the time, let's talk about the future. I am trying to become the President of a future Sri Lanka," he told the media. Asked if it was possible to move ahead without addressing the past, Mr. Gotabaya said: "Sure, we can move on," emphasising the need for education, jobs and development for war-affected people.

Queried on Tamils who surrendered to the Army during and after the war, whose whereabouts remain unknown to their families till date, the former Defence Secretary said that 13,784 people had been rehabilitated, reintegrated and given employment. Families of those who surrendered to the military are agitating relentlessly in the north and east, because their relatives are still missing.

Making a distinction between "missing persons" and people who "surrendered", Mr. Gotabaya said that over 4,000 military men were also missing.

Pointing to the "intensity" of the civil war, he said there were instances where the bodies of the dead could not be retrieved and that they

had been termed "missing".

In the decade since the war ended, some families have maintained that many who surrendered to the army never returned. "That's only an allegation," he said.

There were no cases of families providing names of the missing persons and the date of their surrendering, he claimed, although a presidential commission headed by a retired High Court judge – set up in 2013 by then president Rajapaksa – had received thousands of petitions with those details. Many of them also subsequently petitioned the Office on Missing Persons set up by the current government as part of the UN resolution it co-sponsored in 2015.

'Neutral' power

Speaking of a global shift in focus towards Asia, Mr. Gotabaya pledged to build a knowledge-based economy that would be driven by technology. Further, on his foreign policy vision, he said if elected his government would remain "neutral" and stay out of "regional power struggles", alluding the geopolitical contest between India and China.

Prince William, Kate meet Khan

U.K. royals' Pakistan trip is seen as a soft push to improve ties

REUTERS
ISLAMABAD

Britain's Prince William and his wife Kate on Tuesday met Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan, who the Prince played cricket with in London as a child.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge arrived at the country's national monument in Islamabad on Tuesday evening in a rickshaw painted with the Pakistani and U.K. flags. Prince William spoke of the warm welcome and delicious food they had experienced after their arrival on Monday.

"The U.K. and Pakistan share unique bonds and so it will always be in our best interests for you to succeed," Prince William said.

Foreign policy experts



Britain's Prince William with wife Kate at a government-run school in Islamabad. **AFP**

and officials say the trip, the first by a British royal family member in more than a de-

cade and made at the request of the British foreign office, represented a soft power push, which may help both sides further their diplomatic aims.

Earlier in the day, they met students at an Islamabad Model College for Girls, discussing education and visiting the classrooms.

For the morning events, the Duchess of Cambridge wore a periwinkle blue silk salwar kameez. Many on social media had been hoping she would don the outfit, which Princess Diana had worn during visits.

Prince William also mentioned the challenge of climate change to Pakistan, as well as the importance of women having access to education.

Atwood and Evaristo are joint winners of Booker Prize

Judges defy rules by allowing two writers to share the award

REUTERS
LONDON

Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* and Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* jointly won the Booker Prize on Monday.

The authors will split the £50,000 (\$62,800) annual prize, the judging panel said.

Ms. Atwood, 79, previously won the prize in 2000 for *The Blind Assassin*. *The Testaments*, published last month, is the sequel to the Canadian author's best-selling 1985 novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Ms. Evaristo, the first black woman to win the



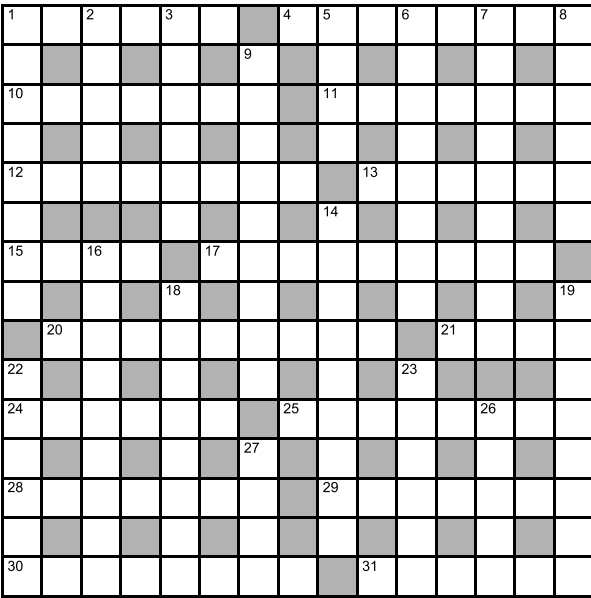
Big win: Margaret Atwood with Bernardine Evaristo. **REUTERS**

prize, tells the stories of 12 characters, mainly female and black aged 19 to 93, living in Britain in *Girl, Woman, Other*.

While the prize has been jointly awarded twice pre-

viously, the rules changed in 1993 limiting the award to one author. The judges defied those rules as they could not agree on a winner between the two books, which were on a shortlist of six.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12756



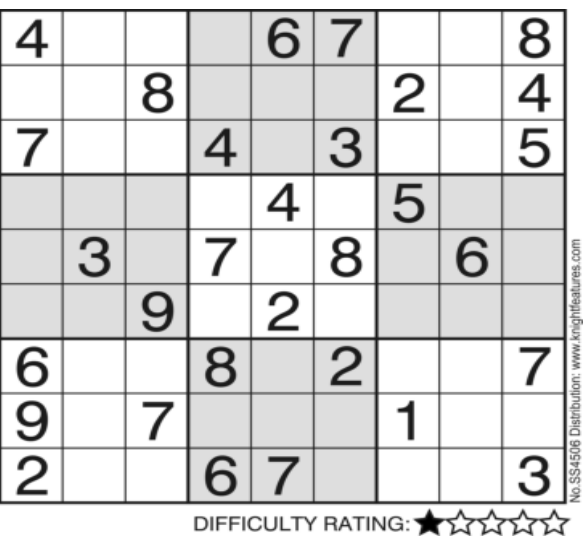
ACROSS

- 1 At first, female invites gentleman home, then she attacks! (6)
- 4 Woman, starting late, ran and ran fast! (8)
- 10 A crime busted before a country (7)
- 11 Gold missing from admiral's cabinet (7)

- 12 Lock mostly traps warmth in cinema halls (8)
 - 13 Girl's former flame in adjoining building (6)
 - 15 Beheaded mammals for breakfast item? (4)
 - 17 Regularly scale peak, becoming most competent (9)
 - 20 They remind you of champions, missing nothing while absorbing pressure! (9)
 - 21 Annoyance on missing tea turns into smile (4)
 - 24 Series result basically captured by call at the toss, perhaps? (6)
 - 25 Splinters from wrecked planes strewn around edges of hangar (8)
 - 28 Exact prices fixed while receiving drug (7)
 - 29 Unlimited funds revolutionary extended (7)
 - 30 Left pen inside pen (8)
 - 31 Plucked instrument softly with discordant delay (6)
- ### DOWN
- 1 Small part of ring protecting small part of ring (8)
 - 2 We see good returns keeping birds (5)
 - 3 Turns south, stuck among fools (6)
 - 5 Swerves when winning race, every now and then (4)
 - 6 Guiding light from tower in regularly cloudy environment (8)
 - 7 Academic poses for broadcast with king (9)
 - 8 Idles while moving, saving energy/fuel (6)
 - 9 Orbiter positioned at the top, lander among A-list (9)
 - 14 Dislodge or miss stumps altogether? (9)
 - 16 Cows aren't the mad ones at the end! (9)
 - 18 Suggesting Spinner's not telling the truth about beginning of puzzle? (8)
 - 19 Inserted unfinished clue, didn't properly... (8)
 - 22 Pours liquid over cut, ultimately causing numbness (6)
 - 23 Reprimand is heartbreaking as leader quits (6)
 - 26 Anxious baron essentially consumed by unnatural envy (5)
 - 27 Just no money in wool! (4)

The crossword is also available online at crossword.thehindu.com

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12755

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

True grace

When Parikshit listens to the story of how Vritrasura is killed by Indra, he voices a doubt about whether God is openly partial to the devas. This narrative goes into the roots of bhakti to show how one who is able to be truly devoted to God and love Him for His sake alone in the most selfless manner is the recipient of God's highest grace, pointed out Sri Damodhara Dikshitar in a discourse. Unlike other worldly attainments that a jivatma cannot carry over to his next birth, bhakti is his greatest asset as it attains depth and sincerity through successive births. That is why some have love for God right from birth, though they may not be born in a spiritual family. Some others may seek the company of the pious.

Vritrasura has gained jnana and vairagya from his previous births and is clear about what he seeks from God, which is true devotion. Vritrasura is an exceptional bhakta and prays to God to grace him in such a way that he always remains in the company of His bhaktas and serves them as well. In the battle between Indra and Vritrasura, Indra is keen on victory but Vritrasura is focused on bhakti. It is only the jivatma who is bound by prakriti and the gunas and hence entertains hatred and dislike. But the Lord is above all these and is yet present as the antaratma in every being endowed with individual traits.

When a variety of crops is raised on earth, is it the seed or the earth that is the reason for the distinctive taste and quality of each of them? It is without doubt the seed, though the earth is also absolutely necessary for its growth. Likewise God is the protector, the friend, mother or father, depending on the bhava with which a jivatma approaches Him. The jivatma's bhakti is the strongest bond with God.