

U.S. House passes Hong Kong Rights Act

It requires U.S. President to sanction those responsible for rights abuses in city; China slams the Bill

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a Bill on Tuesday sought by pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong that aims to defend civil rights in the semi-autonomous territory, prompting an angry response from China.

The Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, which will now move to the Senate before it can become law, has drawn rare bipartisan support in Congress.

The law would end the Hong Kong-U.S. special trading status unless the State Department certifies annually that city authorities are respecting human rights and the rule of law. China expressed “strong indignation” over the passing of the Act, which also requires the U.S. President to identify and sanction people who are responsible for the erosion of autonomy and serious abuses of rights in the city.

“What Hong Kong faces is not the so-called human rights and democracy issue at all, but the issue of stop-

ping violence, reinstating order and upholding the rule of law as soon as possible,” said Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang in a statement.

Mr. Geng said the U.S. should “stop meddling” and warned China would take “strong measures” to counter the proposed Hong Kong Bill. The Act will now move to a similar vote in the Senate before it can become law.

“Today, we’re simply urging the Chinese President and the Hong Kong Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, to faithfully honour the government’s promises” that Hong Kong’s rights and autonomy would be protected, Republican Representative Chris Smith, prime sponsor of the Bill, said on Tuesday on the House floor.

‘External forces’
China has frequently accused “external forces” of fuelling weeks of unrest in the global financial hub.

Millions have taken to the streets of Hong Kong, initially against a now-dropped bid by its leaders to allow extra-



Under fire: Carrie Lam leaving the legislature after being heckled by pro-democracy lawmakers in Hong Kong. • AFP

ditions to the authoritarian Chinese mainland. The movement has expanded into a broader pro-democracy push in the territory where activists say freedoms are being eroded by Beijing, despite being written into a deal the deal that governed Hong Kong’s 1997 transfer to China from British colonial rule.

“The House just sent a strong message to the people of Hong Kong: We stand with you in the fight for democracy and justice,” said Ben Ray

Lujan, a House Democrat.

Republican House member Mario Diaz-Balart said the Act ensures “that the special relationship with Hong Kong endures only as long as Hong Kong retains the autonomy and freedoms that justify that special relationship.”

The House also approved, by a voice vote, a related Bill to prohibit the export of certain non-lethal crowd control items such as tear gas to Hong Kong.

Lam abandons policy address after protest

REUTERS
HONG KONG

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam had to abandon her policy speech in the legislature on Wednesday because of jeering lawmakers.

Ms. Lam, who had to broadcast the annual address via a video link after the rowdy scenes in the city’s Assembly, hoped to restore confidence in her administration and address discontent after four months of often violent anti-government protests.

She had to halt her initial attempts to deliver the address after pro-democracy lawmakers called out for “five demands, not one less”. The protesters’ demands include universal suffrage and an independent inquiry into what they say has been excessive force by police.

China leases an entire Pacific island for 75 years

State company secures development rights for Tulagi Island

DAMIEN CAVE
SYDNEY

The island of Tulagi served as a South Pacific headquarters for Britain and then Japan. During Second World War, its natural deepwater harbour across from Guadalcanal made it a military gem soldiers fought and died for.

Now Tulagi, part of the Solomon Islands, is about to move into Chinese hands.

Under a secretive deal signed last month with a provincial government in the South Pacific nation, a Beijing-based company with close ties to the Chinese Communist Party has secured exclusive development rights for the entire island of over 1,000 people and its surroundings.

The lease agreement has shocked Tulagi residents and alarmed U.S. officials who see the island chains of the South Pacific as crucial to keeping China in check and protecting important sea routes.

“The geography tells you that this is a good location,” said Anne-Marie Brady, a China scholar at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand. “China is expanding its military assets into the South Pacific and is looking for friendly ports and friendly airfields just like other rising powers before them.”

The South Pacific region is rich in natural resources, and China’s investments have provoked worries in the U.S. and Australia that the projects could give Beijing an opening to establish a military foothold for everything from ships and planes to its own version of the GPS.

China is also pushing to end the region’s status as a



New alignments: Solomon Islands PM Manasseh Sogavare and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in Beijing. • REUTERS/FILE

diplomatic stronghold for Taiwan.

The Solomons cut ties to Taipei and allied with Beijing just a few days before the Tulagi deal. A second Pacific nation, Kiribati, followed suit the same week.

Even compared to previous Chinese development deals in nearby countries – including a wharf in Vanuatu – the Tulagi agreement is remarkable for both its scope and the lack of public input.

The renewable 75-year lease was granted to the China Sam Enterprise Group, a conglomerate founded in 1985 as a state-owned enterprise, according to corporate records.

A copy of the “strategic cooperation agreement,” obtained by the NYT and verified by two people with knowledge of the deal, reveals both the immediate ambitions of China Sam and the potential for infrastructure that could share civilian and military uses.

Infrastructure plans

Signed on September 22, the agreement includes provisions for a fishery base, an operations centre, and “the building or enhancement of the airport.” Though there are no confirmed oil or gas reserves in the Solomons, the agreement also notes

that China Sam is interested in building an oil and gas terminal.

These are just the explicit possibilities. The document also states that the government will lease all of Tulagi and the surrounding islands in the province for the development of “a special economic zone or any other industry that is suitable for any development.”

The provincial governor who signed the deal, Stanley Maniteva, could not be reached for comment. Noting that laws and landowner rights would be respected, he told local reporters this week that the agreement had not been completed.

A military installation would carry strategic and symbolic significance. Some U.S. officials believe China’s efforts in the region echo the period before and during the Second World War, when Japan wrested control of island assets, which were won back in turn by American and Australian troops in bloody battles.

But it is also a matter of feasibility: China goes where there is value and interest. With the U.S. pulling back in much of the world under President Donald Trump’s America First policy, Beijing is often knocking on doors left open. NY TIMES

Turkey defiant on Syria offensive

Trump sends Pence, Pompeo to negotiate with Erdogan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CEYLANPINAR

Turkey rebuffed international pressure to curb its military offensive against Kurdish militants in Syria on Wednesday as U.S. President Donald Trump dispatched his deputy Mike Pence to Ankara to demand a ceasefire.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan rejected any negotiations, telling Parliament the only way to solve Syria’s problems was for the

Kurdish forces to “lay down their arms... destroy all their traps and get out of the safe zone that we have designated.”

Battles raged in the key Syrian border town of Ras al-Ain on Wednesday, with Kurdish fighters burning tyres in a bid to blind Ankara’s warplanes and digging in against a ground offensive by Turkish-backed Syrian rebels.

Mr. Trump sent Mr. Pence along with his top diplomat Mike Pompeo to Turkey

amid the greatest crisis in relations for decades between the NATO allies.

The U.S.-led coalition said on Wednesday that its forces had left the Syrian cities of Tabqah and Raqqah as well as a Lafarge cement factory.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin said it would host Mr. Erdogan for a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the coming days, to ensure the operation does not turn into all-out war between Turkey and Syria.

Basic foundation of Brexit deal ready: Tusk

REUTERS
BRUSSELS/WARSAW

British and EU officials were on the verge of a last-minute Brexit deal on Wednesday but Prime Minister Boris Johnson still has work to do at home to ensure Parliament approves the plan.

“The basic foundations of this agreement are ready and theoretically we could accept a deal tomorrow,” said European Council President Donald Tusk, who will chair a EU summit of

leaders, including Mr. Johnson, on Thursday and Friday. However, Mr. Tusk said that “certain doubts have appeared from the British side”, apparently a reference to Mr. Johnson’s need to win over politicians who fear he may have conceded too much.

French President Emmanuel Macron said an agreement was being finalised and he hoped it could be approved by the summit on Thursday.

Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar back Sanders

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

High-profile progressives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan Omar threw their support behind Bernie Sanders’ campaign for President as the U.S. Senator held his own on Tuesday during a three-hour debate just weeks after suffering a heart attack.

The endorsement of Ms. Ocasio-Cortez, a new star on the leftist stage, and Ms. Omar, a Muslim Congresswoman who often targets President Donald Trump, suggested Mr. Sanders remained the Left’s favoured nominee. “Bernie is leading a working class movement to defeat Donald Trump...,” said Ms. Omar.

Warren comes under attack at U.S. Democratic debate

Presidential hopeful draws fire on healthcare, tax policies

REUTERS
WESTERVILLE

Surging U.S. Democratic presidential contender Elizabeth Warren came under repeated attack on her healthcare and tax policies in a debate on Tuesday, as moderate rivals pushed her to explain how she would pay for ambitious proposals, including her Medicare for All plan.

Ms. Warren’s recent rise into a virtual tie with former Vice-President Joe Biden in many opinion polls made her a frequent target for attacks that exposed the Democratic Party’s divisions between its centrist and pro-



Elizabeth Warren

gressive wings on a range of issues.

The contenders were united, however, in supporting impeachment inquiry of President Donald Trump.

Moderate rivals Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South

Bend, and U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, went after Ms. Warren for being evasive on her plan for universal healthcare and said her plan would mean higher taxes or Americans. “I think we owe it to the people to tell them where to send the invoice,” Mr. Klobuchar said. “The difference between a plan and a pipe dream is something you can actually get done.”

Ms. Warren did not directly respond to questions about whether she would raise taxes for the healthcare plan, but she said she would not sign any Bill that does not lower healthcare costs for middle-class families.

ELSEWHERE



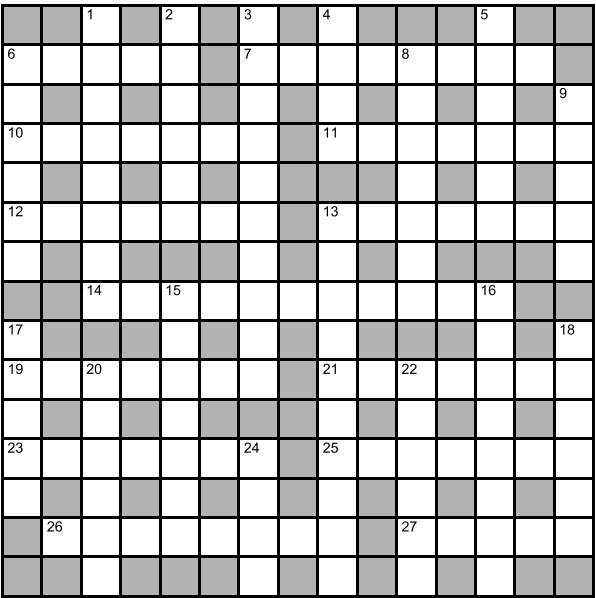
Sri Lanka’s Army chief in controversy over poll ad

COLOMBO
Sri Lanka’s poll chief Mahinda Deshapriya has asked the Defence Ministry to explain why Army chief Gen. Shavendra Silva features in an advertisement promoting presidential candidate Gotabaya Rajapaksa. AP

Iran President’s brother starts 5-year jail term

TEHRAN
Iranian President Hassan Rouhani’s brother, Hossein Fereydoun, began a five-year sentence on Wednesday in a corruption case. Mr. Fereydoun, who served as an aide to the President, was arrested in 2017. AFP

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12757



■ ACROSS

- 6 Perception of setter’s generation (5)
- 7 Artificial intelligence starts to remove constraints on armed forces (3,5)
- 10 Corral fish quietly squeezing out head (7)
- 11 Being full of yeast – it’s fermenting (7)

■ DOWN

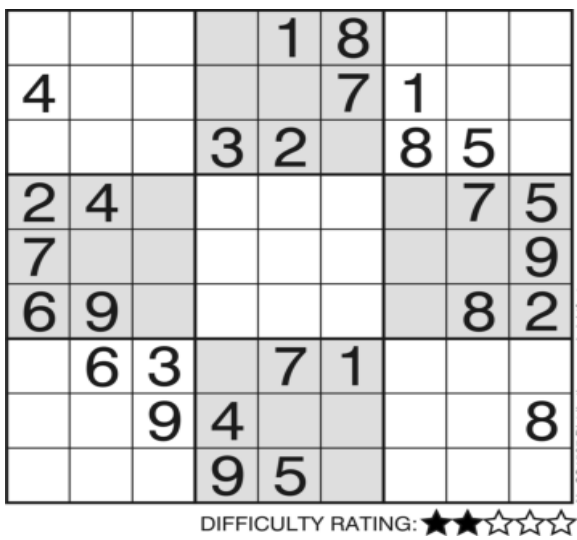
- 1 Drainage set-up for plant (8)
- 2 Get rid of sleep – enjoy taking lady out (6)
- 3 Have no desire... about to become lifeless (10)
- 4 Online assistant-turned-Goddess (4)

(set by Bruno)

- 12 Back seat of auto’s bouncing carrying nine – one got tossed out (7)
- 13 Plant’s natural to continent – needs no introduction (7)
- 14 Empirical operator is represented by imaginary number (1,10)
- 19 Receiver of tirade in company gets irate, finally (7)
- 21 Chopper in California’s heading to Oregon over inland snowy peaks (7)
- 23 Set up one night stand (7)
- 25 Yarn from great gallery (7)
- 26 Foot and dress regularly getting caught in part of flower (8)
- 27 Spread these – one to a bed? (5)

- 5 About to get tax-break (6)
- 6 Guess setter’s place? Bottom of pile! (6)
- 8 Mobile technology’s development cycle is endlessly complex when being released (2,3,2)
- 9 Bird is setter’s? Dont think so... (5)
- 13 Strong and pliant with ego under control (10)
- 15 Biscuit and fizzy coke at end of tea (7)
- 16 To a large extent, where saunas can be found, occupied by half-dead (2,6)
- 17 Renouncing God, falls, gets up once more (5)
- 18 Bust of Bolivar restored somewhat (6)
- 20 Solution on hair – evenly spreads over all directions (6)
- 22 Double credit-relief (6)
- 24 Wood machine releases energy (4)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12756

FIGHTS GALLOWED
REWS RUORI
AMERICA COMMODE
CST SJFS
THEATRES ANNEXE
JSL OASL
OATS CLEVEREST
NHITIEYORIN
PROMPTERS GRIN
SEPTEREC
TRAILS SHRAPNEL
UTYMRREUE
PRECISE OFFERED
ONNRWUVE
RESIGNED PLAYED

Solution to yesterday’s Sudoku

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

FAITH

Intricacies of dharma

When Rama enters Dandakaranya, Valmiki is quick to point out the new responsibility that has fallen on His shoulders, namely to guard the rishis against the troublesome rakshasas. The poet skilfully clarifies that the life of penance that Vana Vasa entails is not antithetical to Rama’s Kshatriya dharma as heir to the kingdom of Ayodhya, through the conversation that ensues between Sita and Rama at this juncture, pointed out Damal Sri Ramakrishnan and Srmati Perundevi in a discourse. Sita perceives a basic contradiction in Rama carrying a bow and arrow when He is pledged to live the life of a hermit in the forest. Sita humbly says that out of her love for Rama she wishes to share a few thoughts, though not in the attitude of giving advice to Him who is the very embodiment of dharma.

She begins with a general opinion on human nature. Any jivatma born in this world is susceptible to desire that could prompt him to sin on three counts, namely, telling lies, coveting another’s wife and killing or hurting anyone who has done no harm to him. The first two kinds of sin are totally irrelevant in the case of Rama. But Sita is afraid if the third kind of sin might attach itself to Rama who has given word to the rishis that He would protect them against the rakshasas. Would it be wise to kill the rakshasas when they have not attacked them directly?

Rama gently reminds Sita that a Kshatriya cannot sit still when helpless people suffer persecution. He has already vowed to protect the rishis and He cannot withdraw the pledge. A Kshatriya proudly bears weapons to protect others. This brief exchange also indicates the future course of events when together they have to tread the path of dharma and cannot differ in their views.

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