

ELSEWHERE



Trump signs funding Bill to avert govt. shutdown

WASHINGTON
U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday signed a temporary spending Bill that averts a government shutdown, after the Senate approved the one-month measure hours before federal funding was to expire at midnight. The Bill will fund federal operations until December 20. AFP

Bolivia accuses Morales of 'terrorism'

LA PAZ
Bolivia's caretaker government on Friday filed a complaint accusing Evo Morales of "sedition and terrorism" after the ex-President allegedly called on supporters to maintain blockades in the country. "We are seeking the maximum penalty for sedition and terrorism," Interior Minister Arturo Murillo said. AFP

China wants trade deal but not afraid to fight: Xi

BEIJING
China wants to reach an initial trade deal with the U.S., President Xi Jinping said on Friday, but is "not afraid" to fight back when necessary and will enact economic reforms at its own pace. "As we always said we don't want to start the trade war but we are not afraid," Mr. Xi told former U.S. officials and other foreign dignitaries at a meeting in Beijing. AFP

South Korea salvages military pact with Japan

SEOUL
South Korea decided on Friday against scrapping a critical military intelligence-sharing pact with Japan, in a dramatic 11th-hour U-turn. The pact was due to expire at midnight amid deterioration in ties between the two countries that has alarmed the U.S. as it seeks to curb the threat from North Korea. AFP

'Political settlement alone won't end violence in Afghanistan'

U.S. says a peace deal will enable Afghans to work together against extremists

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

Two and a half months after talks between the U.S. and the Taliban collapsed, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Afghanistan Nancy Jackson said a political settlement in Afghanistan did not mean that the violence would cease.

"...No-one should be under any illusion that a political settlement will immediately mean an end to violence," Ms. Jackson said, at a conference on the India-Afghanistan relationship at the Hudson Institute, a Washington-based think tank.

"There will still be violent extremist groups like ISIS [Islamic State], and there will still be armed groups pursuing their own criminal or political objectives. A comprehensive peace agreement will, however, enable Afghans to work together to fight these common threats..." Ms. Jackson said.

Victims of terror

She added that the U.S., India and Afghanistan had all suffered from terrorism and were determined to stop it. "In 2017, the President's South Asia Strategy acknowledged that military power alone will not bring peace to Afghanistan or stop the terrorist threat arising from that country."

"Rather, our military effort is designed to create conditions for a negotiated settlement. This effort involves military resolve in Afghanistan, with decisions based on conditions on the ground," she said.

Outlining his administration's South Asia Policy, President Donald Trump had



No respite: Afghan security personnel inspecting the site of a car bomb attack in Kabul, in this November 13 photo. AP

said in 2017 that "the consequences of a rapid exit [of U.S. troops from Afghanistan] are both predictable and unacceptable."

Nevertheless, early in 2019, the Trump administration started negotiating a settlement with the Taliban, which would see the withdrawal of most U.S. troops in a phased manner, in return for security commitments from the Taliban. The Afghan government had felt sidelined by these talks and India had been wary of the exercise, as it has wanted an "Afghan-owned, Afghan-led, and Afghan-controlled" peace process.

Talks collapsed in September when Mr. Trump called off a meeting with the Taliban at Camp David, after the insurgency group claimed responsibility for an attack in Afghanistan that killed 12 people, including an American.

Also contentious was Mr. Trump's earlier characterisation of India's role in Af-

ghanistan. In January, the U.S. President had dismissed India's contributions to Afghanistan, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "constantly telling me he built a library in Afghanistan."

On Thursday, following remarks by India's envoy to the U.S., Harsh Shringla, in which the Ambassador listed India's major development works in Afghanistan and the \$3 billion it has spent there since 2001, Ms. Jackson acknowledged India's projects, "from the construction of dams, roads, electrical lines, irrigation systems, and telecommunications infrastructure to building a stadium in Kandahar for Afghanistan's cricket team".

'Preserving gains'

India has also been concerned that however the U.S. position and strategy in Afghanistan plays out, the gains since 2001 should be preserved. This was empha-

sised by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar when he did a tour of Washington's think tanks in the first week of October and it was brought up again by Mr. Shringla on Thursday.

"Democracy and constitutional order in Afghanistan are the major gains of the last 18 years, which are worth preserving," Mr. Shringla said.

The change in the ground realities of Afghanistan over the last two decades was noted by Ms. Jackson.

"Afghanistan is a much different country than it was 20 years ago, with institutions, security forces, and a growing civic culture that make it increasingly inhospitable to global terrorists. Although transnational terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS-Khorasan [the Afghan branch of the Islamic State] continue to seek a foothold there, time is not on their side," she said.

Trump calls Ghani

Mr. Trump spoke with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to thank him for facilitating the release of hostages Kevin King (American) and Timothy Weeks (Australian), White House Deputy Press Secretary Judd Deere said on Thursday. Their release was facilitated by the Afghan government and the Taliban as part of a prisoner swap.

"President Trump affirmed the important role of the Afghan government in its country's peace process. Both sides agreed a reduction in violence is necessary to move the peace process forward and for any intra-Afghan negotiations regarding a political settlement to be successful," Mr. Deere said.

Trump's conduct worse than Nixon's, says Adam Schiff

Head of Trump impeachment probe cites Watergate scandal

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump's conduct with Ukraine was far worse than the behaviour that led to the downfall of Richard Nixon, the head of the congressional impeachment probe said on Thursday as he summed up the case for the U.S. President's removal.

Lawmakers investigating whether Mr. Trump abused his office by bullying Ukraine into assisting his reelection efforts have spent three days hearing the most explosive witness testimony since the scandal broke.

Democrats accuse Mr. Trump of demanding Ukraine's assistance in a July 25 phone call and via a circle of accomplices, mainly senior figures in his administration.



Adam Schiff

He stalled almost \$400 million in military aid and a White House visit for new Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, allegedly to coerce Kiev - which is at war with Russia - into helping.

"What we've seen here is far more serious than a third-rate burglary of the De-

mocratic headquarters," said House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, referring to the infamous 1972 Watergate break-in that Nixon ordered, eventually leading to his resignation.

"What we're talking about here is the withholding of recognition in that White House meeting (and) the withholding of military aid to an ally at war. This is beyond anything Nixon did."

Mr. Schiff spoke at the close of a marathon testimony by nine witnesses over three days.

Democrats are expected to prepare formal articles accusing Mr. Trump of abusing his presidential powers, bribery and obstruction of justice.

Indian-American official named as source for Ukraine information

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW YORK

An Indian-American White House Official has been enmeshed in the controversy over President Donald Trump's dealings with Ukraine that is the focus of the impeachment hearings against him.

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff on Thursday named Kashyap Patel as a source providing information on Ukraine matters directly to Mr. Trump, bypassing the National Security Council (NSC) staffers in charge of the country's matters. Mr. Patel is the Senior Director of counterterrorism in the NSC.

During the testimony by Fiona Hill, the former NSC Senior Director dealing with Ukraine, Mr. Schiff said, "The indication is that Kash Patel provided some information directly to the President without your knowledge."

"That seems to be the indication," she replied.

To reinforce the Democratic line that there was an unofficial parallel foreign policy setup dealing with Ukraine, Mr. Schiff said that Mr. Trump thought an individual was the Director of Ukraine in the NSC, and asked her who it was. Ms. Hill said that the person was referred to only as "Kash" and "I had to search my

mind. The only Kash I knew at the National Security Agency was Kash Patel."

Mr. Schiff asked her if he worked on Ukraine and reported to her, to which she replied that Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, who testified earlier, was the Director for Ukraine and she did not oversee Mr. Patel.

In secret hearings last month Mr. Vindman had told the panel investigating Mr. Trump that Mr. Patel had misrepresented his expertise on Ukraine to the President.

Mr. Patel had worked for the Intelligence Committee, when it was controlled by the Republicans and David Nunes was its chair.

Sri Lanka President to call snap parliamentary poll in March

Will consult people at the earliest opportunity: Gotabaya

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's new President said on Friday that he will call a snap parliamentary election in March following his sweeping victory in the recent presidential poll.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa is hoping to ride a wave of popularity by calling an election six months before the current Parliament's five-year term expires on March 1.

"I will consult the people at the earliest opportunity I get under the Constitution," he said, after swearing-in a new Cabinet headed by his brother Mahinda, a former



Gotabaya Rajapaksa

President who will now serve as the Prime Minister.

The brothers are credited with brutally defeating Tamil separatist militants in 2009 to end Sri Lanka's bloody civil war, making them adored among the majority Sinhalese-Buddhist

majority. For the same reason they are feared by many Tamils, and also among the Muslim minority who have seen increased hostility since the Easter Sunday attacks in April.

Currently, the Rajapaksas and their allies have just 96 lawmakers in the 225-seat Parliament, making it hard for them to pass legislation. The Opposition of outgoing premier Ranil Wickremesinghe is also six MPs short of a majority. The new 16-member Cabinet also includes another Rajapaksa brother, Chamal, who was made Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation in addition to Trade.

Persuaded Xi on Hong Kong: Trump

If it weren't for me, it would have been obliterated in 14 minutes, says U.S. President

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Friday he had saved Hong Kong from being destroyed by persuading Chinese President Xi Jinping to hold off on sending in troops to crush its pro-democracy movement.

"If it weren't for me, Hong Kong would have been obliterated in 14 minutes," Mr. Trump said in a scattershot early morning interview with Fox News.

Mr. Trump's comments come as he mulls signing congressionally-approved legislation in support of the pro-democracy activists - or bow to Beijing's threats of retaliation if the laws pass.

Asked whether he would



A welcome visitor: A protester hugging a social worker inside the Hong Kong Polytechnic University on Friday. AP

veto the legislation, green-lit by an overwhelming margin in Congress on Wednesday, Mr. Trump equivocated.

"I'll tell you we have to stand with Hong Kong but I'm also standing with President Xi. He is a friend of mine he is an incredible

guy," Mr. Trump said. "I would like to see them work it out. We have to see them work it out," he added.

Mr. Trump cast his relationship with Mr. Xi as the bulwark keeping China from moving against the pro-democracy movement that has

rocked Hong Kong during almost six months of increasingly violent protests.

He added that a "million soldiers standing outside of Hong Kong are not going only because I asked him: 'Please don't do that. You will be making a big mistake. It will have a tremendous negative impact on the trade deal.'"

Mr. Trump acknowledged that the tension over the former British colony - handed back to China in 1997 - has complicated efforts to strike a trade deal with Beijing, a source of economic uncertainty as Washington heads into an election year. U.S. and Chinese trade negotiators are "potentially very close" to a deal, he said.

High Court reinstates mask ban

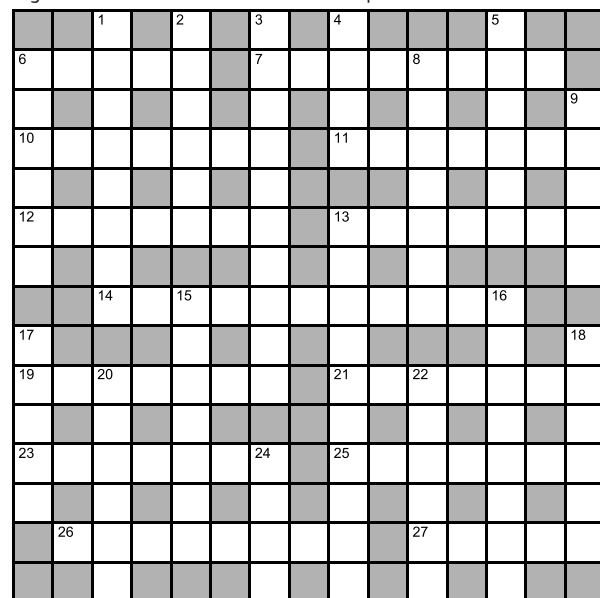
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HONG KONG

The Hong Kong police can continue enforcing a ban on demonstrators wearing masks for the next seven days, the High Court said on Friday, to allow the government time to appeal an earlier ruling that the action was unconstitutional.

The High Court said on Friday it had rejected the government's request for a longer suspension and decided instead upon a short stay of its ruling due to the "great public importance of the issues raised in this case, and the highly exceptional circumstances that Hong Kong is currently facing".

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12788

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



- (set by Bruno)
- 13 Setter infiltrated sect for a story (7)
 - 14 After work, one left before end of day for a break (11)
 - 19 Gain from gamble's criminal - fine must be levied (7)
 - 21 Protection for liberal acts repealed - only first half of each was included (7)
 - 23 Trace of complex compounds extracted & made regularly (7)
 - 25 World body had extremes of hierarchy - also displayed missing dexterity (7)
 - 26 Try to block Harry taking clothes off and another article of clothing (8)
 - 27 Approach from side at dawn to kill leader (3-2)
 - 5 Height of pollution encountered in Indian city and another city (6)
 - 6 Subject's convictions were debated - perhaps not on release (6)
 - 8 Potato product from Congo mostly raised with biological energy (7)
 - 9 Triple-A rating snagged by metal debenture, finally (5)
 - 13 Kid's game of 16? (10)
 - 15 Humourless - having coffee with no pep at work, when upset (2-5)
 - 16 Desire for making money after ending in penury (8)
 - 17 Big wardrobe's easy to hide (5)
 - 18 Emphasize quietly - that's an easy 2 points (4,2)
 - 20 Impartial book about Europe by Eastern King (6)
 - 22 Stick notice on TH crossword page? (6)
 - 24 Want to be born dead... (4)



- ACROSS
- 6 Container found to release energy (5)
- 7 Programmer's app put on company desk's oddly missing (8)
- 10 Virginia's elk run (7)
- 11 Traffic cop's account on review outlined offense (7)
- 12 Placate church occupants with tree extract (7)
- DOWN
- 1 Tropical plant spreading around metal pot (8)
- 2 Courageous gathering rejoicing at heart (6)
- 3 Official's craftily starting to unravel Arab truce (10)
- 4 Lay out capital in short underwear (4)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12787

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Deity and ornaments

When Sugreeva and other monkeys see Rama and Lakshmana approaching, they are filled with fear. Sugreeva is certain that they have been sent by Vali to attack him. Even as all the monkeys panic, Hanuman assures them that they have nothing to fear. He asks them to discard confusion, for Vali cannot harm them. Sugreeva wants Hanuman to find out what the intentions of the newcomers are. Hanuman goes to meet Rama and Lakshmana, but he goes in the guise of an ascetic. Hanuman addressed Rama and Lakshmana in gentle words. He says they appear like ascetics, and yet they are armed. Their arms are like the trunk of an elephant. Perhaps they are gods come in human form, Hanuman says. He then asks them why they wear no ornaments.

But this observation of Hanuman should not be looked at superficially, said Akkarakkani Srinidhi in a discourse on the Ramayana. When someone looks attractive, one worries that evil eyes will be cast on the person. A mother always fears for her child when she suspects that people may cast eyes on her child. It is in this spirit of concern that Hanuman asks Rama why He is unadorned. The lack of ornamentation exposes Rama's body to the eyes of people who may be envious of Him and may cast evil eyes on Him. But if He had worn ornaments, they would have concealed from the world His muscular body.

In fact, even in temples, the ornamentation for the deity is to ward off evil eyes. He is kept covered so that none may see His beauty fully. Vedanta Desika, in his Varadaraja Pancharatnam, says that the priests who serve in the temple are blessed to see Lord Varadaraja without His ornaments. Others see His beauty unconcealed by ornaments only on rare occasions, when there is an Ekanata seva at the temple.