

Record turnout in Hong Kong elections

Over 71% of voters cast their ballots in the poll seen as a test of public support for anti-govt. protests

REUTERS
HONG KONG

Polls closed in Hong Kong with no major disruptions on Sunday after people turned out in huge numbers to vote in district council elections seen as a test of support for anti-government protests that have persisted for over five months.

Electoral affairs chief Barnabus Fung said at least 2.94 million people voted, a turnout rate of more than 71% and a record showing that appeared to have been spurred by the political turmoil. About 1.47 million voted in the last district elections four years ago.

First results began to trickle in after midnight.

Jimmy Sham, a candidate for the Civil Human Rights Front, which organised some of the anti-government rallies, won his contest and said the voter numbers should be a sign to the government that it should listen to their voices.

The voter numbers showed people's determination, said one voter named Tsz, 30, who works in the service industry.

"The high turnout rate... definitely reflects Hong Kong people's hope for genuine universal suffrage," he said.

Casting her ballot, the Beijing-backed Ms. Lam pledged that her government would listen "more intensively" to the views of district councils in the Chinese-ruled city.

"I hope this kind of stability and calm is not only for today's election, but to show that everyone does not want Hong Kong to fall into a chaotic situation again," Ms. Lam said.

The district councils control some spending and decide issues such as recycling and public health. A record 1,104 candidates were vying for 452 seats and a record 4.1 million people have enrolled to vote.

If the pro-democracy



Decisive elections: People line up to vote in the district council elections in South Horizons in Hong Kong. • REUTERS

campaigners gain control, they could secure six seats on Hong Kong's semi-representative Legislative Council and 117 seats on the 1,200-member panel that selects its chief executive.

The protests started over a now-withdrawn extradition Bill that would have allowed people to be sent to mainland China for trial but rapidly evolved into calls for full democracy, posing the big-

gest popular challenge to Chinese President Xi Jinping since he came to power in 2012.

Attacks on candidates They have at times forced the closure of government, businesses and schools as police used tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannon in response to petrol bombs and rocks.

The run-up to the election

was marked by attacks on candidates, with one stabbed and wounded and another having part of his ear bitten off.

Ming Lee, 26, who works in event production, said she hoped the higher turnout would benefit the pro-democracy camp that is battling some seats that were once uncontested and dominated by pro-Beijing candidates.

"I hope this vote can counter the voice of the pro-establishment, so as to bring in more voices from the democrats," she said. "The social problems encouraged people to vote and to focus on political issues."

Sunday was also the seventh day of a stand-off at Polytechnic University, whose campus has been surrounded by police.

"The district council election is almost like a referendum," said a protester clad in a red university tracksuit, his face covered by a red mask.

At least 27 killed as plane crashes into homes in Congo

Busy Bee aircraft en route to Beni crashed soon after takeoff

REUTERS
GOMA

At least 27 people were killed, including some on the ground, when a small plane crashed into a densely populated neighbourhood in the city of Goma in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo on Sunday, a rescue official said.

The propeller plane, which was operated by local company Busy Bee, crashed shortly after takeoff en route to the city of Beni, about 250 km to the north, officials said.

The company said the 19-seater Dornier 228-200 had 16 passengers and two crew members on board.

There was no word yet on what might have caused the accident.

Joseph Makundi, the coordinator of rescue services in Goma, told Reuters that 27



Fatal landing: Rescuers and onlookers amid the debris of a Busy Bee aircraft that crashed in Goma on Sunday. • AP

bodies had been recovered from the rubble, including those of several people hit by falling debris.

"I was at a restaurant with my family when I saw the plane spinning three times in the air and emitting a lot of smoke," said Djemo Medar, an eyewitness. "After

that we saw the plane crash into this house," he said.

Air accidents are relatively frequent in Congo because of lax safety standards and poor maintenance. All Congolese commercial carriers, including Busy Bee, are banned from operating in the European Union.

Boris unveils Brexit manifesto for U.K.

He vows £23.5 bn worth of tax cuts and public spending during 2020-2024 period

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised on Sunday "to get Brexit done", pledging in his Conservative Party's manifesto to bring his deal to leave the European Union back to parliament before Christmas.

Having taken over a minority administration in July and been unable to speed his EU divorce deal through Parliament, Mr. Johnson is seeking a clear victory at the December 12 snap election.

Mr. Johnson is promising to bring back his Brexit deal



Boris Johnson

ma," Mr. Johnson said. "The Conservative manifesto, which I'm proud to launch today, will get Brexit done and allow us to move on and unleash the potential of the whole country," he said.

'Oven-ready' Brexit deal He claims the treaty is "oven-ready" and good to go — as long as he can get a majority.

He insists the deal will allow Britain to regain control over its laws, money and immigration policy.

Mr. Johnson has blasted chief rival, left-wing Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, for

his strategy in refusing to recommend either his own proposed Brexit deal or staying in the EU.

He promised £23.5 billion worth of tax cuts and public spending between 2020 and 2024. The party is pledging it will not raise the three main taxes — income tax, sales tax and national insurance contributions to State benefits — in what it branded a triple tax lock.

Other measures include more money for childcare support, energy efficiency measures, skills retraining and road upgrades.

For Netanyahu, party's support is key to political survival

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu looked to project business as usual on Sunday as he returned to work following his indictment on graft charges, but a wall of silence from his usually loyal Cabinet Ministers indicated tough times ahead for the embattled Israeli leader.

Mr. Netanyahu is determined to fight the charges from the Prime Minister's office. But long before the proceedings begin, it could be his own Likud party that decides his political future as

the country appears to be heading toward elections.

One top Likud official, Gideon Saar, has already announced his intention to challenge Mr. Netanyahu in party primaries as other typical backers have said he should resign.

"There isn't a single person who thinks that after a third or fourth or fifth or sixth election, Netanyahu will succeed in forming a government," Saar told Channel 12 TV on Saturday.

The open call is a risky manoeuvre in a party that fiercely values loyalty and

has had only four leaders in its 70-plus-year history. He made no mention of his indictment during Sunday's meeting, talking about Iran, threats from Gaza and domestic affairs.

But perhaps influenced by polls showing a majority of Israelis thinking Mr. Netanyahu should step down, the party's most senior Ministers pointedly remained mum. Foreign Minister Israel Katz, Internal Security Minister Gilad Erdan, among others, are all straddling the sidelines as Mr. Netanyahu precariously clings to power.

In protest-hit Iraq, security forces kill nine

REUTERS
BASRA

Security forces opened fire on protesters in Baghdad and several cities in southern Iraq on Sunday, killing at least nine people and wounding dozens of others.

In Nassiriya, security forces used live ammunition to disperse protesters, in which four people were killed. Three people were killed near the Gulf port of Umm Qasr.

In Baghdad, two protesters were killed during overnight demonstrations.

ELSEWHERE



Bloomberg launches U.S. presidential bid

WASHINGTON Former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced on Sunday he is running for President. "I'm running for President to defeat Donald Trump and rebuild America," Mr. Bloomberg, 77, said on his web page. AFP

Police charge man over U.K. container deaths

LONDON Prosecutors in U.K. have charged Christopher Kennedy, 23, of Northern Ireland, in the deaths of 39 Vietnamese, whose bodies were found in a refrigerated container truck last month. AP

China says self-confessed spy defector is a fraudster

Wang had sought asylum in Australia

ASSOCIATED PRESS
PERTH

China denied the explosive claims of a self-confessed spy seeking asylum in Australia, saying on Sunday he is a convicted fraudster wanted by Shanghai police.

The *Nine Network* newspapers reported that Chinese defector Wang "William" Liqiang has given Australia's counterintelligence agency inside intelligence on how Beijing conducts its interference operations abroad and revealed the identities of China's senior military intelligence officers in Hong Kong.

Mr. Wang claimed he was involved in the kidnapping in 2015 of one of five Hong

Kong booksellers suspected of selling dissident materials. The incident has been a reference point for protesters during the ongoing unrest in Hong Kong.

The Chinese embassy on Sunday hit back at Mr. Wang, saying he was sentenced for fraud in Fujian province in 2016.

The embassy said he left for Hong Kong on April 10, carrying a fake Chinese passport and a fake Hong Kong permanent resident ID.

Mr. Wang also claimed he was part of an investment firm that was a front for the Chinese government to conduct political and economic espionage in Hong Kong.

Pak. needs to 'rebrand' itself away from terror: U.K. panel

'It is like a shark... poses existential threat to its neighbours'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

A panel of academics and South Asia experts from around the world explored the prospect of a Pakistan that "rebrands" itself away from an ideology of jihad and terrorism, with the Pakistani diaspora playing some role in such a move.

'Reimagining Pakistan: A Global Perspective', organised by the Jammu Kashmir Study Centre and the Indian National Students Association in London on Saturday, highlighted that Pakistan's "jihad strategy" dates back to 1947 when it tried to "forcibly annex Kashmir".

The panelists were in general agreement that the country risks becoming increasingly isolated in the wake of its recent grey-listing by the global money laundering watchdog Financial Action Task Force (FATF) unless some steps are taken and that China could act as a counter-weight, given its own economic interests in the region.

"Pakistan has a unique opportunity to reposition itself as a leader in the region. The Kartarpur Corridor is a good start... but it needs to rebrand the country away from the ideology of jihad," said Seth Oldmixon from the

Liberty South Asia, an independent group promoting political pluralism in South Asia.

Dr. Christine Fair, a Georgetown University professor, informed the gathering that the Pakistani High Commission in London had tried to coerce the organisers of the panel discussion into cancelling the event. "That is reflective of the kind of State it is," she said.

"Pakistan is like a shark in the region... It is an existential threat to its neighbours and countries beyond. The U.K. should stop all aid to Pakistan," noted David Vance, a writer at AltNewsMedia.

Bolivian MPs approve elections sans Morales

New law forbids him from contesting

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LA PAZ

Bolivian lawmakers on Saturday unanimously approved a Bill calling for new presidential elections that would exclude former leader Evo Morales — a key step toward pacifying a nation rocked by unrest since an October 20 election that was marred by reported irregularities.

The Bill was first approved by the Senate and then by the lower house, both of which are dominated by Mr. Morales' Movement Toward Socialism party. Right-wing leader Jeanine Añez, who declared herself interim President after Mr. Morales quit, signed



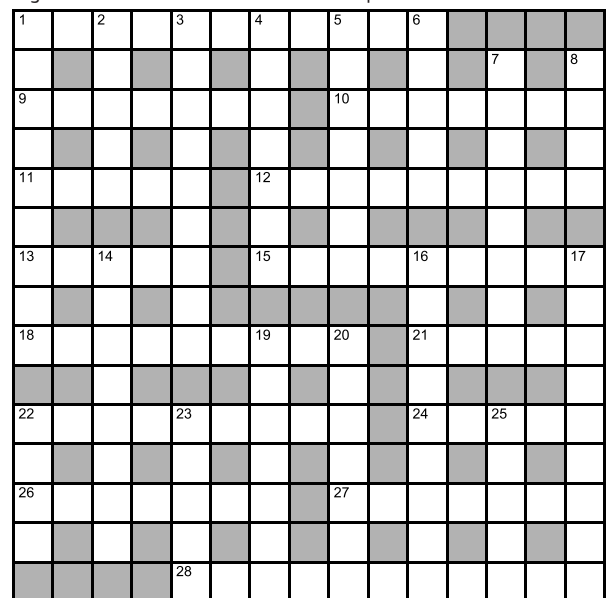
Jeanine Añez

the Bill into law on Sunday. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal will set the date for the new elections.

The new law forbids reelection of anyone who has served two terms consecutively as President, effectively ruling out Mr. Morales, whose refusal to accept such limits was a key issue in protests against him.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12789

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



ACROSS

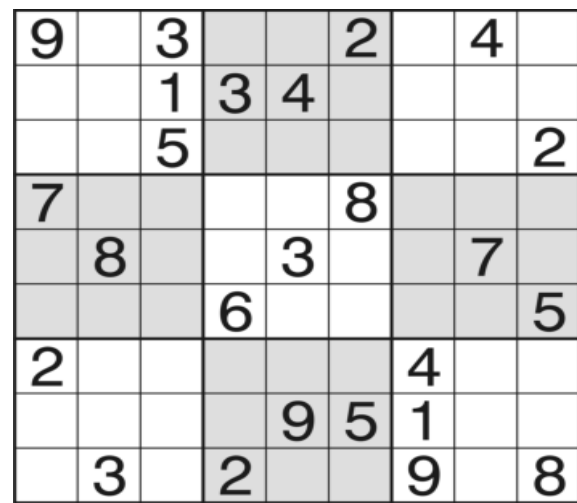
- 1 Very happy, cloned union fittingly (2,5,4)
- 9 Give the right to label (7)
- 10 All jittery — how restaurant visitor leaves girl and you in France (7)
- 11 In France, nothing about principal player is mature (5)

- 12 Direct premier worker (9)
- 13 Hostile behaviour of Gadag group (5)
- 15 True, dater broke up sorrowfully at last recently (9)
- 18 Be told cheat's writhing in emotional anguish (9)
- 21 Poem part of which is totally rich (5)
- 22 Apt corner fixed for business associate (9)
- 24 Sir's head is knocked off in darkness (5)
- 26 Clive's ill with a little enlarged sac (7)
- 27 Even old news agency has class (7)
- 28 As Sone rose at an inappropriate time? (3,2,6)

(set by Gridman)

- 4 Thoroughly cook river fish putting in a little pepper (4-3)
- 5 Man at last enters faulty drains showing guts (7)
- 6 Rue bird's dropped its head (5)
- 7 More unfriendly, going over a new vessel (8)
- 8 Utilised — utilised oil I rejected (4)
- 14 Bar — end — stop by hook or crook (8)
- 16 Climber somewhat inelegant (9)
- 17 Yes, lively chats by staff sailor (9)
- 19 Essentially seconds latest faster challenge (7)
- 20 It provides cover for the listener (7)
- 22 Man's incomplete insurance (4)
- 23 Right side of directory (5)
- 25 Disgusting group, large and primarily stupid (5)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12788									Solution to yesterday's Sudoku								
P	H	R	V	D	E	E	K	E	6	9	1	4	3	2	5	7	8
C	R	A	T	E	U	B	E	R	8	2	4	1	5	7	3	9	6
I	L	R	S	N	L	T			7	3	5	6	9	8	4	1	2
V	A	M	O	S	E	T	R	O	1	4	6	8	7	5	2	3	9
I	E	I	A	C	H	I			9	5	8	2	4	3	7	6	1
C	A	T	E	C	H	U	F	I	2	7	3	9	6	1	8	4	5
S	T								4	8	2	3	1	6	9	5	7
O	P	P	O	R	T	U	N	I	3	6	7	5	2	9	1	8	4
O	N	E	F	I	T	S	E	A	5	1	9	7	8	4	6	2	3
E	E	A	R														
S	O	U	P	C	O	N	U	N									
E	T	E	A	E	A	E	I	U									
H	E	A	D	G	E	A	R										
R	A	D	E	E	G												

FAITH

Focus on God's feet

To behave in a dharmic manner requires a pure heart. Everything else is just needless showing off. Those are the words of the poet Thiruvalluvar. To be of pure heart, we need to keep our thoughts focused on the feet of God, and this is emphasised by Saint Arunagirinatha, said R. Narayanan in a discourse.

Singing Lord Shanmukha's names is one way to attain mukti. But we may lack the capacity to sing. Fasting is another way, but we may not be able to forego food. Bathing in sacred waters grants mukti, but we may not be able to travel to sacred rivers. It is said that if a person is born in Thiruvavur, or dies in Varanasi, he will attain mukti. Where we are born does not lie in our hands. What if we can choose the place of death? We could make a conscious choice, but there is no guarantee we can stick to it.

There is a story of a king who decided that he should move to Varanasi to spend his last days, so that he would die there and thereby attain liberation. But his astrologer said that he might move to Varanasi, but he would not die there. The King did not believe him and moved his court to Varanasi, and remained there, without moving out of the city. One day he noticed a man struggling to control a horse. The King said that he could control it and he mounted the horse. The horse took off at great speed, and the king gradually managed to slow it down. And just when he had the horse almost fully under his control, the exhausted horse died, throwing the king off as it fell to the ground. The king too died. But it so happened, that the horse had stopped galloping only after inching beyond the border of Varanasi. The king did not die in Varanasi. So, for people to get mukti, the only guaranteed way is to focus on the feet of Lord Muruga.