

# Democracy backers sweep Hong Kong polls

They capture 389 of 452 seats while the government's allies win in just 56 seats, down from 300 in 2015

KEITH BRADSHER  
AUSTIN RAMZY  
HONG KONG

Pro-democracy candidates buoyed by months of street protests in Hong Kong won a stunning victory in local elections on Sunday, as record numbers voted in a vivid expression of the city's aspirations and its anger with the Chinese government.

It was a pointed rebuke of Beijing and its allies in Hong Kong, and the turnout – seven in 10 eligible voters – suggested that the public continues to back the democracy movement, even as the protests grow increasingly violent. Hong Kong's youth, a major force behind the demonstrations of the past six months, played a leading role in the voting surge.

With nearly 3 million voters casting ballots, pro-democracy candidates captured 389 of 452 elected seats, up from 124 and far more than they had ever. With two races undecided, the government's allies held just 56 seats, a remarkable collapse from 300 in 2015.

**Viewed as a referendum**  
To many democracy advocates, Sunday was a turning point. "There has been a very deep awakening of the Hong Kong people," said Alan Leong, chairman of the Civic Party, one of the largest pro-democracy parties.

The elections were for dis-



**Turning point:** Supporters of pro-democracy candidate Angus Wong celebrating his victory in the district council elections in Hong Kong on Monday. **AP**

trict councils, one of the lowest elected offices in Hong Kong, and they are typically a subdued affair focused on community issues. The job mostly entails pushing for neighbourhood needs like bus stops and traffic lights.

But this election took on outside significance, and was viewed as a referendum on the unrest that has created the city's worst political crisis in decades. In a semiautonomous part of China where greater democracy is one of the protesters' biggest demands, it gave residents a rare chance to vote.

The gains at the ballot box are likely to embolden a democracy movement that has struggled with how to ba-

lance peaceful and violent protests to achieve its goals.

They are also likely to deepen the challenges for China's central government, which wants to curb the unrest in Hong Kong. And they might exacerbate Beijing's fears about giving the city's residents even greater say in choosing their government.

**Electing a new chief**

The district councils are among the most democratic bodies in Hong Kong. Almost all the seats are directly elected, unlike the legislature, where the proportion is just more than half. The territory's chief executive is also not chosen directly by voters, but is instead selected

by a committee stacked in favour of Beijing.

The election results will give democracy forces considerably more influence on that committee, which is scheduled to choose a new chief executive in 2022.

The district councils name about a tenth of the group's 1,200 members, and now all of these will flip from pro-Beijing to pro-democracy seats. Democracy advocates already control about a quarter of the seats, while other previously pro-Beijing sectors of the committee are now starting to lean toward democracy, most notably accountants and real estate lawyers.

Mr. Leong, the Civic Party

## China backs Lam despite setback

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
HONG KONG

China said on Monday it supports Hong Kong's embattled leader Carrie Lam despite setback in community-level elections.

"China's central government resolutely supports chief executive Carrie Lam's leadership of the Special Administrative Region government," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang at a press briefing.

chairman, called on the Chinese Communist Party to change its policies in Hong Kong.

"Unless the CCP is doing something concrete to address the concerns of the Hong Kong people," he said, "I think this movement cannot end."

Regina Ip, a Cabinet member and the leader of a pro-Beijing political party, said she was surprised to see so many young voters, many of whom tried to confront her with the protesters' demands.

"Normally," she said, "the young people do not come out to vote. But this time, the opposition managed to turn them out." **NY TIMES**

# Assange 'could die' in U.K. jail for want of care, warn doctors

They want him to be shifted to a properly equipped hospital

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

More than 60 doctors wrote an open letter published on Monday, saying they feared Julian Assange's health was so bad that the WikiLeaks founder could die inside a top-security British jail.

The 48-year-old Australian is still fighting a U.S. bid to extradite him from Britain on charges filed under the Espionage Act that could see him given a sentence of up to 175 years in a U.S. prison.

In the letter to Home Secretary Priti Patel, Britain's Interior Minister, the doctors call for Mr. Assange to be moved from Belmarsh prison in southeast London to a university teaching hospital.

They based their assessment on "harrowing eyewitness accounts" of his October 21 court appearance in London and a November 1 report by Nils Melzer, the United Nations special rapporteur on torture.

The independent UN rights expert said Mr. Assange's "continued exposure to arbitrariness and abuse may soon end up costing his life".

Mr. Assange used WikiLeaks to publish classified military and diplomatic files in 2010 about U.S. bombing campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq that proved highly



Julian Assange in London on April 11. **REUTERS**

embarrassing to the US government.

"We write this open letter, as medical doctors, to express our serious concerns about the physical and mental health of Julian Assange," the doctors said in their 16-page open letter.

They said they had "concerns about Mr. Assange's fitness" to go through the full extradition hearing, which is set for February.

"Mr. Assange requires urgent expert medical assessment of both his physical and psychological state of health," the wrote.

"Any medical treatment indicated should be administered in a properly equipped and expertly staffed university teaching hospital (tertiary care).

"Were such urgent assessment and treatment not to

take place, we have real concerns, on the evidence currently available, that Mr. Assange could die in prison. The medical situation is the reby urgent. There is no time to lose."

The doctors are from the U.S., Australia, Britain, Sweden, Italy, Germany, Sri Lanka, Poland.

At his first appearance in public for six months, in a court hearing last month, Mr. Assange seemed frail.

He also appeared confused whenever he was asked to talk at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London.

He seemed to have difficulties recalling his birth date, and at the end of the hearing told District Judge Vanessa Baraitser that he had not understood what had happened in court.

## U.S. missions against IS in Northern Syria resumed

It joins forces with Syrian Kurdish fighters

ERIC SCHMITT  
MANAMA

U.S. troops have resumed large-scale counterterrorism missions against the Islamic State group in northern Syria, military officials said, nearly two months after President Donald Trump's abrupt order to withdraw U.S. troops opened the way for a bloody Turkish cross-border offensive.

U.S.-backed operations against Islamic State fighters in the area effectively ground to a halt for weeks despite warnings from intelligence analysts that IS militants were beginning to make a comeback from Syrian desert redoubts even though their leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, had been killed during a U.S. raid October 26.

On Friday, U.S. soldiers and hundreds of Syrian Kurdish fighters – the same local allies the Trump administration abandoned to fend for themselves against the Turkish advance last month – reunited to con-

duct what the Pentagon said was a large-scale mission to kill and capture Islamic State fighters in Deir el-Zour province, about 193 km south of the Turkish border.

"Over the next days and weeks, the pace will pick back up against remnants of ISIS," Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie, the commander of the military's Central Command, told reporters here on the sidelines of Manama Dialogue.

The resumption of extensive counterterrorism operations capped a tumultuous two months, in which many of the nearly 1,000 U.S. troops in northeastern Syria flew or drove out of the country under Mr. Trump's withdrawal order.

Separately, several hundred other troops, some with armored Bradley Fighting Vehicles, arrived from Iraq and Kuwait under a subsequent order from Mr. Trump to protect Syria's eastern oil fields from the Islamic State, as well as from the Syrian government and its Russian partners. **NY TIMES**

# Won't do anything to threaten India's security, says Gotabaya

'Sri Lanka's involvement with China is purely commercial'

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Days ahead of his first State visit abroad, to New Delhi, Sri Lanka's newly-elected President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has said his government will not do anything that would threaten India's security.

"We don't want to do anything which will threaten the security of India... Our involvement with China is purely commercial," he told the Indian website Bharat Shakti, in his first interview to foreign media since becoming President a week ago.

President Gotabaya is scheduled to visit New Delhi on November 29, following an invitation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was the first senior foreign official to meet the newly-elected President in Colombo, to hand over the PM's invitation, hours after Mr. Gotabaya assumed duty. Reiterating his "neutral"



Gotabaya Rajapaksa

foreign policy vision, Mr. Gotabaya said, "we don't want to get in between the power struggles of superpowers. Further, commenting on his predecessor government's agreement with China on the southern Hambantota Port – the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe administration leased it to China for 99 years – Mr. Gotabaya said: "I am not afraid to say, that was a mistake."

**Thaw in relations**

The newly-elected President's visit signals a full circle in diplomatic ties bet-

ween New Delhi and the Rajapaksas in the last decade – with relations shifting from close cooperation to heightening tensions and now, to what appears a thaw.

Mr. Modi, who visited Sri Lanka in March 2015 – months after Mr. Mahinda was defeated – and later in May 2017, and more recently this June, after the Easter terror attacks, met Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa each time.

The shift in relations was further evident during Mr. Mahinda's visit to New Delhi in September 2018 when he, along with his son parliamentarian Namal Rajapaksa, met Mr. Modi.

Meanwhile, New Delhi's list of pending India-assisted projects in Sri Lanka looms. It figured in different bilateral meetings over the years, including in the October 2018 meeting between PM Modi and then PM Wickremesinghe in New Delhi, when the former "expressed concern" over the delay in the projects.

## Leaked papers show how China runs its camps

'Officials monitor inmates at all times'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING

Leaked government documents outlining the need to prevent escape, double lock doors and constantly monitor detainees in China's network of internment camps in Xinjiang refute Beijing's defence of "vocational education centres" in the region, experts say.

Obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and published by 17 media outlets worldwide, the documents show the strict protocols governing life in the camps in Xinjiang, where an estimated one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities are held.

In one document, local officials are told to monitor inmates at all times – including during toilet breaks – to prevent escape.

Staff are also banned from befriending inmates and engaging in "personal interactions" to prevent "collusion", the document read.

"It shatters (the Chinese

Communist Party's) CCP's narrative about these camps as benign vocational training centres where Uighurs and other Chinese Muslim (s) willingly undertake training," said James Leibold, an expert on ethnic relations in China and a professor at Melbourne's La Trobe University.

The leak comes one week after *The New York Times* reported, based on more than 400 pages of internal papers, that Chinese President Xi Jinping ordered officials to act with "absolutely no mercy" against separatism and extremism in a 2014 speech following a Uighur militant attack on a train station.

In light of ICIJ's investigation, China's Foreign Ministry remained dismissive, with spokesman Geng Shuang on Monday accusing "some media" of "smearing China's counter-terrorism and anti-extremism efforts in Xinjiang".

The Chinese embassy in London denied such documents existed.

### ELSEWHERE



**Trump fires U.S. Navy chief over discipline case**

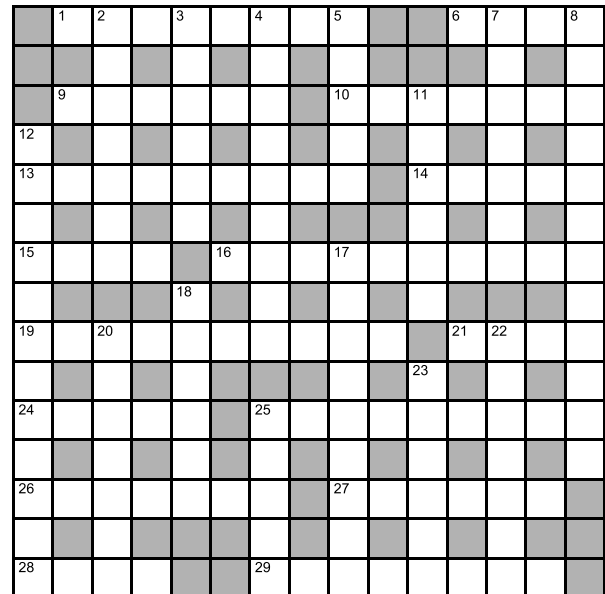
WASHINGTON  
The chief of the U.S. Navy on Sunday criticised Donald Trump after being sacked in a dispute over an elite SEAL commando whose demotion for misconduct was reversed by the President. Richard Spencer was ousted as Navy Secretary, a civilian position, in a case that has fuelled reports that the U.S. military leadership has been angered by Mr. Trump's interference in discipline cases. **AFP**

**Greenhouse gases hit a new record in 2018: WMO**

GENEVA  
Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere hit a new record in 2018, the World Meteorological Organization said on Monday. The concentration of carbon dioxide surged from 405.5 ppm in 2017 to 407.8 ppm in 2018, exceeding the average annual increase of 2.06 ppm in 2005-2015. The annual increase in methane was the highest since 1998, said the report. **REUTERS**

### THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12790

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



**ACROSS**

- 1 Works hard and long with some three of bulkier security devices (8)
- 6 Pole, be lenient endlessly (4)
- 9 Trying times are usual for these bench sitters (6)
- 10 Thanks to the French girl for winged sandals (7)

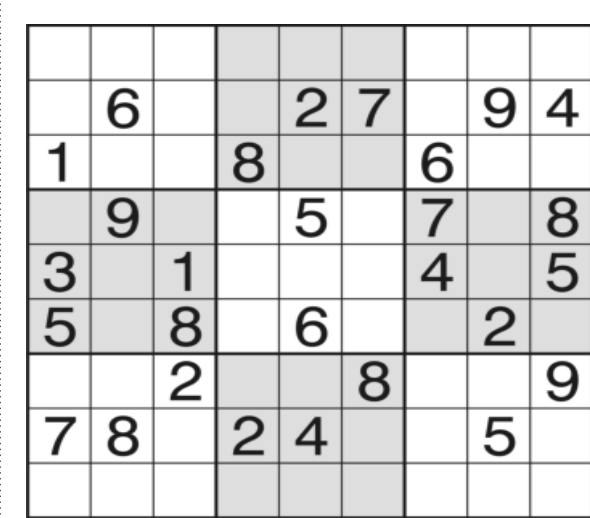
(set by Gridman)

- 13 Fit to be restricted (9)
- 14 Fuel found in Virginia. There it is! (5)
- 15 Sailor and journalist are retired (4)
- 16 Supporter in rage to look for ideas (10)
- 19 Prince, be with wild rider – member of old regiment (10)
- 21 One abandons a piece of furniture for English domestic (4)
- 24 Little weight in pronouncement (5)
- 25 Tries to enter actual practice (9)
- 26 Uproar from two leaders of Russia about hard, catty comment (7)
- 27 Queen startled over one like horse (6)
- 28 Single old lawyer gets Scotch mate (4)
- 29 Girl goes around star in US city (3,5)

**DOWN**

- 3 Gigolo, dropping a ring, running to a gallery (6)
- 4 Head of clan has less healthy-looking boy dismissed (9)
- 5 Investigators have journalist put in place (5)
- 7 Concealed support I consider for porch (7)
- 8 These high navy officers do come to the front (4,8)
- 11 Liberal Whip embraces six (6)
- 12 Woos after soft drink in sport arenas (6,6)
- 17 Dismantle cheesiest Arctic covers (3,6)
- 18 Almost vague family divisions (6)
- 20 Lacking vigour, network manager stops short (7)
- 22 Almost excited, son and girl give a cry of praise (7)
- 23 Heard you are embraced by friend who is grown-up (6)
- 25 Beer splashes – lady's first to rise (5)

### SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

**Solution to puzzle 12789**

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

**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

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

