

# 7 get death penalty for Dhaka cafe attack

Those convicted belong to Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh group; they will appeal the verdict

REUTERS  
DHAKA

A Bangladesh court handed death sentences to seven members of an Islamist militant group on Wednesday for their role in an attack on a cafe in 2016 that killed 22 people, mostly foreigners, in the south Asian nation's worst such incident.

"Charges against them were proved beyond any doubt. The court gave them the highest punishment," public prosecutor Golam Sarwar Khan told reporters after the verdict, amid tight security at the court in the capital, Dhaka.

One of the eight accused was acquitted, he added. A defence lawyer said the convicted men would appeal the charges, which include training the attackers and supplying arms, explosives and funds. After the ruling, they shouted "Allahu Akbar" (God is Greatest) and "We did nothing wrong" from the



Islamist militants being taken to court for trial in the Holey Artisan Bakery attack case in Dhaka on Wednesday. ■ AFP

dock to a packed courtroom, witnesses said.

## IS insignia

Two were seen wearing prayer caps bearing the insignia of Islamic State; authorities opened an investigation into how the caps reached them while they were in police custody.

The July 1 attack on the restaurant popular with fo-

reigners in Dhaka's diplomatic area shocked the nation of 160 million and unnerved businesses.

Five young militants, armed with guns, sharp weapons and grenades stormed the Holey Artisan cafe, took diners hostage and killed them over 12 hours. Nine Italians, seven Japanese, an American and an Indian were among the dead. The

attackers were also killed in a rescue bid by Army commandos.

Prosecutor Khan said the seven men convicted on Wednesday belong to Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh, a group that seeks to establish sharia rule in the predominantly Muslim country.

"The ruling will set an example. It will give a message to militant groups that none of them will be spared," Law Minister Anisul Huq said.

Under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has been cracking down on militant groups to preserve its image as a moderate Muslim nation. After the cafe siege, police raided suspected hideouts and killed dozens of militants believed to have helped mount the attack. Hundreds more were arrested. "We are happy that justice has been served," said Shamsuzzaman Shams, whose policeman brother

was killed when he tried to enter the cafe, adding: "We want immediate execution of the ruling."

But defence lawyer Delwar Hossain said all seven men convicted on Wednesday will challenge the verdict in a higher court. "They didn't get justice," he said.

The assault was claimed by the IS but the government has consistently denied the presence in the country of any transnational militant organisation such as al-Qaeda or the IS, blaming domestic militants instead.

Police said a faction of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh, which has pledged allegiance to Islamic State, was involved in organising the cafe attack.

In the year before the atrocity, Bangladesh saw a string of grisly individual murders, including of secular writers and foreigners, claimed by the IS or al-Qaeda.

# Pak. SC's decision on Army chief's extension likely today

Court slams govt. for procedural lapses in notification

MEHMAL SARFRAZ  
LAHORE

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Wednesday adjourned the hearing of the case regarding the extension of the tenure of Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa until Thursday.

If the court decides in favour of his extension or reappointment, Gen. Bajwa will be able to continue his tenure as Army Chief. His current term ends on Thursday at midnight.

Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa said the government has made the Army Chief a shuttlecock due to the procedural hiccups regarding the extension notification.

Justice Khosa said that even an assistant commissioner is not notified the way the government handled the Army chief's extension notification.



Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa

He asked the government to find a solution by Thursday to the questions raised by the court; otherwise the court will act as per its constitutional obligations.

Prime Minister Imran Khan called an emergency session of the government's legal team as well as senior Cabinet Ministers. Gen. Bajwa also attended the meeting.

A senior politician said,

requesting anonymity, that what has happened "in the last couple of days is unprecedented". The politician said that former dictator Pervez Musharraf's case on alleged treason is on its last legs. If convicted, it will set a precedent that will be hard to ignore for future chiefs. "Abrogating, suspending or holding the Constitution in abeyance and imposing martial law will have consequences. Also the Supreme Court's intervention in questioning the legality of Gen. Bajwa's extension has brought to the fore the conversation which was hitherto missing from national and legal discourse."

On the other hand, the Islamabad High Court halted the verdict of a special court in Gen. Musharraf's high treason case, which was to come on Thursday.

# U.S. to label Mexican cartels as 'terror' groups

The move comes after 9 women and children were killed by drug traffickers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said in an interview posted online on Tuesday that he planned to designate Mexican drug cartels as terror groups.

The move comes after Mr. Trump called for a "war" on the cartels in early November when nine women and children from a Mormon community in northern Mexico were killed in a hail of gunfire. The victims were dual U.S.-Mexican citizens.

"Are you going to designate those cartels in Mexico as terror groups and start

hitting them with drones?" asked Bill O'Reilly, a conservative media personality.

"I don't want to say what I'm going to do, but they will be designated," Mr. Trump answered. He added: "I will be designating the cartels... absolutely. I have been working on that for the last 90 days... Designation is not that easy, you have to go through a process and we are well into that process."

Mexican authorities reacted swiftly, with the Foreign Ministry saying that it has contacted U.S. officials "to understand the meaning and scope of the remarks".



Donald Trump

Mexico will also "seek a high-level meeting as soon as possible to present Mexico's position" and hear Washington's views, the Foreign Ministry said.

Mexico will seek talks to "make progress with reducing the flow of arms and money from the U.S. to organised crime in Mexico, in addition to drug precursors that cross Mexican territory en route to the U.S.," the statement read. Mexico has long complained about the flow of weapons bought in the U.S. and smuggled south of the border.

Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard's reaction was more forceful on Twitter. "Mexico will never allow any action that means a violation of its national sovereignty," he wrote.

# Swiss embassy staffer 'detained' in Colombo

She was threatened to reveal sensitive information, says Switzerland

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

A local staff of the Embassy of Switzerland in Colombo has been "detained" and "threatened" in what the Swiss Foreign Ministry on Wednesday called a "serious security incident".

The Swiss Ambassador to Sri Lanka met Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, and sought "an immediate and complete investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident" and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Swiss authorities have also sought a guarantee of the security of the Swiss representation in Colombo and its employees, a spokesperson of the Swiss Foreign Ministry said

## 'Unacceptable attack'

"We can confirm that a local employee of the embassy was detained against her will on the street and threatened at length by unidentified men in order to force her to disclose embassy-related information. Switzerland regards this incident as a very serious and unacceptable attack on one of its diplomatic



Hanspeter Mock

representations and its employees," the Ministry spokesperson told *The Hindu* via email from Bern.

The development comes

less than two weeks after the new government, helmed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, took charge in Colombo following Sri Lanka's presidential poll.

Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry is yet to comment on the development, and *The Hindu* was not able to reach its officials for comment.

A tweet from the verified Twitter handle of the Ministry said on Wednesday evening: "Swiss Ambassador Hanspeter Mock called on Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena and discussed the progress of bilateral relations."

## ELSEWHERE



### Three injured in blast at Texas chemical plant

WASHINGTON  
Three people were injured in an explosion at a chemical plant in Texas on Wednesday, which sent a huge fireball into the sky and triggered evacuation. TPC Group said two employees and a contractor were injured. ■ AFP

### Nineteen killed by militia in east DR Congo

BENI  
Nineteen people were killed on Wednesday in eastern DR Congo by suspected group ADF, blamed for massacres that have sparked deadly protests against the UN peacekeeping mission, the UN said. ■ AFP

# Iran firms up response to protests

Six suspects arrested, Iranian journalists overseas penalised

FARNAZ FASSIHI  
RICK GLADSTONE

The authorities in Iran strengthened their reprisals on Tuesday over the protests that engulfed the country last week, arresting "six main elements" accused of rioting in Tehran and penalising Iranian journalists overseas who publicised the mayhem.

Although internet service that had been suspended in Iran after the protests erupted has been partly restored, it may be curtailed indefinitely, officials warned. Mobile phone access to the internet remains blocked.

The intensified response to the protests, reported in official Iranian media, came as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the U.S.

government had received nearly 20,000 messages, videos, photographs and notes from Iranians after his call last week for evidence that the protests had been violently suppressed during the internet blackout.

Mr. Pompeo's appeal to Iranians has enraged the Tehran leadership.

Police said they have "arrested six main elements behind violent riots that recently hit Tehran," and that "the suspects had confessed to their acts of sabotage."

The protests began peacefully over the government's abrupt announcement November 15 that it was raising petrol prices by as much as 200% and imposing a rationing system, with the proceeds from the higher prices

going, it said, to needy Iranians in the form of cash subsidies.

## Mounting death toll

The changes took many Iranians by surprise and their protests soon turned into violent demonstrations about a litany of grievances in the country of 80 million, where unemployment and inflation have been growing worse.

Amnesty International has said more than 140 people were killed, mostly by firearms. Two journalists contacted inside the country said they believed that the death toll was at least 218, based on coroners' reports, with more than 1,900 people injured and at least 7,000 arrested. ■ NY TIMES

# 18 dead after bus falls into gorge in Nepal

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KATHMANDU

At least 18 people died after a bus skidded off a highway in Nepal and plunged into a deep gorge on Wednesday, authorities said, while rescuers scoured the steep terrain for survivors.

The bus was travelling from hilly Arghakhanchi district west of Kathmandu to the southern city of Butwal when it left the road and plummeted some 350 m to the ground.

"We have recovered dead bodies of 17 passengers and the bus driver, including two infants," chief district officer Bijayraj Poudel said. Twelve others were taken to hospital, Mr. Poudel said.

# Labour says U.K. govt. holding secret talks to sell NHS to U.S.

Corbyn shows papers on trade negotiations to attack Johnson

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
LONDON

The leader of Britain's main opposition party, Jeremy Corbyn, accused Prime Minister Boris Johnson of secretly negotiating the basis of a trade deal with the U.S. ahead of the country's departure with the European Union, including a contentious plan to extend patents for American drug companies.

The Labour Party's Corbyn waved 451 pages of documents at a press conference on Wednesday, declaring that they covered six rounds of negotiations beginning in July 2017 - pre-



Jeremy Corbyn

liminary soundings ahead of formal trade talks.

With the future of the National Health Service in focus in the December 12 general election, Mr. Corbyn highlighted the drug price issue and argued that extending patents would boost the profits of big pharmaceutical

companies at the expense of taxpayers, who would be barred from buying cheaper generic drugs.

"We have got evidence that under Boris Johnson the NHS is on the table and will be up for sale," Mr. Corbyn said.

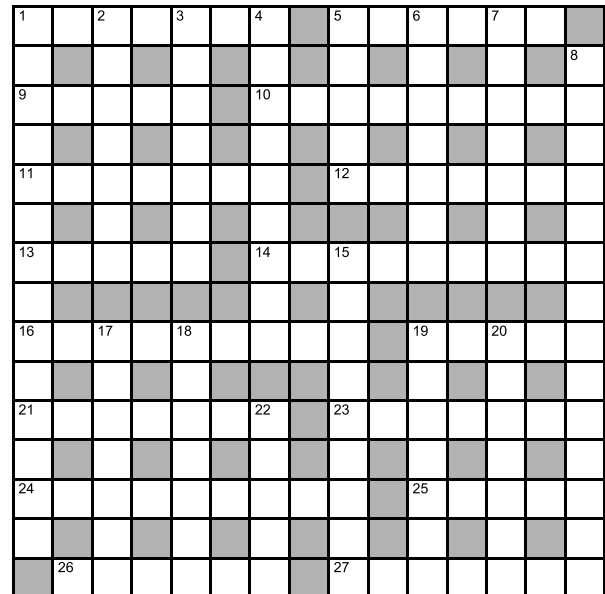
Mr. Johnson described Mr. Corbyn's claims as "an absolute invention," and "completely untrue."

"We are absolutely resolved that there will be no sale of the NHS, no privatisation," Mr. Johnson told the BBC.

"The NHS is not on the table in any way... in no aspect whatever."

## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12792

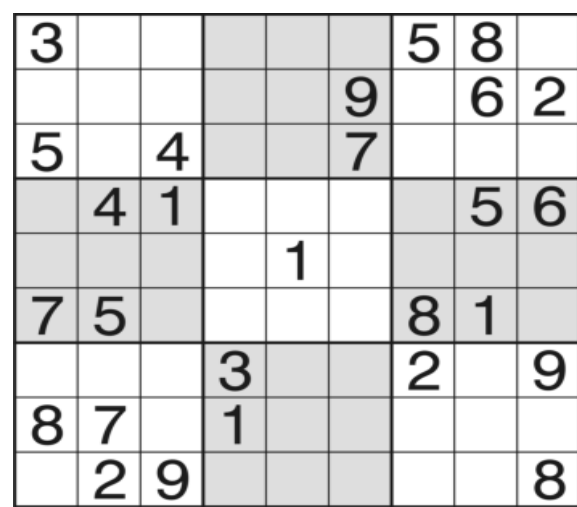
Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



(set by Gridman)

- 11 Writing about origin of love gives hint (7)
- 12 Admirer neglects to start air freshener (7)
- 13 Such a container could do with a refill (5)
- 14 Jack and missionary in waterproof cloth (9)
- 16 Master mad about Dutch city (9)
- 19 Pasta? Push this central dish from Japan! (5)
- 21 Fashionable ways to make progress (7)
- 23 Somehow ignore a historic period (4,3)
- 24 Carrier of printed matter to retail it (9)
- 25 She originally stole your lovely pencil holder (5)
- 26 Cheats Greek character backing mineral (6)
- 27 Nonsense work with lines embedded in desk (4-3)
- 2 What one might do before leaving to leave the bar in a hurry (5,2)
- 3 In a stylish way, you get in dismissing ace in an insane manner (7)
- 4 Lone good date is exotic and stretched out (9)
- 5 Something fragrant swallowed by clientele mistrustingly (5)
- 6 Speak endlessly about AP town's flower (7)
- 7 Advice the administrative body delivered orally (7)
- 8 Training job provided by nice, hip tappers (14)
- 15 Hint about a leftover amount (9)
- 17 Son, with stomach extremely nasty, is unhealthily thin (7)
- 18 Passes English with shortcomings (7)
- 19 Marriage-related opus put out on brief shop event (7)
- 20 Red-faced, allowed evidence of injury to show up first (7)
- 22 Son and father recall writing on muscular problem (5)

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

### Solution to puzzle 12791

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

### Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code

- 1 Boorish fellow therefore does not start providing voice modulation (7)
- 5 Anticipate what's here (6)
- 9 Doctor and I, by the way, are slightly wet (5)
- 10 Surpass deliveries by US President (9)

## FAITH

### Surrender to His will

A diligent student of Vedanta may develop erudite skills, such as the ability to expound the sastras, or even compose works and texts based on these. But Adi Sankara reiterates that more than such scholarly attainments that indicate intellectual proficiency, it is the extent to which one internalises this valuable esoteric knowledge to bring it into practice in day-to-day life that will be truly beneficial to one, pointed out Swami Vidyashankara Saraswati in a discourse. To feel and experience the truth of God is different from merely stating esoteric truth.

It is not easy to give up the affinity to the body and the world, despite the awareness of their impermanence. Renunciation or tyaga that leads to surrender to the will of God is the springboard for God realisation. It is an arduous path even for the devout who have renounced everything. Pattinathar, a great Siva devotee, is born into a rich family. Eventually, he gives up everything and adopts the lifestyle of a wandering devotee, visiting temples and offering prayers to the deities. Once, during his visit to Ujjain, he is wrongly accused of theft and the king orders him to be punished and he is sent to be burnt in the "kazhu maram." Even in that difficult situation he does not lose heart. He is unable to explain how this accusation pertains to him and the punishment is executed. But the wonder is that he remains unscathed while the tree is burnt.

He says in his hymn that he experiences the power and presence of the Almighty. It is clear to him then that none can stand against the force of destiny and fate and that there is something beyond individual action and effort. He then surrenders all to God's will and Sankalpa which alone prevails in the life though it is difficult to realise and accept it.