

ELSEWHERE



Global climate protests kick off in Sydney

Protesters across Asia kicked off a fresh round of global demonstrations against climate change on Friday, with bushfire-ravaged Australia taking the lead. Protesters in several Asian cities, including Delhi, heeded the call to action from 16-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg. The protests have taken on extra urgency in Australia — the country's southeast has been devastated by bushfires in recent weeks. AFP

K-pop star jailed for gang rape, spycam crimes

South Korean singer-songwriter Jung Joon-young was convicted on Friday of gang rape and distributing videos of the assaults and other sexual encounters, and was jailed for six years in a scandal that has rocked K-pop. Mr. Jung and Choi Jong-hoon, a former member of boy band FT Island, were found guilty of gang-raping two different victims on two occasions in 2016. AFP

Trump visits Afghanistan, says U.S.-Taliban talks back on track

He celebrated Thanksgiving holiday with troops during a surprise visit to Kabul

REUTERS KABUL

President Donald Trump made a surprise Thanksgiving visit to U.S. troops in Afghanistan on Thursday and said talks with Taliban are back on track. The President also said that he believed the radical group would agree to a ceasefire.

Mr. Trump's surprise Thanksgiving Day visit was his first to Afghanistan since becoming President and came a week after a prisoner swap between Washington and Kabul that raised hopes for a long elusive peace deal to end the 18-year war.

"The Taliban wants to make a deal and we are meeting with them," Mr. Trump told reporters after arriving in Afghanistan on Thursday.

Ceasefire key to talks
"We say it has to be a ceasefire and they didn't want to do a ceasefire and now they want to do a ceasefire, I believe. It will probably work out that way," he said.



Unexpected guest: Donald Trump making a gesture at 'Thanksgiving' dinner with troops in Kabul on Thursday. ■ AP

Mr. Trump cancelled peace negotiations in September after the militant group claimed responsibility for an attack in Kabul that killed 12 people, including an American soldier.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the hardline Islamist insurgent group, said on Friday they were "ready to restart the talks".

"Our stance is still the same. If peace talks start, it will be resumed from the stage where it had stopped,"

Mr. Mujahid told Reuters.

Taliban leaders have told Reuters that the group has been holding meetings with senior U.S. officials in Doha since last weekend, adding they could soon resume formal peace talks.

"We are hoping that Trump's visit to Afghanistan will prove that he is serious to start talks again. We don't think he has much of a choice," said a senior Taliban commander on conditions of anonymity.

Mr. Trump did not answer reporters' questions when he returned on Friday morning to Florida, where he is spending the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday weekend away from Washington.

There are currently about 13,000 U.S. forces as well as thousands of other NATO troops in Afghanistan, 18 years after a U.S.-led coalition invaded the country following the September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda attacks on the United States.

About 2,400 U.S. service members have been killed in the course of the Afghan conflict.

A draft accord agreed in September would have thousands of American troops withdrawn in exchange for guarantees that Afghanistan would not be used as a base for militant attacks on the United States or its allies.

Still, many U.S. officials doubt the Taliban could be relied upon to prevent al-Qaeda from again plotting attacks against the United States from Afghan soil.

London police shoot suspect dead after 'terrorist' stabbings

Bystanders wrestle man to the ground and grab his knife

REUTERS LONDON

British police on Friday shot dead a man who strapped a fake bomb to his body and stabbed a number of people in what they said was a terrorist incident in the London Bridge area of the capital.

Police said they were alerted at just before 2 p.m. (1400 GMT) about a stabbing incident near London Bridge. Half a dozen bystanders wrestled the suspect to the ground and grabbed his knife. A video posted on Twitter shows police dragging one man off the suspect before an officer takes careful aim. Two shots ring out. The man stops moving.

"A male suspect was shot by specialist armed officers from the City of London police and I can confirm that this suspect died at the scene," the U.K.'s top counter-terrorism officer, Neil Basu, told reporters.

"A number of other people received injuries during this incident," Mr. Basu said. "We believe a device that



London in panic: Police vehicles and buses near the London Bridge on Friday. ■ AP

was strapped to the body of the suspect was a hoax explosive device."

A video posted on Twitter showed a group of about half a dozen men wrestling with someone on the ground on the sidewalk of the bridge. One of them backs away from the scene carrying a knife.

As he looks towards the melee, an armed police officer drags another person away from the man on the floor. Soon after, what sound

like two gunshots ring out, and the man on the ground stops moving. Reuters could not immediately verify the footage.

People in buildings around the scene were evacuated to the north side of the River Thames.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the incident appeared to have been contained. "I want to thank the emergency services and members of the public for their immense bravery".

Hong Kong set for fresh protests, university siege ends

Agitators gather at British consulate; other rallies planned

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE HONG KONG

Hong Kong police on Friday ended their two-week siege of a university campus that became a battleground between pro-democracy protesters and security officials. Activists vowed to hold fresh rallies and strikes in the coming days.

Renewed calls to hit the streets came after Beijing and city leader Carrie Lam refused further political concessions despite a landslide victory for pro-democracy parties in local elections last weekend.

Favourable poll results
Sunday's district council polls delivered a stinging rebuke to the financial hub's pro-Beijing establishment and undermined their argument that a silent majority were tired of the nearly six months of increasingly violent protests.

Online forums used to organise the mass movement have filled with calls for a major rally on Sunday and a strike on Monday targeting the morning commute.

"If the communist Hong Kong government ignores public opinion, we will blossom everywhere for five or six days straight... We have to set a deadline," read one post on the Reddit-like



Pro-democracy agitators outside the British Consulate in Hong Kong on Friday. ■ AP

LIHKG forum, which got heavy approval from users.

Earlier in the day, police said they were closing the book on one of the most violent chapters of the protest movement — the siege of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

The sprawling campus became a battleground on November 17 between police and protesters armed with bows and arrows as well as Molotov cocktails.

The standoff settled into a stalemate during which hundreds fled the campus — some making daring escapes, others caught and beaten by officers during failed breakouts — leaving a dwindling core of holdouts surrounded by police cordons.

After university leaders

said almost all protesters had left, police teams moved in on Thursday to gather nearly 4,000 Molotov cocktails and other weapons left behind after the occupation.

A few hundred protesters, some carrying Union Jack flags, gathered at the British consulate on Friday, urging London to extend citizenship to Hong Kong residents born before the 1997 handover to China and classified as overseas British nationals.

They chanted "We are all Simon", referring to a former consulate employee, Simon Cheng, who said Chinese police manhandled him, seeking information about activists behind the protests. A rally is also planned for December 8 by Civil Human Rights Front.

(With Reuters inputs)

Iraq's PM set to resign after violent protests

Adel Abdel Mahdi's announcement comes after top cleric called on Parliament to replace the Cabinet

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE BAGHDAD

Iraq's embattled premier announced on Friday he will resign in keeping with the wishes of the country's top Shiite cleric, after nearly two months of anti-government protests that have cost more than 400 lives.

Adel Abdel Mahdi's written statement was greeted with cheers and blaring music across Baghdad's iconic Tahrir (Liberation) Square, where crowds have amassed since early October against a ruling class deemed corrupt and inefficient.

"I will submit to the esteemed Parliament a formal letter requesting my resignation from the premiership,"

Mr. Abdel Mahdi wrote, just hours after Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani called in his weekly sermon on Parliament to replace the Cabinet.

The sermon set off an avalanche of statements from political figures in support of a no-confidence vote on the government, before the Prime Minister's announcement.

Celebrations erupt
Celebrations broke out in Tahrir, where young protesters dropped the stones they were preparing to throw at riot police and began dancing, an AFP photographer said.

"It's our first victory, and we're hoping for many



Adel Abdel Mahdi

more," shouted one demonstrator as the three-wheeled tuk-tuk vehicles used to ferry casualties pumped patriotic music into the square.

"It's also a victory for the martyrs who fell," he said. The grassroots movement is the largest Iraq has seen in

decades but also the deadliest, with more than 400 people dead and 15,000 wounded in the capital and Shiite-majority south, according to an AFP tally.

For weeks, Mr. Sistani had called for restraint in dealing with demonstrators and urged political parties to get "serious" about reform, but he ramped up demands on Friday.

"The Parliament, from which this current government is drawn, is asked to reconsider its choice in this regard," he said in Friday's sermon delivered by a representative.

Within minutes, MP and former premier Haider al-Abadi called on lawmakers

to convene on Saturday a "special session for a vote of no-confidence and to form a new independent government".

The bloodshed resumed on Friday, with two protesters shot dead in the flash-point city of Nasiriyah and another killed in the shrine city of Najaf.

The unrest in Iraq's south was unleashed after protesters stormed the Iranian consulate in Najaf late on Wednesday, accusing the neighbouring country of propping up Iraq's government. Tehran demanded Iraq take decisive action against the protesters, saying it was "disgusted" by the developments.

Sudan overturns moral policing law

The transitional government dissolves al-Bashir's former ruling party

ASSOCIATED PRESS CAIRO

Sudan's government on Friday overturned a moral policing law that criminalised wearing revealing clothing and drinking alcohol, and dissolved the country's former ruling party, fulfilling the two key demands of pro-democracy protesters. "This law is notorious for being used as a tool of exploitat-

ion, humiliation & violation of rights," PM Abdallah Hamdok said in a tweet.

"I pay tribute to the women and youth of my country who have endured the atrocities that resulted from the implementation of this law."

The Public Order Act was first passed in 1992 by al-Bashir's Islamist government and enforced only in the



The law criminalised wearing revealing clothing and drinking alcohol. ■ AFP

capital, Khartoum, before being applied nationwide four years later. The law criminalised a wide range of in-

dividual behaviour, including revealing clothing and drinking alcohol. Those convicted of violating the act could face prison sentences, fines, lashing and confiscation of property.

Sudan's sovereign council and Cabinet announced both decisions after a fourteen-hour long meeting that ended shortly after midnight on Thursday. It said the law would also require confiscation of al-Bashir's National Congress Party's assets and funds.

Pak. students demand end of ban on unions

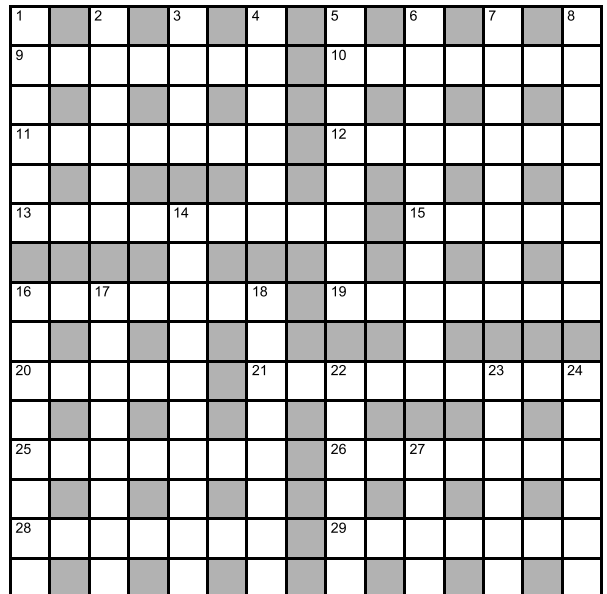
ASSOCIATED PRESS LAHORE

Pakistani students on Friday staged rallies across the country in a rare show of strength to urge Prime Minister Imran Khan to lift a decades-long ban on peaceful political activities at education institutions.

Hundreds of students attended rallies in Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi and elsewhere.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12794

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles

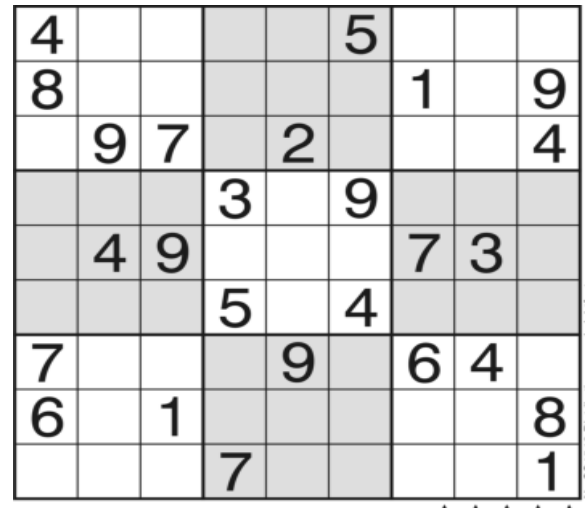


- 9 Dressing the group on time (7)
- 10 State, according to a President, once lacked nothing (7)
- 11 On money, European Union rejects, they follow (7)
- 12 Caul starts with minute thrust (7)
- 13 Overrun links following areas of growth (9)

(set by Arden)

- 15 Line to cut what you own into two (5)
- 16 Choice to have a drink outside club (7)
- 19 Animal less protected, no one goes back inside (7)
- 20 In France it's good, for America it's a bounty (5)
- 21 One outlet — with yen you get gas (9)
- 25 After time out, becomes angry and taut, say (7)
- 26 Badly niggled horse (7)
- 28 A genuine short built African (7)
- 29 Ardent runner, regularly participates in Asia (7)
- 5 Musical merry-go-round (8)
- 6 Bloodstained clothes — a new theme used in gambling (4,6)
- 7 French can keep husband in bed (8)
- 8 Slams her badly, but it's safe (8)
- 14 Simple way to be well off (4,6)
- 16 Right of navigation, rickety boat in detention (8)
- 17 Scientist took middle path guarded by ones in Germany (8)
- 18 Cold cream — also found in organic chemical (8)
- 22 It's underage maybe, to be allowed to fly (6)
- 23 Two short men kept it cut (6)
- 24 They managed to get one thousand, that's four times the score (6)
- 27 Change initial dimension and poet becomes fat (4)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12793
A B B A C Y B R I G H T O N
S R R O I O I E
T H E O R Y C O L L A P S E
E A R O T D P P D
R E D N E C K S R E P E A L
I B S I A N R E
S K I P P I N G R O P E
K N O A M A P A
M S O A T A L L I
E S P R I T B R A C E L E T
D I N P Y H A A A
I N T E G R A L N U G G E T
N E L W T T E E
A S S A Y I N G M E N D E D
Solution to yesterday's Sudoku
8 6 7 2 5 9 3 4 1
2 9 4 3 8 1 7 6 5
1 3 5 6 4 7 2 8 9
5 4 9 1 2 8 6 3 7
6 7 2 9 3 4 1 5 8
3 1 8 5 7 6 9 2 4
7 5 1 4 6 3 8 9 2
4 8 6 7 9 2 5 1 3
9 2 3 8 1 5 4 7 6

FAITH

His endless glories

None can fathom the greatness of the Supreme Brahman, say the Vedas, and yet they try to speak of His glories. In the seventh, eighth, and ninth chapters of the Gita, the Lord has indicated briefly about His greatness to Arjuna. In the tenth chapter, He describes in greater detail many aspects of His innumerable glories which can never be exhausted. It is this knowledge of His greatness that can open the eye of jnana and this goes hand in hand with devotion to lead to salvation, pointed out Srimati Rukmini Ramamurthy in a discourse. Once one is aware of His greatness, the import of the Lord's words in the famous verse at the end of the ninth chapter, 'Manmanabhava Mathbhakto' about how by fixing one's mind in Him, and remaining devoted to Him, and training oneself to seek Him as the only goal, one can surely reach Him, automatically becomes a practical reality to the ardent devotee.

Arjuna has already had a taste of the Lord's greatness. Naturally, he is filled with wonder and amazement and is so overwhelmed that he begins to praise Krishna as the Supreme Brahman, the Highest Abode and the Absolute Essence of Purity, Everlasting Divine One, the First among Gods. Moreover, he is also familiar with the devotional experience of sages and rishis such as Narada and other celestial beings. He knows that none can reveal more of His glories better than Krishna and so requests Him to explain the secret embedded in creation. The Lord provides a sample list from which one gets an idea of how to meditate on Him. He is the source of all creation, pervades each and every aspect of it and sustains it most admirably. The experience of this truth is the essence of Brahma Jnana, the ability to perceive the entire universe in all its detail as His manifestation.