


Poll day

British voters are heading to the polls on Thursday for the third time in less than four years, with the Conservatives and Labour seeking a fresh mandate for their respective Brexit plans



Key issues

Brexit was the top issue during the election campaign, with health care and the economy coming next. These are the main points from leading parties' manifestos:

Conservatives

- Leave the EU under PM Boris Johnson's deal before the January 31 deadline
- Negotiate free trade agreement with EU by December 31, 2020
- Invest £2.7 billion to build new hospitals
- Borrow more to invest in infrastructure
- Won't raise taxes
- Implement points-based visa system to prioritise skilled workers

Labour

- Negotiate a new Brexit deal
- Put the new deal to a referendum
- Raise spending across the health sector
- Nationalise key utilities, including rail and mail
- Tax the rich more
- Immigration system to be built around human rights

Liberal Democrats

- Stop Brexit
- If not in power, back a second referendum on Brexit
- Introduce a wellbeing budget alongside the fiscal budget
- Raise income tax by 1 percentage point to fund health and social care
- Invest £130 billion in infrastructure
- Save EU freedom of movement

2017 election results

Latest polls suggest that the Conservatives' lead over Labour has narrowed but still remains solid

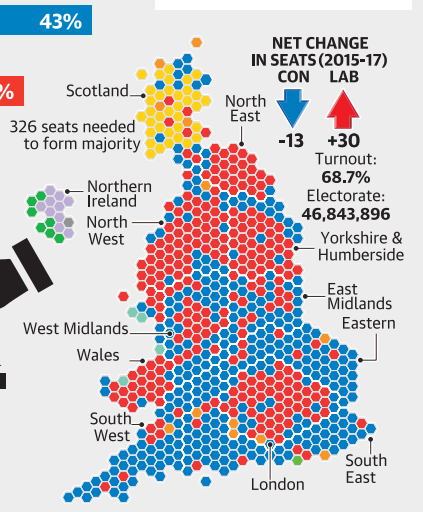
Voting intention

Conservatives	339 seats	43%
Labour	231 seats	34%
Lib Dem	15 seats	12%
Brexit Party	3%	
Green	3%	
SNP	3%	
Other	2%	

NET CHANGE IN SEATS (2015-17)

Conservatives **318** | Labour **262** | SNP **35** | Lib Dem **12** | DUP **10** | Sinn Féin **7** | Plaid cymru **4** | Others **2**

Turnout: 68.7% | Electorate: 46,843,896



Source: YouGov, Electoral Commission, U.K.

Boris seeks Brexit win as U.K. votes today

Possible outcomes range from a landslide victory for Tories to a hung Parliament, say pollsters

REUTERS
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson looks on course to win Thursday's election though the race has tightened markedly and he can no longer be sure of a majority, according to opinion polls published on the eve of the vote.

The December 12 election has been described by all parties as Britain's most important in memory, with Johnson calling for a big majority so he can swiftly pull Britain out of the EU next month.

The main opposition Labour Party promises a new referendum on Brexit and a renationalisation of utilities and railroads in its most left-wing platform for decades.

YouGov, which accurately predicted the outcome of the last election two years ago with an elaborate survey that

estimates the outcome in individual constituencies, cut its forecast for Mr. Johnson's likely parliamentary majority by more than half to 28 seats. Two weeks ago it had forecast a majority of 68.

Possible outcomes range from a landslide victory for Mr. Johnson to a hung Parliament with no party in control, YouGov said, given the possibility of "tactical voting" in dozens of closely fought constituencies to deny a Conservative victory.

"It could not be tighter," Mr. Johnson, the face of the Leave campaign in the 2016 referendum, said on Wednesday when asked about the opinion polls showing a tighter race. He delivered milk to voters before sunrise.

In a last minute pitch for votes, both Mr. Johnson and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn went on whistlestop tours of the country.



Labour supporters listening to their leader Jeremy Corbyn in Bristol. ■ AFP/FILE

Mr. Corbyn called on voters to reject the politics of despair and division he said the Conservatives had sown and urged Britons to vote for justice and equality.

The YouGov model indicated Mr. Johnson's Conservatives were on course to win 339 seats in the 650-seat House of Commons with 43% of the vote, versus Labour's 231 seats with 34% of the vote.

While that would be the

Conservatives' best performance in seat terms since Margaret Thatcher's 1987 victory, YouGov said the Conservatives' tally could fall anywhere from 311 to 367.

A poll by Opinion showed Mr. Johnson's lead over Labour had narrowed to 12 percentage points from 15.

Brexit paralysis

Mr. Johnson called the snap election to break what he said was the paralysis of Britain's political system after more than three years of crisis over how, when or even if to quit the EU.

He has promised to "get Brexit done" by January 31 if he wins a majority. Mr. Corbyn has said he will negotiate a new Brexit deal maintaining closer trade and financial ties with the EU, and then grant a new EU referendum.

Polls open at 0700 GMT on Thursday and close at

2200 when an exit poll will give the first indication of who has won.

While there have been countless polls in the run-up to the election, YouGov's "Multilevel Regression and Post-Stratification Model" is seen as the most meaningful, offering a prediction of seats, rather than just vote share.

It crunched data from more than 1,00,000 interviews over seven days, using demographics, the specific circumstances in individual constituencies, and national statistics to come up with a projection. "We absolutely cannot rule out the 2019 election producing a hung parliament - nor can we rule out a larger Conservative majority," said Anthony Wells, YouGov's director of political research. Labour are forecast to lose 31 seats, taking them to the worst performance since 1983.

Pak. court indicts Hafiz Saeed on terror financing charges

The anti-terrorism court adjourned the hearing till Thursday

MEHMAL SARFRAZ
LAHORE

An anti-terrorism court (ATC) indicted Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed on terror financing charges on Wednesday in Lahore.

An FIR against Saeed and other JuD leaders Abdul Ghaffar, Hafiz Masood, Ameer Hamza and Malik Zafar Iqbal was registered in July on charges of terror financing.

The case against Saeed and the others was registered by the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in Gujranwala.

Saeed was brought to the court under strict security.



Hafiz Saeed

Court proceedings went on for over an hour in ATC-1 under Judge Arshad Hussain Bhutta.

Saeed and other JuD leaders' lawyers Naseeruddin Advocate and Imran Fazal

Gill denied the charges pertaining to terrorism financing on their clients' behalf. Judge Bhutta ordered the prosecution to complete the evidence for a fair trial.

The court had earlier postponed the indictment due to the unavailability of one of the suspects. Indictment is a standard procedure in a criminal trial. The next hearing of the case will be held on Thursday.

Saeed is the alleged mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks that killed 166 people. He also has a bounty on his head worth \$10 million by the U.S. government.

CPI: China is biggest jailer of journalists

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

At least 250 journalists are jailed around the world, with the largest number held in China, amid a growing crackdown by authoritarian regimes on independent media, a press watchdog group said on Wednesday.

Many of those imprisoned face "anti-state" charges or are accused of producing "false news", according to the report by the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

The report also cited Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Eritrea, Vietnam, and Iran for their jailing of journalists.

China tight-lipped on naval exercise in Indian Ocean

Iran had said it would hold a naval drill with China & Russia

ATUL ANEJA
BEIJING

Chinese Foreign Ministry on Wednesday declined to confirm that China was participating in a joint military exercise with Iran and Russia, amid signals that Beijing and Tehran were considering a long term blueprint of military collaboration.

In response to question on the reported exercise in the Indian Ocean, Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, deflected the query to the Chinese Ministry of Defence.

On December 3, Iran's naval chief Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi said during a

meeting in Tehran with Lieutenant General Shao Yuanming, deputy chief of Joint Staff Department in China's Central Military Commission, that the trilateral exercise, codenamed Marine Security Belt, will be held on December 27, Iran's semi-official Fars news agency reported.

Admiral Khanzadi further sought Chinese support to build destroyers and submarines.

Earlier, the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post*, quoting Chinese military analysts, reported that China is expected to limit its involvement in a joint naval

drill with Iran and Russia to non-combat forces to underline its desire not to be drawn into Middle East conflicts. "Participation in formal military exercise in the Persian Gulf could turn the waterway into a hotspot, and that may mean trouble for Beijing," the daily quoted Zhou Chenming.

On the same day, Mohammad Baqeri, chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, said, "Iran's Leader (Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) views Tehran-Beijing relations as strategic. The Chinese President has also similar view towards the issue," the *Tehran Times* reported.

ASSOCIATED PRESS
THE HAGUE

Myanmar's former pro-democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi on Wednesday denied that her country's armed forces committed genocide against the Rohingya minority, telling the U.N.'s top court that the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Muslims was the unfortunate result of a battle with insurgents.

In a measured tone, Ms. Suu Kyi calmly refuted allegations that the army had killed civilians, raped women and torched houses in 2017 in what Myanmar's accusers describe as a deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing and genocide that saw more than 700,00 Rohingya flee to neighbouring Bangladesh.

She said the allegations stem from "an internal armed conflict started by coordinated and comprehensive armed attacks... to



Aung San Suu Kyi

which Myanmar's defence services responded. "Tragically, this armed conflict led to the exodus of several hundred thousand Muslims."

Ms. Suu Kyi told the court that the African nation of Gambia, which brought the legal action against Myanmar on behalf of the 57-country Organization of Islamic Cooperation, had provided "an incomplete and misleading factual picture"

of what happened in Rakine state in August 2017.

Gambia alleges that genocide was committed and is still ongoing. But Ms. Suu Kyi said developments in one of Myanmar's poorest regions are "complex and not easy to fathom." She detailed how the army responded on August 25, 2017, to attacks by insurgents trained by Afghan and Pakistan extremists.

Addressing the court in her capacity as Myanmar's Foreign Minister, Ms. Suu Kyi insisted that the country's armed forces had tried "to reduce collateral damage" during fighting in 12 locations. While conceding that excessive force might have been used and that one helicopter may have killed "non-combatants," she said a Myanmar investigation is looking into what happened and should be allowed to finish its work.

Bougainville votes to become world's newest country

98% of voters back independence from Papua New Guinea

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BUKA

Voters backing Bougainville's independence from Papua New Guinea have won a landslide referendum victory, according to results released on Wednesday - a major step toward the troubled isles becoming the world's newest nation.

Chairman of the Bougainville Referendum Commission Bertie Ahern declared that 1,76,928 people -

around 98% of voters - had backed independence with just 3,043 supporting the option of remaining part of Papua New Guinea with more autonomy.

The announcement prompted loud cheers, applause and tears as dignitaries soon burst into song, with strains of the islands' anthem "My Bougainville" ringing out. "Happy is an understatement," said nursing graduate Alexia Baria.

The historic vote caps a decades-long peace process and a long recovery from a brutal civil war between Bougainville rebels, Papua New Guinea security forces and foreign mercenaries that ended in 1998 and left up to 20,000 people dead - 10% of the population.

"Now, at least psychologically, we feel liberated," said John Momis, the priest-turned-leader of the autonomous region's government.

ELSEWHERE



Greta Thunberg is Time's 'person of the year'

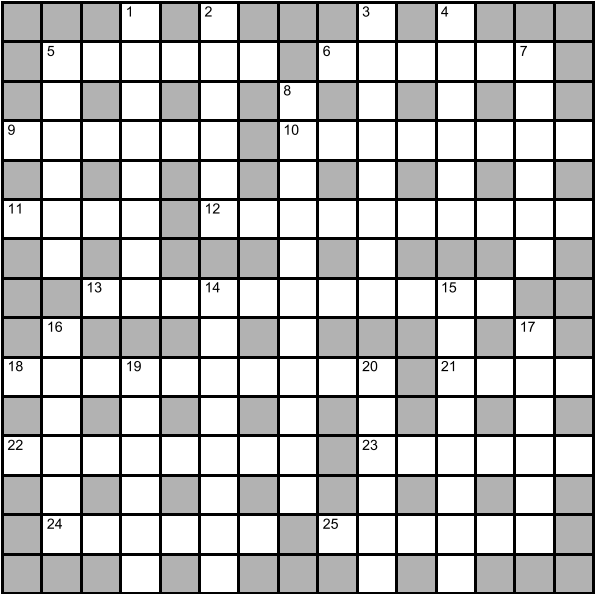
NEW YORK
Teen activist Greta Thunberg has been named Time's Person of the Year. Heading for home after a U.N. climate conference in Madrid, Ms. Thunberg said she wanted to dedicate the honour to all young activists. ■ AP

Zardari gets bail on medical grounds

ISLAMABAD
Pakistan's former President Asif Ali Zardari was on Wednesday granted bail on medical grounds by a court here in two corruption cases, making him the second jailed senior politician in over a month to get similar relief. ■ PTI

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12804

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles

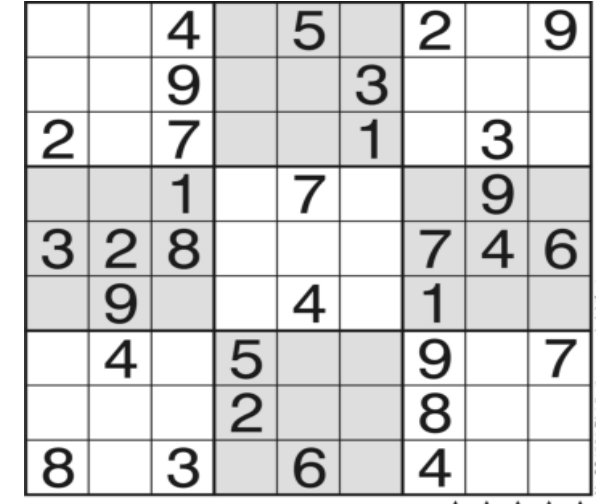


(set by Skulldugger)

- 11 Change banking domain extension here (4)
- 12 Gratuities vaguely appealing, ultimately pointless (10)
- 13 Pretended truce I often broke (11)
- 18 Semi-fictions with altered reality in two quarters? (4-6)
- 21 Radically refined research and development leads to good hallucinogen (4)
- 22 Go on and on about graduate work (8)
- 23 Broadcast location that might be found in a school! (6)
- 24 Snack consumption interrupted by Italians (6)
- 25 Kind, loving folks with a leg up on society protected knight (6)

- 3 Hanky-panky with young woman curtailed by boss (8)
- 4 Gyrating undressed supplies rubbernecker's delight (6)
- 5 Harangue kid about expression of hesitancy (6)
- 7 Surgeon's instrument polished clean before start of transplant (6)
- 8 After gym, ran out incoherent (11)
- 14 DEA agent every so often touts disco drug (8)
- 15 Crafts for people here (8)
- 16 Old man seeming to relinquish absolute power (6)
- 17 Idiots bartered diamonds for ordinary little bits (6)
- 19 Allegiance for loose leaf tea under discussion (6)
- 20 Prone to drink tinnies on a regular basis (6)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12803

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Saguna and Nirguna

God is seen at times as personal rather than impersonal, and to some He appears as one with form while others claim He is formless. Is one to worship the Absolute Brahman, Unchanging and Unmanifest, or the Brahman who is manifest in the entire creation and assumes many personal forms, asks Arjuna in the Gita. Krishna replies that whatever mode of worship is adopted, the aspirant should have total faith in the Lord and be engaged in constant meditation with the aim to seek Him alone. Adi Sankara too endorses this view, for he knows too well that except for a select few, Nirguna worship, though superior and ultimate, cannot be practised by a majority of the people, pointed out Swami Vidyashankara Saraswati in a discourse.

But Saguna Upasana and meditation appeals to many spiritual aspirants who may be at different levels of realisation. The only danger in this path is that the upasaka should not stop with mere worship of the deity or form but should be able to go beyond and understand the infinite, inscrutable, endless, limitless nature of the Brahman. In the Shadpatti Stotra, a work extolling the greatness of Vishnu, His incarnations, and His infinite auspicious attributes, Adi Sankara points out that the jivatma is of the essence of the Paramatma even as the waves in the ocean. While the waves belong to the ocean, the ocean can never become part of the waves. Sri Ramakrishna says Nirguna and Saguna are only two sides of the same coin. Nirguna Brahman can be compared to an infinite ocean. . Through intense cold at places water freeze into ice, the formless water appears as having form. Through intense love for devotee the formless Brahman manifests as having form and personality. But forms and aspects disappear to one who reaches the highest Samadhi.



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