

# Small parties could be kingmakers in U.K.

Lib Dems, DUP, SNP or Brexit Party could play a decisive role if leading parties fail to win majority

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

If British Prime Minister Boris Johnson fails to win an absolute majority in Parliament on Thursday, smaller parties may find themselves holding the trump cards in negotiations to form an alliance. Some opinion polls suggested that Mr. Johnson's Conservative Party would fail to gain majority as most polls showed the gap between the Conservatives and Labour narrowing on the eve of the election.

Here are the parties who could hold the keys to power.

**The 'Remainers'**  
Under Jo Swinson, 39, the Liberal Democrats hope to capture the votes of "Remainers" with a clear message to cancel Brexit, pitching themselves as the pro-EU party, as opposed to the pro-Brexit Conservatives and undecided Labour.

The Lib Dems, who came second in EU elections in May, have seen their ranks swell after defections by dissident pro-EU Conservative MPs. But polls suggest they could lose some of their 21



Final countdown: Leader of Liberal Democrats Jo Swinson taking a selfie in Sheffield. • REUTERS/FILE

seats. The promise to cancel Brexit has proven unpopular among even europhiles.

The party's role in a coalition government in the early 2010s, a period marked by severe austerity, has also turned off voters on the Left.

Their failure "to capitalise on their distinctive position on Brexit" was "perhaps the biggest surprise of the election campaign," pollster John Curtice said.

**Northern Ireland's DUP**  
With no absolute majority in 2017, the Conservatives were

forced to join forces with Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party to govern.

But the immovable stance of the ultra-conservative party's 10 MPs on Brexit was the decisive factor in the failure of Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson to get the divorce deal he had reached with the EU through Parliament.

The party also opposed an agreement negotiated between Brussels and Mr. Johnson's predecessor Theresa May, contributing to her

downfall. They believe Mr. Johnson's deal will lead to a border between Northern Ireland and mainland Britain, which they fear could stoke growing momentum for a united Ireland. The DUP is the main party in Northern Ireland and is led by 49-year-old Arlene Foster.

**Scottish party**  
The Scottish National Party (SNP), which wants Scotland to split from the rest of Britain, has capitalised on the 2016 Brexit referendum – in which more than six out of

10 Scots voted to stay in the EU – to breathe life into its campaign.

Led by energetic First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, 49, the party has campaigned under the slogan "Stop Brexit", believing the vote to leave has exposed a permanent ideological rift between Scotland and the rest of Britain. The party's progressive ideology means it could theoretically join forces with the Labour Party.

But its demands to hold a second independence referendum in 2020 and its opposition to Britain's Trident nuclear programme could complicate negotiations.

**The Brexit Party**  
The new party is the latest vehicle of chief eurosceptic Nigel Farage.

His party won the European elections in May, weeks after its official launch, leading to Theresa May's departure and a pro-Brexit shift within Tory party. Despite an intervention by his friend Donald Trump, Mr. Farage has struggled to compete against Mr. Johnson, who warned against splitting the Leave vote.

# Gotabaya promises media freedom under his govt.

Uphold country's reputation, President tells media houses

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Thursday assured that media freedom will not be hindered in any form during his tenure, according to a statement from his office.

Addressing heads of local media institutions, he said that while there was an opportunity for "reasonable criticism", he expected every media institution to fulfil its obligation towards the country, by "engaging in favourable media reporting" to uphold the country's reputation.

The statement quoted him as saying: "People of this country elected me to the office of the President with great expectations. Enhancing the efficiency of politicians and public officials, elimination of corruption and the economic development are some of the priorities among them. As such I expect the fullest support and cooperation of media towards achieving these objectives."



Gotabaya Rajapaksa

His assurance comes amid concerns among sections over media freedom in Sri Lanka after the November presidential election. Several journalists and dissidents in Sri Lanka have been targeted in the past.

According to international press freedom advocate Reporters Without Borders (RSF), at least 14 journalists were murdered during the 2005-15, when Mahinda Rajapaksa was President.

In 2017, when the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) told a magistrate court in Colombo about "top-secret death squads" reportedly linked to the de-

fence establishment, Mr. Gotabaya, a former Defence Secretary, squarely denied the charges. The CID's submission pertained to the assassination of well-known newspaper editor Lasantha Wickrematunga, in January 2009. In the last month, at least one news website was raided, while two other online journalists were "questioned". An editor of a Vavuniya-based Tamil newspaper was also questioned in November allegedly over publication of "LTTE-related" photographs, local media reported.

"No doubt that there is a big fear factor now," said senior journalist and commentator Victor Ivan, a former editor of Sinhala weekly newspaper *Rawaya*. "A lot of journalists who merely covered and followed issues as part of their job now feel threatened under the new government," he told *The Hindu*, adding that the previous government, "although foolish", was "relatively much better" for media freedom.

## ELSEWHERE



### Suu Kyi's defence of Army puzzles many

THE HAGUE  
The Gambia condemned Aung San Suu Kyi's "silence" over the plight of Rohingya on Thursday after the Nobel Peace Prize laureate defended Myanmar against genocide charges at the ICJ. Lawyers said that she ignored allegations of mass murder, rape and forced deportation in her arguments while defending the Army. AFP

### Russia expels two German diplomats

MOSCOW  
Russia expelled two German diplomats on Thursday in retaliation for Berlin's ousting of two employees of the Russian Embassy last week over a brazen killing last summer in the German capital. Russia said it was making the move "due to the reciprocity principle" and ordered them to leave the country in seven days. AP

### Trump says Greta should 'chill,' go to movies

WASHINGTON  
U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday slammed *Time* magazine's naming of Greta Thunberg as 2019 Person of the Year. "So ridiculous. Greta must work on her Anger Management problem, then go to a good old fashioned movie with a friend! Chill Greta, Chill!", Mr. Trump said in a tweet.

# 16 killed in Ukraine college fire

Firefighters pull out two more bodies after eight-day search

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KIEV

Firefighters have pulled two more bodies from a college building in Ukraine's southern port of Odessa that burned in a spectacular fire last week, authorities said on Thursday, bringing the number of dead to 16.

Prosecutors have arrested the director of the college on

charges of professional negligence and placed her under house arrest.

The bodies of the last two people missing following the fire were found late on Wednesday, the emergency services said in a statement.

**30 injured**  
Firefighters spent eight days combing through the debris

of the six-storey building, which caught fire last Wednesday. Another 30 people were injured in the blaze, with eight still in hospital as of Thursday.

The College of Economics, Law, and the Hotel and Restaurant Business is in central Odessa and gets around 400 graduates per year.

# 50 lawyers arrested after attack on Lahore hospital

Five patients died as doctors, staff fled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LAHORE

Pakistan police on Thursday arrested 50 lawyers for attacking a cardiac hospital, which led to a melee, in which five patients died as they were left unattended.

A large number of lawyers, including women, forced their entry into the Lahore's Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC) to avenge what they said was an assault by doctors on a fellow advocate weeks ago.

As the lawyers forced their entry into the hospital, the doctors and paramedical staff ran for their lives, leaving the patients unattended.

Punjab Health Minister Yasmeen Rashid later told the media that the casual-

ties took place after doctors were unable to provide the patients timely treatment during their bid to avert the assault, Geo News reported.

"We have arrested 50 lawyers and registered an FIR against a total 250 lawyers under terrorism charges, Lahore police chief Zulfiqar Hameed told reporters here on Thursday.

Interestingly, Prime Minister Imran Khan's nephew Barrister Hassan Khan Niazi was also among the attackers.

Police, however, did not lay a hand on him.

"PM's nephew Hassan Khan was caught on camera in PIC attack but the police have been stopped from arresting him, PML-N lawmaker Azma Bokhari said.

# Trump signs order targeting anti-Semitism at universities

Colleges that allow such activity will be denied funds

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Wednesday to prohibit federal funding for colleges and universities that allow anti-Semitism, but the move drew some criticism for potentially limiting free speech.

The order would extend protections against discrimination under the 1964 Civil Rights Act to people subjected to anti-Semitism on college campuses.

"This is our message to universities: If you want to accept the tremendous amount of federal dollars that you get every year, you must reject anti-Semitism.



Donald Trump

It's very simple," Mr. Trump said during a Hanukkah reception at the White House.

Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, colour, and national origin in programmes and activities receiving federal financial assistance. "This action makes

clear that Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits the federal funding of universities and other institutions that engage in discrimination, applies to institutions that traffic in anti-Semitic hate," Mr. Trump said. J Street, a liberal Jewish-American lobbying group, criticised the order.

"This executive order, like the stalled congressional legislation it is based on, appears designed less to combat anti-Semitism than to have a chilling effect on free speech and to crack down on campus critics of Israel," it said in a statement.

The Anti-Defamation League, which tracks acts of racism, welcomed the order.

# Fire on Russia's only aircraft carrier kills one

It was under repair at Arctic shipyard

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MOSCOW

Russia's only aircraft carrier suffered a massive fire on Thursday that killed one crew member, injured 11 people and significantly damaged the ship.

The fire on the *Admiral Kuznetsov* broke out during welding work at a shipyard in the Arctic port of Murmansk and spread quickly through the carrier's internal compartments. The ship's crew and emergency teams spent the day battling the blaze.

The military said one crew member died while battling the fire, and another one is missing.

The Investigative Committee, the nation's top state investigative agency, has



The fire reportedly broke out during welding operations. • AP/FILE

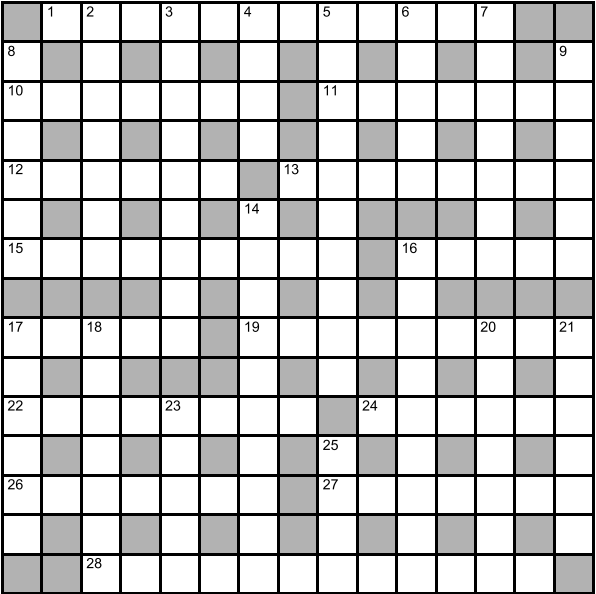
opened a probe into a possible violation of safety rules.

The *Admiral Kuznetsov* has been plagued by breakdowns and setbacks since its launch in 1985. The massive blaze follows a 70-tonne crane crashing onto the *Admiral Kuznetsov's* deck in October 2018.

Thursday's fire will further push back the work to fit the ship with modern control systems and weapons.

## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12805

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



### ACROSS

- 1 Athlete presently in a broadcast (6,6)
- 10 Gifted? In conclusion had to pay up (7)
- 11 Steady measure mostly consisting of two parts (7)
- 12 For the most part, stop sign gives relief (6)

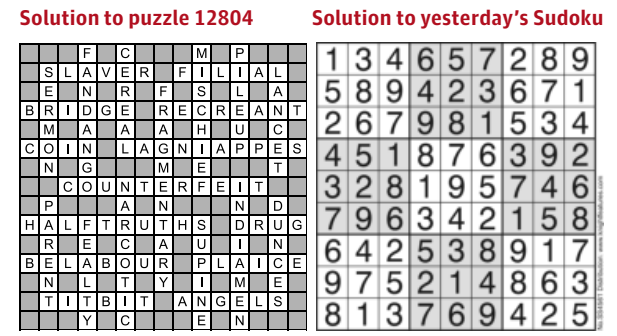
(set by Vulcan)

- 13 A descendant kept apart by one in French city (8)
- 15 Spider natural at spinning (9)
- 16 Part of a group, an election committee (5)
- 17 She's in a big town right in California (5)
- 19 Another set to wear in a car? (3-6)
- 22 Outcast, disheartened, volunteered outside a country (8)
- 24 Very hard to keep away from this kind of tea – unwritten (6)
- 26 A science place followed by a scholar in one of the states (7)
- 27 National Bank's counter closing early primarily (7)
- 28 Neon light working on display eventually (2,3,4,3)

### DOWN

- 5 Senator/member is subsequently overheard (10)
- 6 Desire of every earner (5)
- 7 Ruin one critical meeting (7)
- 8 European, one in dry city (6)
- 9 No sex involved – no call made (6)
- 14 What's fair to take during trial as a precaution (4,2,4)
- 16 Power diminishing as aforementioned (9)
- 17 Animal crossing road with caution (6)
- 18 A lie without basis, basically about a country detailed in language (7)
- 20 Vivid description of a piece of furniture with gold at the bottom (7)
- 21 Change one's mind about fasting time (6)
- 23 Band's first and final hit (5)
- 25 Repetition of same chords (4)

## SUDOKU



## FAITH

# Embodiment of vairagya

A life of absolute renunciation is the only way to realise the eternal and superior bliss of the Infinite. This is the final word in the Upanishads. Very rarely are some souls inspired by vairagya, the strong impulse to turn away with determination from the world and its myriad attractions, to seek salvation with single mindedness. Parikshit meets his moment of realisation when he unwittingly commits a wrong against a sadhu, and soon repents for it with utmost sincerity, pointed out Sri Krishnamurthy Sastrigal in a discourse.

Parikshit is at the height of his successful reign and as the heir of the Pandava clan, he has established high standards of righteousness in his kingdom. His domestic life too is impeccable, having fulfilled all his duties towards family and kingdom. He even confronts Kali Purusha who tries to invade his kingdom. He subdues him and, in response to his pleas, grants him five places to stay in his kingdom – gambling, drinking, immoral living, slaughtering of cows and gold – which are the sources of evil. But during one of his hunting trips when he is thirsty, he hurls a dead serpent on a rishi in meditation, an act alien to his own rightful nature.

He is filled with remorse at his own unpardonable deed, and as atonement for it, decides to renounce all his possessions, kingdom, riches, family, etc, even as he is informed of the curse of the rishi's son condemning him to die of snake bite in seven days. He undertakes a vow of fast unto death and goes to the banks of the Ganga to spend the time on hand in meditation that might free him of sinful tendencies. It is the Lord's Sankalpa that Suka, the sage always established in Brahma Nishtha, arrives in their midst and seeing Parikshit as the very embodiment of vairagya, decides to narrate the Bhagavata Purana to him.



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