

Ghani set for second term in Afghanistan

Incumbent President wins 50.64% of the votes against 39.52% by rival Abdullah, after preliminary results

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KABUL
Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani appeared to have secured a second term, preliminary polling results showed on Sunday, but his main rival immediately vowed to challenge the tally.

After months of political limbo and allegations of fraud and corruption in the September 28 poll, Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) said Mr. Ghani won 50.64% of the votes.

If it holds, the result is enough for Mr. Ghani to avoid a run-off. He easily beat his top challenger, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, who scored 39.52%.

In a televised address, a jubilant Mr. Ghani said the election results were a "victory" for all of Afghanistan. "A government worthy of this great nation will be built," Mr. Ghani said.

Candidates now have three days to file any complaints before final results are announced, probably within weeks. Mr. Abdullah said he would contest the vote.

"The election commission



Making it public: Hawa Alam Nuristani, head of the Independent Election Commission, announcing the preliminary results on Sunday, and, right, incumbent President Ashraf Ghani. ■ AFP



has unfortunately sided with the fraudsters," Mr. Abdullah said in a televised address, when he also demanded a recount in provinces across Afghanistan. "There is no doubt that we are the winners of the election based on the clean votes of the people," he added.

Mr. Abdullah lost to Mr. Ghani in 2014 in a divisive election that saw the U.S. intervene to broker an awkward power-sharing deal between the two rivals.

US Ambassador to Afghanistan John Bass said it was vital the full electoral process plays out. "It's im-

portant for all Afghans to remember: these results are preliminary. Many steps remain before final election results are certified, to ensure the Afghan people have confidence in the results," Mr. Bass wrote on Twitter.

Observers and candidates have blasted the IEC over its handling of the count and its repeated disregard of the electoral calendar. The Transparent Electoral Foundation of Afghanistan, an independent watchdog, said the IEC needs to share all information about how it reached its numbers and break down data by polling centre.

IEC chairwoman Hawa Alam Nuristani said her agency acted with "honesty, loyalty, responsibility and faithfulness". "We respected every single vote because we wanted democracy to endure," she said.

Low turnout
The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which provided support to electoral authorities, welcomed the announcement of preliminary results and called on the Electoral Complaints Commission to listen carefully to any grievances. "The ECC has an obliga-

tion to adjudicate any complaints it receives transparently and thoroughly so the election process may conclude in a credible manner," UNAMA head Tadamichi Yamamoto said.

ECC chairwoman Zuhra Bayan Shinwari said candidates and their supporters should wait for final results to be announced. "We are committed to reviewing all the complaints according to the law," she said.

The election was meant to be the cleanest yet in Afghanistan's young democracy. A German firm supplied biometric machines to stop people from voting more than once. But allegations of vote stuffing, illegal balloting and other fraud came almost as soon as the polls had closed.

Nearly one million of the initial 2.7 million votes were purged owing to irregularities, meaning the election saw by far the lowest turnout of any Afghan poll. Ultimately, only 1.8 million votes were counted, a tiny number considering Afghanistan's estimated population of 37 million and a total of 9.6 million registered voters.

Kim discusses bolstering military as deadline looms

N. Korea has sought U.S. concessions by end of December

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SEOUL
North Korean leader Kim Jong-un discussed strengthening his country's military capability with top military officials, state media reported on Sunday, with Pyongyang's end-of-year deadline for the U.S. to offer concessions approaching.

The North promised an ominous "Christmas gift" earlier this month if Washington does not give ground by the end of December. The denuclearisation process has been largely deadlocked since the collapse of a summit in Hanoi at the start of the year.

Pyongyang has carried out a series of static tests at its Sohae rocket facility this month, after a number of weapons launches in recent weeks – some of them described as ballistic missiles by Japan and others. North Korea is banned from carrying out such tests under UN sanctions.

Mr. Kim held an enlarged meeting of the ruling Workers' Party's Central Military



Taking stock: North Korean leader Kim Jong-un speaking during a ruling party meeting. ■ AP

Commission, for which he serves as Chairman.

There, he "gave analysis and briefing on the complicated internal and external situation... to bolster up the overall armed forces of the country," the North's official KCNA news agency reported.

"Referring to merits and demerits in the recent work of the People's Army and matters to be rapidly overcome", KCNA said, "the Supreme Leader indicated in detail the direction and ways to be maintained" to boost the armed forces.

"Important issues for de-

cisive improvement of the overall national defence and core matters for the sustained and accelerated development of military capability for self-defence," were also discussed, it added.

The report came a day after the nuclear-armed state warned Washington it would "pay dearly" over criticism of its human rights record by a U.S. state department official. A North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the comments were akin to "pouring oil over burning fire" amid heightened tensions in a statement carried by KCNA.

Hong Kong protesters rally for Uighurs

According to UN, at least 1 million Muslims have been detained in Chinese camps

REUTERS
HONG KONG
Hong Kong riot police pepper sprayed protesters to disperse crowds in the heart of the city's financial district on Sunday after a largely peaceful rally in support of China's ethnic Uighurs turned chaotic.

Dozens of police marched across a public square overlooking Hong Kong's harbour to face off with protesters who hurled glass bottles and rocks at them.

Earlier in the afternoon more than 1,000 people had rallied calmly, waving Uighur flags and posters, as they took part in the latest demonstration in over six months of unrest.

A mixed crowd of young



Show of solidarity: Protesters attending a rally in Hong Kong on Sunday to show support for the Uighur minority. ■ AFP

and elderly people, dressed in black and wearing masks to shield their identities, held up signs reading "Free Uyghur, Free Hong Kong" and "Fake 'autonomy' in

China results in genocide".

The protest comes after footballer Mesut Ozil caused a furor in China after he criticised the country's policies toward the Muslim ethnic

minority in the north-western region of Xinjiang. "I think basic freedom and independence should exist for all people, not just for Hong Kong," said a 41-year-old woman surnamed Wong who attended the protest with her husband.

UN experts and activists say at least 1 million Uighurs and members of other largely Muslim minority groups have been detained in camps in Xinjiang since 2017 under a campaign that has been condemned by the United States and other countries.

Beijing says it is providing vocational training to help stamp out separatism and to teach new skills. It denies any mistreatment of Uighurs.

Delay in sending impeachment articles to Senate unfair: Trump

U.S. President slams House of Representatives Speaker Pelosi

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WEST PALM BEACH
President Donald Trump has complained about House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's delayed transmission of the articles of impeachment to the Senate, which may delay a trial in the GOP-controlled chamber.

"It's so unfair," Mr. Trump said, days after he was impeached by the House, as he spoke at a Conservative student conference. "They are violating the Constitution."

Ms. Pelosi has refused so far to send the articles of impeachment to the Senate, in part to provide more leverage to Democrats in that



Donald Trump

Chamber as they seek to negotiate the rules for the trial proceedings. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Democratic leader Chuck Schumer remain at an impasse over whether there will be new witnesses and testimony in the trial.

Still, Mr. Trump is expect-

ed to be acquitted of both charges in the Senate, where Republicans have the majority. Proceedings are expected to begin in January.

Mr. Trump lashed out at the Democrats who supported impeachment, accusing them of trying to overthrow the 2016 election. "They call themselves Democrats, but they really don't believe in democracy," he said.

He lauded House Republicans for remaining in lock-step against impeachment as a few Democrats crossed the aisle to oppose it. "We have to say it was a bipartisan vote," he said. "No Republican went to their side."

'Mexico church priests abused 175 children'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MEXICO CITY
At least 175 children were sexually assaulted by priests belonging to an ultra-conservative Mexican branch of the Roman Catholic Church, according to an internal report published on Saturday.

The founder of the Legionaries of Christ, Marcial Maciel, abused as many as 60 children, with a total of 33 priests or deacons acknowledged to have committed sexual assaults against minors since 1941, the document says.

The findings of the report – written by a commission created in June by the director general of the group, Eduardo Robles-Gil – spans from the group's founding in 1941 until December 16, 2019.

"The vast majority of the victims were adolescent boys between 11 and 16 years old," the statement said, published on *ce-roabustos.org*, which is supported by the Legionaries of Christ. It notes that 18 of the 33 individuals who committed abuses are still part of the organisation, but says they have been removed from tasks connected to the public or minors.

Maciel, who died in 2008, was ordered to retire to a life of prayer and penitence by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006.

IN BRIEF



13 people shot at house party in Chicago

CHICAGO
A shooting early on Sunday at a house party held in honour of someone who was killed in April left 13 people wounded, four of them critically, the police said. Two people were being questioned, they added. ■ AP

FATF puts 150 questions to Pak.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD
A global watchdog for terror financing has sought more clarifications and data from Pakistan on actions taken by it against madrasas belonging to the banned outfits, weeks after Islamabad submitted a report to the Paris-based body detailing steps taken by the country to curb terrorism and money laundering.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which kept Pa-

kistan on the Grey List for an extended period till February 2020, had warned in October that Islamabad would be put on the Black List if it did not comply with the remaining 22 points in a list of 27 questions. Pakistan submitted a report comprising answers to 22 questions to the FATF on December 6.

In response to the report, the FATF's Joint Group has sent 150 questions to Pakistan, seeking some clarifications, updates and actions

taken against the madrasas belonging to the proscribed outfits. "We did receive a response from the FATF on our compliance report through an email in which they raised a set of 150 questions. Some of them are seeking more data, some clarifications, and most importantly questions related to madrasas and actions taken against them having affiliation with proscribed outfits," The News quoted a top official source as saying.

Thousands protest in Iraq

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BAGHDAD
Thousands took to the streets in Iraq's capital and across the south Sunday to protest against Iran's king-making influence as the latest deadline for choosing a new Prime Minister loomed.

Anti-government rallies have rocked Baghdad and the Shiite-majority south since October 1, with demonstrators calling for a complete overhaul of a regime they deem corrupt, in-

efficient and overly beholden to Tehran.

"The revolution continues!" shouted one demonstrator at a protest encampment in central Diwaniyah.

Sunday marks the latest deadline – already pushed back twice by President Barham Saleh – for Parliament to choose a new premier to replace Adel Abdel Mahdi, who tendered his administration's resignation last month.

Parliament speaker Mo-

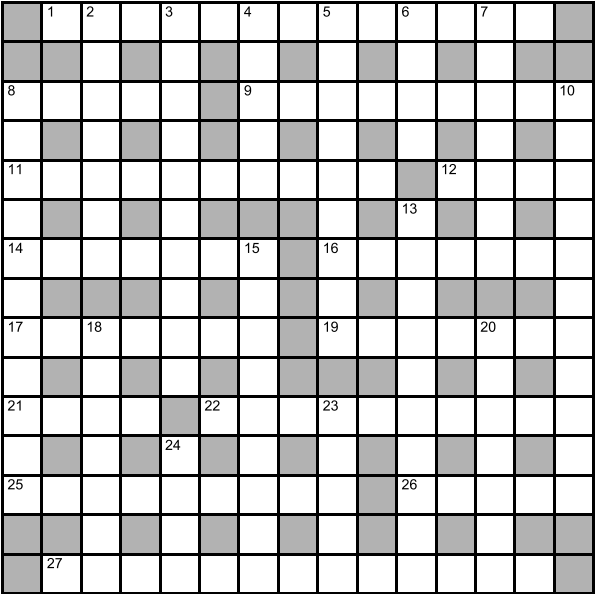
ammed al-Halbussi on Sunday travelled to Arbil, capital of the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq, to discuss who could become the next premier, the presidency there said.

Officials say Iran wants to install Qusay al-Suhail, who served as Higher Education Minister in the government of Mr. Abdel Mahdi.

"This is exactly what we oppose – Iranian control over our country," said 24-year-old student Houeida.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12813

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- (set by Dr. X)
- 12 Reviewing broadcast about England's troubles (4)
 - 14 Gibberish by wife after knocking back spirit in confusion (7)
 - 16 Fierce tennis played by end of game (7)
 - 17 A form of dancing where boor shakes with spam (7)
 - 19 Confine unmarried chaps caught with miss (7)
 - 21 Sahib isn't trapping bird (4)
 - 22 New rent is about to upset bachelor causing moments of great anxiety (4,6)
 - 25 High on drugs, hotshot director interrupts shoot (6,3)
 - 26 Males don't have it? Nothing to disagree (5)
 - 27 Understand what paparazzi want to do? (3,3,7)
 - 4 Attack by Dhoni in the middle, close to marvellous in Final (5)
 - 5 Save director left in ruin over fraud by leading official (9)
 - 6 Time for wife to leave work (4)
 - 7 Native beginning to grumble and fight in bar (7)
 - 8 Deranged, abandoned man bitten by dogs (3,3,5)
 - 10 Rumours about man avoiding arrest with cunning cheaply (11)
 - 13 Tough having stroke – beginning to intrepidly carry on (5,2,3)
 - 15 Horse with a supplementary bridle (9)
 - 18 Unit ordered to carry equipment (7)
 - 20 Outside broadcasting involves training (4,3)
 - 23 Stick held by criminal at highway (5)
 - 24 Religious cult caught in lodge (4)
- ACROSS
- 1 Rush around ineffectually or sit alone sadly after husband enters dispute (5,4,4)
 - 8 Where one might apply chalk at the correct moment (2,3)
 - 9 Draw attention to minor stealing purse (9)
 - 11 Female, drunk after consuming a bit of rum, jumping into a dalliance (10)
- DOWN
- 2 Pawning a bit of stuff away? Disgraceful (7)
 - 3 Wife in house huffs and puffs in exercise outfit (10)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12812

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Value of surrender

While the monkeys are reluctant to admit Vibhishana into their camp, Rama is determined to accept Vibhishana's surrender. He justifies His decision by narrating a story about two pigeons, said Kidambi Narayanan, in a discourse.

The two birds, a male and its partner, were sitting on a tree. The female bird fell off and was caught in a hunter's net. The hunter spent the night under a tree in the forest, after praying to the devata of the tree to protect him. The female suggested that the male bird help the hunter, who was hungry. Not knowing what to offer him as food, the male bird jumped into the fire, so that he could cook it and eat it. The male bird's reasoning was that the hunter had appealed to the tree for protection, so it was its duty to help the hunter. The hunter had not asked the bird to help him. He had only asked the devata of the tree for protection, and the pigeon was not the devata of the tree.

Moreover, the hunter had caused it sorrow, by trapping its partner in a net. Death to the female bird was certain. And yet the male pigeon helped the hunter, by offering its own life. This is the ultimate sacrifice anyone can make, and a mere bird had done this. If a pigeon should help a man, which had snared its partner, should Rama not admit Vibhishana, who had surrendered to Him? Thus goes Rama's argument. Rama further says that in case Vibhishana had only been pretending to be a friend, He would still welcome him. In case Vibhishana's words of friendship had been lies, still Rama would accept him. If Vibhishana had not spoken but had only offered anjali, still Rama would have accepted him as a friend. Sastras say that if a person surrenders, even if he has in some way harmed us, we should not turn him away, but offer him our protection.



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