

5 countries to discuss action against Iran

The countries whose citizens died when the plane was shot down by Tehran will meet in London

REUTERS
SINGAPORE

Five nations whose citizens died when an airliner was shot down by Iran last week will meet in London on Thursday to discuss possible legal action, Ukraine's Foreign Minister said.

Speaking on the sidelines of an official visit to Singapore on Monday, Vadym Prystaiko said the countries would also discuss compensation and the investigation into the incident. All 176 people on board the flight died in the crash on Wednesday, minutes after the plane took off from Tehran airport.

Mr. Prystaiko said suggestions from Iran that the Ukrainian International Airlines plane was downed as it flew near a sensitive military base during a time of heightened tensions were "nonsense". He said Tehran had agreed to hand over the plane's black boxes to Kiev for investigation.

"We have created this group of Foreign Ministers from the grieving nations. On January 16, we will meet in person in London to discuss the ways, including le-



Standoff: Protesters hold flowers as police fire tear gas during a demonstration in front of a university in Tehran. ■STR/AFP

gal, how we are following this up, how we are prosecuting them (Iran)," Mr. Prystaiko said.

He said the five nations also included Canada – which had at least 57 passport holders aboard the doomed flight – Sweden, Afghanistan and a fifth country, which he did not name.

Many on board were Iranians with dual citizenship.

After days of denials, Iran said on Saturday its military had shot down the plane in a "disastrous mistake". Mr. Prystaiko said Ukraine was not informed by Iran that it

would be taking responsibility before that public announcement.

Tehran said its air defences were fired in error while on alert after Iranian missile strikes on U.S. targets in Iraq.

"This is nonsense because our plane was recorded and confirmed – was going within the international route which was given by the dispatchers... Nothing was extraordinary," Mr. Prystaiko said, adding that investigators said the pilot's last words were "everything is ok on board and I am switching to auto pilot."

Iran denies 'cover-up' as protests rage on

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DUBAI

Iran denied a "cover-up" Monday after taking days to reveal an airliner was accidentally shot down last week, a disaster that sparked demonstrations and calls for a fully transparent investigation.

"In these sorrowful days, many criticisms were directed at relevant officials and authorities," said government spokesman Ali Rabiei.

"Some officials were even accused of lying and a cover-up but, in all honesty, that was not the case," he said.

"Lying is intentionally and knowingly faking the truth. Lying is covering up. Lying is knowing a fact and not expressing it or twisting the truth."

The spokesman said all details provided by officials prior to Saturday's revelation had been based on the information available to them at the time. "All of

those who expressed opinions on those days, at the peak of America's psychological war against the Iranian nation... did so based on existing information at the time."

Meanwhile, Iranian anti-government protests were met with tear gas and left at least one person wounded, videos on social media appeared to show on Monday.

Videos show large crowds chanting slogans against the country's authorities in Tehran's iconic Azadi Square south of the centre.

In a video purporting to be from the city of Amol in the Mazandaran region on the Caspian Sea, a crowd marches, shouting, "We don't want the Islamic republic".

Germany's Foreign Ministry said that the Iranians must be allowed to "protest peacefully and freely" and express their "grief" after the plane disaster.

Mahinda Rajapaksa to visit New Delhi in February

This marks his first visit abroad after he was appointed PM

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa will visit New Delhi early February and meet his counterpart Narendra Modi, his office said.

The PM's media office told *The Hindu* that the dates, delegation and meetings are yet to be firmed up for the visit that also marks Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa's first visit abroad after he was appointed Prime Minister by his younger brother President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa's visit to New Delhi comes about two months after President Gotabaya Rajapaksa went to the Indian capital, following his decisive win in Sri Lanka's November presidential polls. Last week, Sri Lanka's Foreign Relations Minister Dinesh Gunawardena met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in New Delhi, in the series of high-level visits from Colombo.

While key bilateral issues, including regional security



Mahinda Rajapaksa

and the much-discussed development cooperation at the East Container Terminal in Colombo and the Trincomalee oil tank farms, are on the table, Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa's India visit will be closely watched for more reasons.

Addressing a joint press conference during Mr. Gotabaya's visit in November, Mr. Modi said that he was confident that Sri Lanka will carry forward the process of reconciliation, "to fulfil the aspirations of the Tamil for equality, justice, peace and respect." In this context, the Indian PM also referenced the implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Sri

Lankan constitution – an outcome of the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987.

PM Mahinda, who served as President for two terms since 2005, has in the past assured India that he would implement the 13th Amendment – which envisages greater power devolution to provinces including those inhabited by Tamils – and "go beyond it". On the other hand, Mr. Gotabaya, who has promised to "be frank" with New Delhi, has repeatedly emphasised the need for development, not devolution, for the war-hit community.

Global outreach

The visit comes at a time when the new government, helmed by the Rajapaksa brothers, who have outlined a "neutral foreign policy", is engaging with international partners at high levels.

Foreign Minister of China and State Councillor Wang Yi will be in Colombo on Tuesday and meet the Sri Lankan President and PM.

HC: Musharraf cannot be punished retrospectively

Court declares his trial illegal

MEHMA SARFAZ
LAHORE

The Lahore High Court, which declared Gen. Pervez Musharraf's trial illegal, on Monday said Section 9 of the Criminal Law Amendment (Special Court) Act, 1976, under which the trial took place, was illegal as it violated Article 10-A of the Constitution, which is about fair trial.

Lawyer Usama Malik told *The Hindu* that according to the court, when emergency was declared in 2007 and the Constitution was held in abeyance, the punishment for holding Constitution in abeyance wasn't death penalty as the offence wasn't considered high treason. The High Court said this was added in the 18th Amendment passed in 2010.

The court said that Gen. Musharraf cannot be punished for something that wasn't punishable back then.

Mr. Malik pointed out that whether the government or Gen. Musharraf will appeal the December 17 ruling before the Supreme Court will be known once the detailed High Court judgment comes out.

"Another point of view is that while constitution of the special court has been declared illegal, whether the punishment stands or not is important. We will know after the detailed

judgment comes out. The High Court says that Article 6 doesn't apply to the 2007 emergency as Article 232 gives power to the President to declare emergency under special circumstances," Mr. Malik said.

Bars reaction

Meanwhile, Faisal Chaudhry, Additional Advocate General Punjab, said "it seems as if Musharraf has been exonerated by the High Court." Mr. Chaudhry, who has also represented Gen. Musharraf in the treason case in the past, said that one will have to see how the legal fraternity like the Bar Associations and Supreme Court react. "There are fair chances that the Bars will react negatively to this verdict."

Reema Omer, legal adviser, South Asia International Commission of Jurists, said it would be premature to comment on the legal reasoning behind the order, but from the reports of the proceedings, it appears legally flawed and in contradiction with earlier SC judgments on the same issues.

Abid Saqi, member of the Pakistan Bar Council, said, "Setting aside of the verdict of the special court without availing appellate court and getting reversal of that judgment through collateral proceedings is not just unprecedented but inconceivable."

Taal volcano shuts down Manila

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TAGAYTAY

Lava and broad columns of ash spewed from a volcano south of the Philippine capital on Monday.

Fine grit weighed down trees and turned roads into muddy messes across the region surrounding the Taal volcano, which has forced over 20,000 people to seek refuge in evacuation centres.

Queen agrees to let Harry, Meghan go their way

Couple will have a period of transition, in which they will stay in Canada and the U.K.

REUTERS
SANDRINGHAM

Queen Elizabeth has given her blessing to her grandson Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle's wish for a more independent future after an urgent meeting on Monday to resolve the rift in the British royal family.

Prince Harry and Ms. Markle triggered the crisis by announcing last week that they

wished to step back from royal duties and spend more time in North America.

After a meeting at the Queen's rural Sandringham estate in eastern England, attended by Prince Harry's father and heir to the throne, Prince Charles, and his elder brother, Prince William, the 93-year-old Queen Elizabeth said the family supported the couple's plans.



Prince Harry along with his wife Meghan Markle in London on Jan. 7. ■REUTERS

The Queen said that "today my family had very constructive discussions on the

future of my grandson and his family."

"Although we would have preferred them to remain full-time working Members of the Royal Family, we respect and understand their wish to live a more independent life as a family while remaining a valued part of my family," the monarch said in a statement.

"Harry and Meghan have made clear that they do not want to be reliant on public funds in their new lives. It has therefore been agreed

that there will be a period of transition, in which the Sussexes will spend time in Canada and the U.K."

Media report slammed

Earlier, Princes William and Harry slammed a newspaper report on Monday describing a strain in their relationship.

The *Times of London* carried a front page story, in which a source alleged that the Sussexes were pushed away by the "bullying attitude" of Prince William.

Joker leads Oscar nominations, 1917, Irishman close behind

Women, ethnic minorities missing from the shortlist

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ASSOCIATED PRESS
LOS ANGELES

Dark comic book tale *Joker* topped the Oscar nominations on Monday, picking up 11 nods including best picture and best director, as women and ethnic minorities were largely shut out once again.

Todd Phillips's *Joker*, a bleak, arthouse take on the comic book villain starring Joaquin Phoenix, was just ahead of three films.

Quentin Tarantino's 1960s Tinseltown homage *Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood*, Sam Mendes's First World War odyssey *1917* and



A scene from *Joker*. ■AP

Martin Scorsese's *The Irishman* each earned 10 nominations, including best picture as well as best director.

South Korean class satire *Parasite*, from Bong Joon-ho, secured the final best di-

rector slot in the shortlist.

For the 87th time, the academy selected all-male directing nominees despite a year in which women made historic gains behind the camera. The most likely candidate was Greta Gerwig (*Little Women*), who was the last woman nominated, two years ago for *Lady Bird*. "Congratulations to those men," said Issa Rae, who presented the nominees alongside John Cho.

The Oscars picked only one non-white acting nominee – British star Cynthia Erivo, who plays U.S. anti-slavery icon Harriet Tubman in *Harriet*.

Priesthood is not for married men: ex-Pope

Pope Francis for allowing it in Amazon

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ROME

Former pope Benedict XVI has publicly urged his successor Pope Francis not to open the Catholic priesthood up to married men, in a plea that on Sunday stunned Vatican experts.

The ex-pontiff, who retired in 2013, issued the defence of clerical celibacy in a book written with arch-conservative Cardinal Robert Sarah, extracts of which were published exclusively by France's *Le Figaro*.

"I cannot keep silent!" Pope emeritus Benedict wrote in the book, which follows an extraordinary meeting of bishops from the Amazonian at the Vatican

last year that recommended the ordination of married men in certain circumstances.

The Pope emeritus, 92, and Cardinal Sarah weighed in on the controversial question of whether or not to allow "viri probati" – married "men of proven virtue" – to join the priesthood.

Pope Francis is currently considering allowing it in remote locations, such as the Amazon, where communities seldom have Mass due to a lack of priests.

The pair asked the whole Church not to be "swayed" by "bad pleas, theatrics, diabolical lies, fashionable errors that want to devalue priestly celibacy".

ELSEWHERE



Democrat Booker drops out of presidential race

DES MOINES

U.S. Senator Cory Booker, an African-American candidate who recently bemoaned the increasingly lack of diversity in the Democratic presidential field, on Monday said he was ending his White House campaign. ■REUTERS

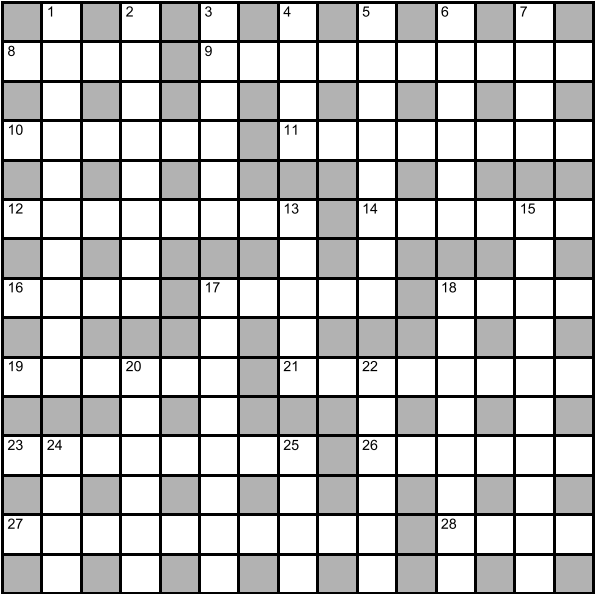
Myanmar sends 200 Rohingya to camps

SITTWE

Nearly 200 Rohingya Muslims arrested at sea last month by Myanmar's Navy during their desperate bid to reach Malaysia or Indonesia by boat have been sent back to Rakhine state, officials said on Monday. ■AFP

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12832

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ACROSS

- 8 Star seer, for example, in Virginia (4)
- 9 English sailors follow international and special joint-training period (10)
- 10 Artist's workplace has hot male at 10 (6)
- 11 Wild bear grabs doctor with a priest and a musician (8)

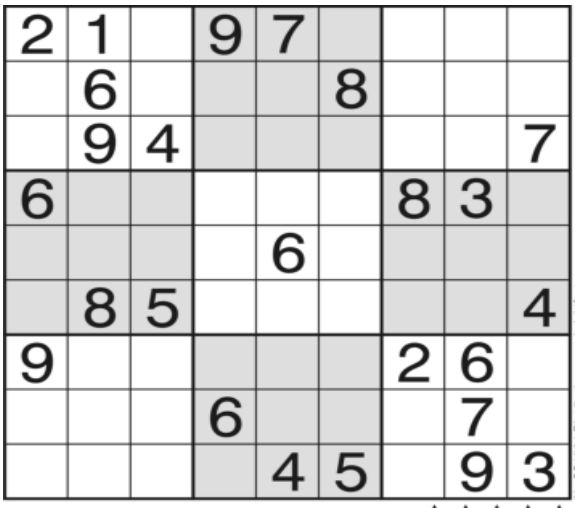
DOWN

- 1 Occidentals hide bird in winding sewers (10)

(set by Incognito)

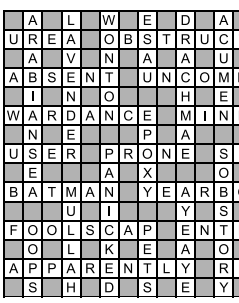
- 2 Monkey-man has tool (8)
- 3 Kipling boy has zero (nil) dress (6)
- 4 Bats! Bats! A way to get rid of bats! (4)
- 5 Rap and tango dance for horny pheasant (8)
- 6 Yearn to go up a steeple (6)
- 7 Haider's helper (4)
- 13 Wise men's time aboard (5)
- 15 Sees a dress altered and evaluated once more (10)
- 17 Prisoner of war and German communist in ground (8)
- 18 Deliver poached gnus and pistols, for example (8)
- 20 Tell about dead (6)
- 22 X – soldier's lessee (6)
- 24 Animal bone (hollow) in possession of returning team (4)
- 25 Thrashes lama endlessly in front of sheriff at first (4)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 12831



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Desirable qualities

The Tamil word 'aram' is not easy to translate. Some translate it as dharma. Qualities like envy, anger and greed predominate in most of us. Overcoming such qualities can be called 'aram,' said Malayaman, in a discourse.

Many Tamil poets have written about 'aram'. Vilambi Naganar says love towards all leads to empathy and kindness, and these may be taken to be the foundation of 'aram'. Munappaadiyar wrote a work called *Aranerichchaaram*. It talks of worldly attachments and of being freed from attachments, which eventually leads to liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. It says that to live without malice towards anyone, to have love for all mankind, is the proper way to live. Deceiving others and turning away from those who need help are traits to be despised. This poet lists ten qualities as desirable: honesty, patience, lofty thoughts, penance, humility, impartiality, selflessness, saintliness, desire to do good to others and adherence to 'vratas'.

Kanimedhaviyar says honesty, spurning alcohol, not befriending wicked people, not abusing others are the qualities one must have, and a person who has such qualities does not need to read works that preach dharma, for he already knows the dharmic way of living. Poet Avvaiyar said we should have the urge to do good things. She said there is nothing better than domestic life. The Tamil work *Pinkalandai* says a person who has no gratitude towards those who helped him deserves to be punished. Thiruvalluvar says he who has a pure heart is a good man. This good man sees easy, but having good thoughts is difficult. We may pretend to be good, but our hearts are filled with envy and ill-will towards others. If we can get rid of such negative thoughts, we will qualify to be called good human beings.



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