

TOPOF THE WORLD



They boy was found after rescuers heard his cries. AP

RUSSIA  
Infant rescued from rubble 35 hours after building collapse

**Moscow:** Rescuers on Tuesday pulled an infant boy alive from the rubble of an apartment building, some 35 hours after a collapse that killed at least seven people and left dozens missing. They found the baby after hearing cries amid the debris. A section of the 10-storey building in the city of Magnitogorsk collapsed on Monday following an explosion believed to have been triggered by a natural gas leak. The boy was seriously injured and his recovery prospects were unclear. The regional emergency ministry said earlier Tuesday that 37 residents of the building had not been accounted for. Hopes of finding survivors were dimmed by the harsh cold: Temperatures overnight were around minus 18 Celsius.

USA  
Military sorry for New Year tweet on bombs

**Washington:** US Strategic Command apologised Monday for a joke in "bad taste" after tweeting it was ready to drop something "much bigger" than the traditional Times Square crystal ball at New Year. In a message posted, and later deleted, on Twitter, the military force that controls the US nuclear arsenal released a video in which B-2 bombers drop bombs, with the message: "If ever needed, we are #ready to drop something much, much bigger." Amid the jaw-dropping and eye-raising on social media that followed, STRATCOM then tweeted an apology.

THAILAND  
Man guns down six family members at New Year party

**Bangkok:** A Thai man who felt slighted by his in-laws shot dead six family members including his two young children at a New Year's Eve party before turning the gun on himself, police said Tuesday. The mass shooting took place 10 minutes after midnight as Sucheep Somsung joined his wife's family in the southern province of Chumphon. Sucheep was "heavily" drunk when he pulled out his pistol in the beauty parlour where the party was being hosted, police said.

INDONESIA  
Search on for survivors of deadly landslide

**Jakarta:** Rescuers are searching for survivors after a landslide triggered by heavy rain left at least 15 people dead and dozens missing in western Indonesia, an official said Tuesday. The landslide occurred shortly before sunset on Monday in West Java province. Search and rescue teams said they have found 15 people dead and are scouring the area for at least 25 missing.

AFTER HASINA-LED COALITION'S LANDSLIDE WIN IN BANGLADESH ELECTION

# Rejecting 'farcical' result, Khaleda party's MPs-elect won't take oath

Govt says parliamentarians to be sworn in on Thursday; BNP vows to fight against poll outcome

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DHAKA, JANUARY 1

THE NEWLY-ELECTED leaders of the BNP, headed by imprisoned former premier Khaleda Zia, will not take oath as they have rejected the results, the party announced Tuesday, hours after the government said the MPs-elect will be sworn in to Parliament on January 3.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which rejected the poll outcome as "farcical" and demanded fresh election, won five seats in the 300-member Parliament.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling alliance swept to a landslide victory in the 11th general elections, securing a third straight term.

The opposition alliance, comprising the BNP and some smaller parties, criticised the

## US and Israel exit UNESCO, claiming bias

THOMAS ADAMSON  
PARIS, JANUARY 1

THE UNITED States and Israel officially quit of the UN's educational, scientific and cultural agency at the stroke of midnight, the culmination of a process triggered more than a year ago amid concerns that the organisation fosters anti-Israel bias.

The withdrawal is mainly procedural yet serves a new blow to UNESCO, co-founded by the US after World War II to foster peace.

The Trump administration filed a notice to withdraw in October 2017 and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu followed suit.

The Paris-based organisation has been denounced by its critics as a crucible for anti-Israel bias: blasted for criticising Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem, naming ancient Jewish sites as Palestinian heritage sites and granting full membership to Palestine in 2011. **AP**

NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATIONS MARRED BY VIOLENT ATTACKS

## UK probes terror links after 3 hurt in knife attack

PHIL NOBLE  
MANCHESTER, JANUARY 1

AMAN armed with a kitchen knife stabbed three people, including a police officer, at Manchester Victoria train station on New Year's Eve in an attack police are treating as terrorism-related.

Greater Manchester Police said they were searching an address in the Cheetham Hill area of the city on Tuesday after they detained a man on suspicion of carrying out the attack. The man's name has not yet been released.

A witness said a man stabbed several people at the station, shouting "Allah" and



BNP General Secretary Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said: "We have rejected the polls results. We will also continue our legal battle and action programmes". File

Election Commission (EC) and accused its chief of being biased.

The EC, however, ruled out holding fresh polls.

Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu said the newly-elected lawmakers will be sworn in to Parliament on January 3. *Dhaka*

*Tribune* reported.

A gazette notification will be issued on Wednesday, he said.

The BNP, alleging irregularities including ballot stuffing and ouster of opposition polling agents from voting centres, said the party's MPs-elect will not take

## NASA craft completes flyby of most distant object ever visited

MARCIA DUNN  
LAUREL, JANUARY 1

NASA'S NEW Horizons spacecraft has survived humanity's most distant exploration of another world.

Ten hours after the middle-of-the-night encounter 6.4 billion kilometres away, flight controllers in Laurel, Maryland, received word from the spacecraft late Tuesday morning. Cheers erupted at Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory, home to Mission Control.

"We have a healthy spacecraft. We've just accomplished the most distant flyby," announced Alice Bowman, mission operations manager.

An anxious spill-over crowd in a nearby auditorium joined in the loud celebration, cheering each green, or good, status update. When the spacecraft was finally declared healthy and the flyby successful, scientists and other team members embraced,



An artist's rendition of Ultima Thule, as seen at the flyby event at Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel, Maryland, on Monday night. NYT

while hundreds of others gave a standing ovation.

"It's a great day. Happy New Year!" said Mark Holdridge, a mission manager from Johns Hopkins.

New Horizons zoomed past the small celestial object known as Ultima Thule three-and-a-half years after its spectacular brush with Pluto. Scientists said it will

oath as they have already rejected the results, *Daily Star* reported.

The party took the decision in principle at a meeting of its standing committee at its chairperson's Gulshan office, it said.

BNP General Secretary Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said: "We have rejected the polls results. We will also continue our legal battle and action programmes".

Fakhrul, who won from the Bogura-6 constituency, said it has been proved that a credible election is not possible under any partisan government.

"The government using state machinery conducted such a farcical election that I think is the most stigmatised election in the country ever," he told reporters, alleging that most of the new voters were denied their right to vote.

BNP's ally Gonoforum, which has won two seats, said all the opposition candidates will submit a memorandum to the

BRAZIL

## BOLSONARO INAUGURATED AS PRESIDENT

Right-wing nationalist Jair Bolsonaro, who has vowed to crack down on corruption, violent crime and ignite a moribund economy with deregulation and fiscal discipline, was sworn in as Brazil's President on Tuesday. The former Army captain and seven-term fringe congressman rode a wave of anti-establishment anger to become Brazil's first far-right President since a military dictatorship gave way to civilian rule three decades ago.



An Afghan National Army soldier at a check point on the outskirts of Kabul. Reuters

# Afghanistan's neighbours fear refugee crisis if US withdraws troops

RUPAM JAIN  
KABUL, JANUARY 1

AFGHANISTAN'S NEIGHBOURS, caught off-guard by reports of US plans to withdraw thousands of troops, have begun preparing for the risk that a pullout could send hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing across their borders, diplomats say.

Alarmed by the possibly of a chaotic withdrawal, diplomats from neighbouring countries who have been in talks with US officials in Kabul said they were reassessing policies and would ramp up border preparations.

"At this point there is no clarity about the withdrawal, but we have to keep a clear action plan ready," said a senior Asian diplomat based in Kabul. "The situation can turn from bad to worse very quickly."

A White House spokesman last week said US President Donald Trump had not issued orders to the Pentagon to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. But the administration has not denied reports that the United States plans to pull out almost half of the 14,000-strong force currently deployed.

The reports come amid an intensification of moves towards peace negotiations in Afghanistan. US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad met Taliban representatives last month and discussed issues around a future troop withdrawal as well as proposals for a ceasefire.

But even among regional powers such as Iran, Pakistan or Russia that have long been suspicious that the US wants perma-



Kim Jong Un delivers his New Year's speech. AP

## North Korea may change approach if US sanctions continue: Kim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SEOUL, JANUARY 1

NUCLEAR-ARMED NORTH Korea wants good relations with the US, but could consider a change of approach if Washington maintains its sanctions, leader Kim Jong Un warned in his New Year speech Tuesday after 12 months of diplomatic rapprochement.

At a summit with US President Donald Trump in Singapore in June, the two signed a vaguely worded pledge on denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

But progress has since stalled with Pyongyang and Washington arguing over what that means.

"If the US fails to carry out its promise to the world... and remains unchanged in its sanctions and pressure upon the DPRK," Kim said Tuesday, "We might be compelled to explore a new path for defending the sovereignty of our country and supreme interests of our state".

He was willing to meet Trump again at any time, he added, "to produce results welcomed by the international community".

The North is demanding sanctions relief — it is subject to multiple measures over its banned nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes — and has condemned US insistence on its nuclear disarmament as "gangster-like".

Washington is pushing to maintain the measures against the North until its "final, fully verified denuclearisation".

## 9 injured as car rams into crowd on Tokyo street

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
TOKYO, JANUARY 1

NINE PEOPLE were hurt, one seriously, when a man deliberately ploughed his car into crowds celebrating New Year's Eve along a famous Tokyo street, police and media said Tuesday.

With an "intent to murder", 21-year-old Kazuhiro Kusakabe drove a vehicle into Takeshita Street in Tokyo's fashion district of Harajuku at 10 minutes past midnight, a police spokesman said.

According to national broadcaster NHK, Kusakabe told police he was acting in "retribution for the death penalty" without giving more precise details.



Policemen stand next to the car which ploughed into pedestrians. Reuters

A witness told NHK it was a ghastly scene. "I saw some guys collapsed on the street. As I walked closer toward the scene, many more people had fallen on the ground. By the time I reached the exact place, paramedics were already there helping people."

QUESTIONS RAISED ON WHETHER FACEBOOK'S EFFORTS ARE EFFECTIVE AND SAFE

# In screening for suicide risk, FB takes on tricky public health role

NATASHA SINGER  
NEW YORK, JANUARY 1

A POLICE officer on the late shift in an Ohio town recently received an unusual call from Facebook.

Earlier that day, a local woman wrote a Facebook post saying she was walking home and intended to kill herself when she got there, according to a police report on the case. Facebook called to warn the police department about the suicide threat.

The officer who took the call quickly located the woman, but she denied having suicidal thoughts, the police report said. Even so, the officer believed she might harm herself and told the

woman that she must go to a hospital — either voluntarily or in police custody. He ultimately drove her to a hospital for a mental health work-up, an evaluation prompted by Facebook's intervention. (*The New York Times* withheld some details of the case for privacy reasons.)

Police stations from Massachusetts to Mumbai have received similar alerts from Facebook over the past 18 months as part of what is most likely the world's largest suicide threat screening and alert programme. The social network ramped up the effort after several people livestreamed suicides on Facebook in early 2017. It now utilises both algorithms and user reports to flag



Facebook called Courtney Davis (left), a telecommunications operator at a police department, about a man live-streaming a suicide attempt, helping Sgt. Bruce Haire find him. NYT

possible suicide threats.

Facebook's rise as a global arbiter of mental distress puts the

social network in a tricky position. Even as Facebook's chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, has apol-

ogised for improper harvesting of user data, the company grappled last month with fresh revelations about special data-sharing deals with tech companies.

The anti-suicide campaign gives Facebook an opportunity to frame its work as a good news story. Some mental health experts and police officials said Facebook had aided officers in locating and stopping people who were clearly about to harm themselves.

Facebook has computer algorithms that scan the posts, comments and videos of users in the US and other countries for indications of immediate suicide risk. When a post is flagged, by the technology or a concerned user, it moves to human reviewers at

the company, who are empowered to call local law enforcement.

But some mental health experts said Facebook's calls to police could also cause harm — such as unintentionally precipitating suicide, compelling nonsuicidal people to undergo psychiatric evaluations, or prompting arrests or shootings. And, they said, it is unclear whether the company's approach is accurate, effective or safe. Facebook said that, for privacy reasons, it did not track the outcomes of its calls to police. And it has not disclosed exactly how its reviewers decide whether to call emergency responders. Facebook, critics said, has assumed the authority of a public health agency while protecting its process as if it

were a corporate secret.

"It's hard to know what Facebook is actually picking up on, what they are actually acting on, and are they giving the appropriate response to the appropriate risk," said Dr John Torous, director of the digital psychiatry division at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston.

Facebook said it worked with suicide prevention experts to develop a programme to connect users in distress with friends and send them contact information for help lines. "While our efforts are not perfect, we have decided to err on the side of providing people who need help with resources as soon as possible," a Facebook spokeswoman said. **NYT**

ment military bases in South Asia, there is no appetite for a sudden US withdrawal, say analysts.

## New year to be beginning of Pak's golden era: Imran

SAJJAD HUSSAIN  
ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 1

PAKISTAN PRIME Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday said the new year would be the beginning of the country's "golden era" as he vowed to "wage jihad" against poverty, illiteracy, injustice and corruption in 2019.

Khan took to microblogging site Twitter to greet people and share his New Year resolution with the countrymen.

"Our New Year resolution is to wage jihad against the 4 ills of our country: poverty, illiteracy, injustice and corruption," he tweeted.

Khan further said that "InshaAllah (God willing) 2019 is

the beginning of Pakistan's golden era".

His government also slashed petroleum prices billed a New Year gift. Petrol was reduced by Rs 4.86 per litre, setting the price at Rs 90.97 per litre, while price of high speed diesel was slashed by Rs 4.26 per litre to fix it at Rs 196.68 per litre.

The two variants of fuel are most commonly used in Pakistan.

Khan's government came to power in August riding on the pledge to create "Naya (new) Pakistan" but so far struggled to give any major relief to the public.

President Arif Alvi also prayed that the new year would bring success and prosperity to the country. **PTI**