

TOPOF THE WORLD



USA

Tesla CEO Musk faces trial in defamation case

*Los Angeles:* Elon Musk is going on trial for his tweets in a defamation case pitting the billionaire against a British diver he allegedly branded a paedophile. The Tesla CEO will be called to testify early in the case in Los Angeles federal court to explain what he meant when he called Vernon Unsworth, who helped rescue youth soccer players trapped underwater in a Thailand cave, “pedo guy” in a Twitter spat over year ago. Musk apologised for lashing out at Unsworth after the diver belittled Musk’s efforts to build a tiny submarine to save the trapped boys as a “PR stunt”. The Tesla CEO, however, said he did not mean to say Unsworth was a paedophile.

JAPAN

Man, 71, held for ‘making 24,000 complaint calls’

*Tokyo:* A Japanese pensioner has been arrested after ringing a phone company 24,000 times to complain they had violated his contract, police and local media reported. Tokyo police said they took 71-year-old Akitoshi Okamoto into custody last week after he made hundreds of toll-free calls over eight days to the customer service section of major telephone operator KDDI. But this could be the tip of the iceberg, with media outlets reporting that he made thousands more calls from public pay phones to voice his displeasure with the company and insult customer service staff.

ZIMBABWE

Mugabe left behind \$10 mn, many houses

*Harare:* The wealth of Zimbabwe’s former president Robert Mugabe was long a mystery. Now the first official list of assets to be made public says he left behind \$10 million and several houses when he died in September. Some in Zimbabwe view that estate as far too modest for Mugabe, who ruled for 37 years and was accused by critics of accumulating vast riches and presiding over grand corruption. The report by the *Herald* newspaper does not mention any overseas assets, but it is thought that Mugabe had properties in South Africa and in Asia.

SUI-LEE WEE & PAUL MOZUR

TUMXUK, DECEMBER 3

IN A dusty city in the Xinjiang region on China’s western frontier, the authorities are testing the rules of science.

With 1 million or more ethnic Uighurs and others from predominantly Muslim minority groups swept up in detentions across Xinjiang, officials in Tumxuk have gathered blood samples from hundreds of Uighurs — part of a mass DNA collection effort dogged by questions about consent and how the data will be used.

In Tumxuk, at least, there is a

# Sri Lanka’s President Gotabaya prorogues Parliament for a month

With his party lacking majority in House, Rajapaksa says parliamentary polls to be held at the earliest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
COLOMBO, DECEMBER 3

SRI LANKAN President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has prorogued Parliament for one month and fixed January 3, 2020 for the commencement of the next session, a move that will give his minority government freedom to rule without obstruction from the Opposition.

The Parliament should have met on Tuesday, according to schedule.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa issued a special gazette notification effective from Monday midnight, stating that Parliament would be reconvened on January 3.

“The President is constitutionally empowered to do so,” officials said.

He is expected to make a ceremonial address at the reopening on January 3, during which he will outline his new government’s policies, they added.

Gotabaya was sworn in as Sri Lanka’s seventh President on November 18 after he defeated the ruling party candidate Sajith Premadasa by more than 13 lakh votes, marking the return of the powerful Rajapaksa dynasty.

His party — the Sri Lanka People’s Front — lacks a working majority in the 225-member as-



Gotabaya was sworn in as President on November 18. Reuters

sembly and ending the session will give him freedom to rule without obstruction from the Opposition.

Gotabaya named his elder brother and former strongman Mahinda Rajapaksa as the new Prime Minister after incumbent Ranil Wickremesinghe of the United National Party resigned from the post following the election debacle. The 74-year-old leader will function as the Prime Minister until the general election in August 2020.

Wickremesinghe and his allies, who command majority in the House, are not expected to challenge the government and they will continue until the next parliamentary election which can be held anytime after end of February.

Gotabaya said he would conduct snap parliamentary elections at the first available opportunity.

## Not like last time

THE LAST time the Sri Lankan Parliament was prorogued was when then president Sirisena sacked PM Wickremesinghe and appointed Mahinda Rajapaksa in his place. This led to a constitutional crisis that ended with Wickremesinghe being reappointed PM. This time, however, with Mahinda’s brother Gotabaya winning the presidential polls, Wickremesinghe resigned, allowing Mahinda to take over as PM. With parliamentary likely to come up in early March, this suspension of Parliament is unlikely to be as dramatic as the last one.

## Court stops Swiss embassy worker from leaving Lanka

*Colombo:* A Sri Lankan court on Tuesday blocked a Swiss embassy employee from leaving the country until she gives a statement to police about allegations that she was abducted and threatened in order to disclose embassy information.

Colombo’s chief magistrate issued an order at the request of police preventing the woman from leaving until Dec 9 and requiring that she give a statement before that date.

The Swiss foreign ministry

called the Nov 25 incident a “very serious and unacceptable attack.” The Sri Lankan government said evidence collected by its investigators did not support the sequence of events given by the embassy.

The day after a top Sri Lankan police officer, who had investigated the Rajapaksas, sought asylum in Switzerland, the worker at the Swiss embassy in Colombo claimed she was abducted and forced to hand over sensitive information. AP

## Committee told to speed up Easter attacks probe

*Colombo:* Sri Lanka’s new President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, instructed a committee inquiring into the Easter Sunday terror attacks to expedite their probe, identify those responsible for the attacks and bring them before the law even as he slammed his predecessors for failing to prevent the bombings.

A string of suicide attacks,

struck churches and luxury hotels frequented in Sri Lanka on April 21 — Easter Sunday — killing 258 people.

“They were very relaxed on national security. This led to the disintegration of intelligences services. The end result was they were unable to prevent the spread of Islamic extremism,” Rajapaksa was quoted as saying by an official release. PTI

## TYPHOON KILLS 2 IN PHILIPPINES, MANILA AIRPORT SHUT



A neighbourhood damaged by Typhoon Kammuri in Legazpi City, Philippines. Reuters

■ Typhoon Kammuri killed at least two people in the Philippines on Tuesday as it tore roofs of houses and forced the international airport in Manila to shut down.

■ As the typhoon was exiting Philippines it hit one last major landmark, the island of Mindoro, where one man was crushed by a falling tree and another killed by a flying piece of lumber, police said.

■ 500 flights were cancelled at Manila’s Ninoy Aquino International Airport, and officials warned passengers not to come to the airport.

■ The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons each year, killing hundreds and putting many in a state of constant poverty.

## 2019 could be second warmest year on record: WMO



EXPRESS IN MADRID

AMITABH SINHA  
DECEMBER 3

THE YEAR 2019 is likely to end as the second or third warmest ever, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said Tuesday in the latest of a series of warnings in recent months about a rapidly worsening climate scenario.

“Global mean temperature for January to October 2019 was 1.1 degree Celsius (error margin of 0.1 degree) above pre-industrial levels. 2019 is likely to be the second or third warmest year on record. The past five years are now almost certain to be the five warmest years on record, and the past decade 2010-2019, to be the warmest decade. Since the 1980s, each successive decade has been warmer than any preceding decade since 1850,” the WMO said in a provisional statement on the State of Global Climate in 2019.

Petteri Taalas, secretary general of WMO, said these numbers were provisional since the year was not yet out but were unlikely to change



Participants on the second day of the climate conference in Madrid. Reuters

significantly over the next one month. The warmest year on record so far has been 2016.

The WMO report said the average global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide in 2018 had touched 407.8 parts per mil-

lion, which was 147 per cent of pre-industrial levels, which is taken to be 1750. Other greenhouse gases, like methane and nitrous oxide, had also touched record levels in 2018. This year, the daily average carbon dioxide concentration crossed 415 ppm for the first time ever, though it has receded after that. The annual average is likely to be below that level.

The state of the climate report also noted the unusually strong Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) that developed this year.

A positive IOD is characterised by warmer than usual waters in the western Indian Ocean, towards the Arabian Sea, and cooler than average temperatures in

# Court directs banks to provide Trump’s financial records to House Democrats

BRENDAN PIERSON & JONATHAN STEMPLE  
NEW YORK, DECEMBER 3

A US appeals court on Tuesday handed President Donald Trump another defeat in his bid to keep his financial records secret, directing Deutsche Bank AG and Capital One Financial Corp to comply with subpoenas from congressional Democrats demanding the material.

A three-judge panel of the Manhattan-based 2nd US Circuit Court of Appeals rejected Trump’s bid to block two House of Representatives committees from enforcing subpoenas to the two banks seeking the documents. Trump had sued the two banks in an effort to prevent the disclosure of his financial records.

The Republican President is expected to appeal the matter to the US Supreme Court. Lawyers for Trump could not immediately be reached for comment.

The subpoenas were issued months before House Democrats began an inquiry in September into whether there were grounds to impeach Trump over his request to Ukraine to investigate Democratic political rival Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden. REUTERS



## Trump, Macron clash at NATO leaders’ meeting

*London:* US President Donald Trump barreled into a NATO leaders’ meeting on Tuesday aiming insults at French President Emmanuel Macron.

Trump began his first of two days at the NATO conference by harshly rebuking Macron for recently saying NATO was experiencing “brain death” as a result of diminished US leadership in the alliance under Trump.

Before meeting with Macron, Trump laced into the French president for what he said were “very, very nasty” comments.

Hours after the broadside, Macron and Trump sat side by side for a meeting. Macron said he stood by his comments about the health of the NATO alliance. He also firmly expressed his frustration that Trump withdrew hundreds of American troops from Syria in October. AP

# Mob tries to storm Dawn office after it calls London attacker ‘man of Pak origin’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ISLAMABAD, DECEMBER 3

DOZENS OF protesters carrying banners and chanting slogans against a Pakistani newspaper tried to storm its offices in Islamabad, enraged over the leading daily’s news report in which the London Bridge attacker was identified as a “man of Pakistani origin”.

The *Dawn* newspaper in its headline had identified Usman Khan, a convicted terrorist from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir who stabbed two people to death on London Bridge last week, as a “UK national of Pakistani origin”, unlike many other local dailies that said he had no link with Pakistan.

A few dozen unidentified people on Monday staged a

protest outside *Dawn* offices in Islamabad over the publication of the news report regarding the ethnicity of the London Bridge attacker of last week, the paper reported on Tuesday.

They were apparently angered by the headline of newspaper last week in which it identified Khan as a man of Pakistani origin.

The angry mob, carrying banners and chanting slogans against the newspaper, remained outside the office building for nearly three hours, besieging the premises and making the staffers hostage, the report said.

They prevented the employees from entering or leaving the building and demanded a written apology. Some of the protesters also misbehaved with the newspaper as well as *Dawn* TV employees when they arrived at the office.



Kundera fled Communist Czechoslovakia and has lived in France since 1975

## Milan Kundera gets back Czech citizenship after 40 years

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
PRAGUE, DECEMBER 3

MILAN KUNDERA, the Czech-born author of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* has been given back the citizenship of his homeland that he lost 40 years ago.

The Czech ambassador to France, Petr Drulak, told Czech public television he handed Kundera his citizenship certificate last week in his Paris apartment.

It’s a result of Kundera’s meeting with Prime Minister Andrej Babis in Paris last year.

Kundera fled Communist Czechoslovakia and has lived in France since 1975, and it is there that he published his most famous books, including *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, *The Art of the Novel* and *Immortality*. His later works, written in French, were not translated into Czech.

The 90-year-old lives in virtual seclusion, only travels to his homeland incognito and never speaks to reporters.

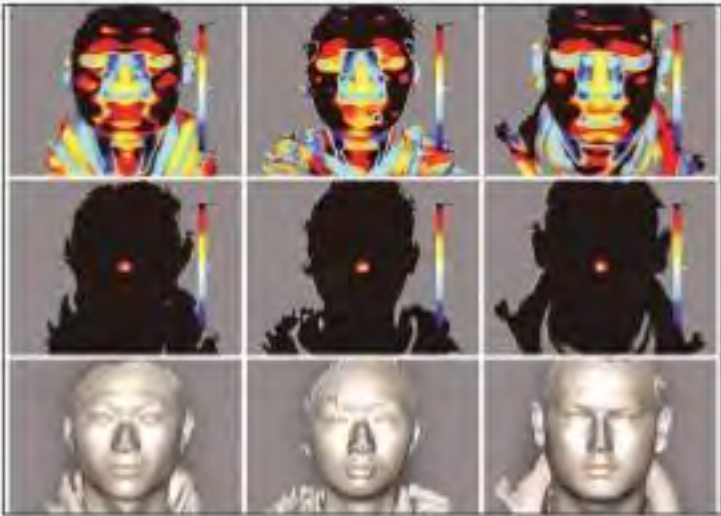
### BLOOD SAMPLES COLLECTED FROM MEMBERS OF MINORITY GROUPS FOR DNA

# China uses DNA to map faces, with help from the West

partial answer: Chinese scientists are trying to find a way to use a DNA sample to create an image of a person’s face.

The technology, which is also being developed in the United States and elsewhere, is in the early stages of development and can produce rough pictures good enough only to narrow a manhunt or perhaps eliminate suspects. But given the crackdown in Xinjiang, experts on ethics in science worry that China is building a tool that could be used to justify and intensify racial profiling and other state discrimination against Uighurs.

In the long term, experts say, it may even be possible for the Communist government to feed



3-D human facial construction is among the scientific tools that China is putting to use. NYT

images produced from a DNA sample into the mass surveillance and facial recognition systems that it is building, tightening its grip on society by improving its ability to track dissidents and pro-

testers as well as criminals.

Some of this research is taking place in labs run by China’s Ministry of Public Security, and at least two Chinese scientists working with the ministry on

the technology have received funding from respected institutions in Europe. International scientific journals have published their findings without examining the origin of the DNA used in the studies or vetting the ethical questions raised by collecting such samples in Xinjiang.

In papers, the Chinese scientists said they followed norms set by international associations of scientists, which would require that the men in Tumxuk (pronounced TUM-shook) gave their blood willingly. But in Xinjiang, many people have no choice. The government collects samples under the veneer of a mandatory health checkup pro-

gramme, according to Uighurs who have fled the country. Those placed in internment camps — two of which are in Tumxuk — also have little choice.

Police prevented reporters from *The New York Times* from interviewing Tumxuk residents, making verifying consent impossible. Many residents had vanished in any case. On the road to one of the internment camps, an entire neighbourhood had been bulldozed into rubble.

Growing numbers of scientists and human rights activists say the Chinese government is exploiting the openness of the international scientific community to harness research into the human genome

for questionable purposes.

Already, China is exploring using facial recognition technology to sort people by ethnicity. It is also researching how to use DNA to tell if a person is a Uighur. Research on the genetics behind the faces of Tumxuk’s men could help bridge the two.

China is building “essentially technologies used for hunting people,” said Mark Munsterhjelm, an assistant professor at the University of Windsor in Ontario who tracks Chinese interest in the technology. In the world of science, Munsterhjelm said, “there’s a kind of culture of complacency that has now given way to complicity.” NYT