

## A look at NYC attack suspect

AP, New York

The man who police say transformed a New York City bike path into a terror scene was an Uzbekistan native who made 1,400 trips as an Uber driver and formed two commercial truck businesses.

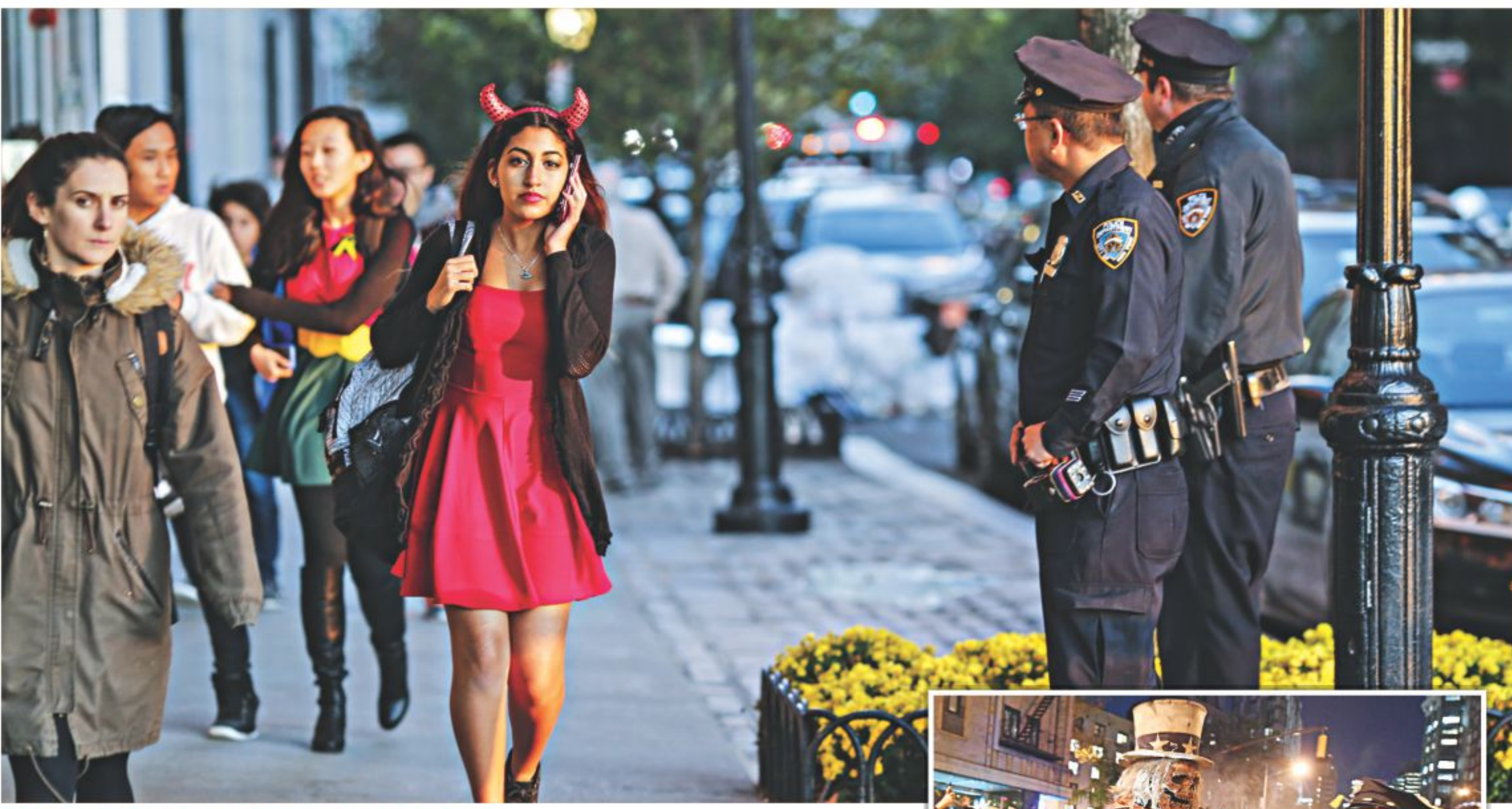
A family friend called Sayfullo Saipov hard-working and neighbors said he would play with the children in a Florida apartment complex.

Details of the life of the suspect have begun to emerge after Tuesday's attack that killed eight people and injured at least 11.

Officials who were not authorized to discuss the investigation and spoke on the condition of anonymity identified Saipov as the attacker and said he is 29 and originally from Uzbekistan.

He came to the US legally in 2010, the officials said, and acquaintances said he lived first in Ohio after his arrival.

Dilnoza Abdusamatova, said Saipov briefly stayed with his family in a Cincinnati suburb upon



## NEW YORK NOT SCARED

Students walk past police officers in New York after a terror attack that killed 8 people on Tuesday. *Inset*, People dressed in Halloween costumes take part in the Annual Halloween Parade in New York. Not five hours had passed since the deadliest terrorist attack in New York since 9/11, thousands of New Yorkers packed alongside Sixth Avenue in Greenwich Village wearing face paints, wigs, and costumes for the annual Halloween parade. Some people looked scary, but no-one was scared.

PHOTO: AFP



## They came to US to celebrate friendship

AGENCIES

A trip of a lifetime for friends of more than 30 years ended in tragedy on Tuesday.

A group of former school mates from Argentina were celebrating the 30th anniversary of their graduation in New York City when they were struck by a truck as they enjoyed a group bike ride.

Five of the men were killed in the terrorist attack that left eight dead and 11 others injured on Halloween after a truck rammed into people on a bike path before slamming into a school bus several blocks from the World Trade Center memorial, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Argentine Republic confirmed Tuesday night.

Their names were Hernán Diego Mendoza, Diego Enrique Angelini, Alejandro Damián Pagnucco, Ariel Erlij and Hernán Ferruchi. Another friend on the trip, Martin Ludovico Marro is recovering from his injuries at New York Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan, according to a statement by the Foreign Ministry.

The friends graduated from the Colegio Politécnico de Rosario in 1987, according to local media in Argentina. Erlij, a 48-year-old businessman who owned a steel mill in Rosario, Argentina, had paid the fares for two former classmates, who for personal reasons couldn't afford the cost of the trip, according to local Argentine outlet Infobae.

## Trump vows to toughen vetting of immigrants

Blames green card lottery programme after NY attack

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

US President Donald Trump has responded to a terrorist attack in New York by vowing to toughen restrictions on immigration.

"I have just ordered Homeland Security to step up our already Extreme Vetting Program. Being politically correct is fine, but not for this!" the president wrote on Twitter.

Throughout his rise to the presidency, Trump has invoked the threat of terrorist attacks as a rationale for tightening immigration policies, including halting refugee admissions and banning immigrants from certain Muslim-majority countries.

Trump's tweets suggest that the president will double down on that push in response to Tuesday's attacks. Earlier in the day, he wrote that "We must not allow Isis to return, or enter, our country after defeating them in the Middle East and elsewhere".

Trump also blamed a lottery scheme for visa applicants for allowing the suspected

New York terror attacker to enter the country.

The US president, citing unconfirmed reports about how Sayfullo Saipov, 29, entered the country, said: "The terrorist came into our country through what is called the Diversity Visa Lottery Program," a Chuck Schumer beauty. I want merit based.

"We are fighting hard for Merit Based immigration, no more Democrat Lottery Systems. We must get MUCH tougher (and smarter). @foxandfriends".

Just minutes before Trump sent his first tweet, Fox News' Fox and Friends programme had posted a clip of Dan Bongino, a former Secret Service agent, railing against the lottery scheme to its Twitter account.

The visa lottery makes available 55,000 immigrant visas, known as green cards, every year for people from countries with low rates of migration to the US.

Saipov, an Uzbek national, entered the US legally in 2010. Officials have not said whether he came via the lottery scheme.



## 'We must do better'

Social media giants tell US Congress after Mueller's Trump-Russia probe

AFP, Washington

American internet giants told Congress Tuesday they were committed to cracking down on fake news operations on their platforms like the ones Russians conducted to meddle in last year's US presidential elections.

A day after bombshell indictments in a US probe of Moscow's election interference and possible coordination between President Donald Trump's campaign and Russia, Facebook, Google and Twitter sought to assure concerned lawmakers that they were taking necessary steps to rid their platforms of disinformation, propaganda and provocation.

In their testimony, the social media companies revealed startling new data showing many more millions of Americans were exposed to the fake news than previously thought.

The new information gives the broadest picture yet of the Russian effort to spread discord across US society.

"We are deeply concerned about all of these threats," Facebook general counsel Colin Stretch told the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism.

"That foreign actors, hiding behind fake accounts, abused our platform and other internet services to try to sow division and discord -- and to try to undermine our election process -- is an assault on democracy, and it violates all of our values."

One of three unsealed indictments brought by US special prosecutor Robert Mueller revealed early contacts between Kremlin-linked figures and a former advisor of Trump's campaign.

Testimony by the three companies, whose executives faced



Facebook's Colin Stretch, Twitter's Sean Edgett, and Google's Richard Salgado testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee in Washington, DC, on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

more congressional questioning yesterday, shows that Russian activities were far greater than they had previously reported.

Twitter's acting general counsel Sean Edgett said his company has found that nearly 37,000 automated "bot" accounts with Russian links generated 1.4 million tweets that were seen by a potential 288 million people in the three months before the November 8, 2016 presidential election.

"We agree that we must do better to prevent it," he said. Facebook testified that some 126 million US users, a potentially huge portion of the voting public, may have seen stories, posts or other content from Russian sources.

Senator Lindsey Graham, the subcommittee's chairman said social media manipulation by terror networks and foreign governments is "one of the greatest challenges to American democracy" and national security.

Analysts say Russia's social media interference was part of a broader effort to help Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

## CATALONIA CRISIS

Suspense over axed leader's court summons

AFP, Madrid

Catalonia's sacked separatist leader yesterday looked to have thrown down the gauntlet in his tussle with the Spanish government, as his Belgian lawyer suggested he would ignore a Madrid court summons.

Carles Puigdemont, in Brussels since at least Monday, and 13 other members of his dismissed Catalan cabinet were told late Tuesday to be at Spain's top criminal court today and tomorrow.

They are due to be questioned in an investigation over Catalonia's independence drive, which has plunged Spain into its biggest crisis in decades.

On Monday, Spain's chief prosecutor said he was seeking charges of



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin (C) in Tehran, yesterday. Putin met Iran's leadership yesterday in Tehran as the two Damascus allies push a Syria peace plan and the Kremlin offers its backing for a landmark nuclear deal facing US opposition.

PHOTO: AFP

## Saudi-led air strike kills 29 in Yemen

AFP, Sanaa

A Saudi-led coalition air strike killed 29 people at a crowded marketplace in the heartland of the Iran-backed Huthi rebels in northern Yemen yesterday, Huthi health authorities said.

The coalition, which has faced repeated international criticism over civilian casualties, did not immediately confirm or deny that it was behind the attack in Saada governorate.

Residents at the scene picked through the remnants of stalls, some still smouldering, reduced to spindly metal frames and scattered wreckage, AFP photos showed.

The charred bodies of the victims, many of their faces disfigured beyond recognition, were laid out on white body bags for families to identify in the courtyard of a hospital morgue.

The health service said 29 people were killed and 17 others wounded, while the Huthi-run Saba news agency gave a lower toll of 21 dead, all of them civilians. Saba accused the Saudi-led coalition of carrying out the raid in the Sahar district.

The alliance did not respond to requests for comment. But it enforces an air blockade on rebel-held territory and is the only force whose warplanes are known to operate in Yemen's north along the Saudi border.

The United Nations blacklisted the coalition in October for killing and maiming children, drawing fresh calls from rights groups to step up pressure on Riyadh over the conflict.

## RECONCILIATION DEAL

## Hamas hands over Gaza crossings to PA

REUTERS, Gaza

The Islamist group Hamas began ceding control of the Gaza Strip's border crossings with Israel and Egypt to US-backed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas yesterday under an agreement brokered by Cairo to end a decade of internal schism.

The move marked the most concrete implementation of the Oct 11 reconciliation deal that Palestinians hope will ease economic restrictions on Gaza and enable more fruitful negotiations on their goal of setting up an independent state.

Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Al-Hamdallah said in a statement that taking charge of the crossings would help Abbas's Palestinian Authority (PA) fulfill its duty "to improve the living conditions of our people".

Israel and the United States have reservations about the intra-Palestinian pact, however, given refusals by Hamas - which has fought three wars with Israel since seizing control of Gaza in 2007 from forces loyal to Abbas - to relinquish its rockets and other arms.

Witnesses said PA employees moved into Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings on the Israeli border and Rafah crossing on the Egyptian border, as Hamas counterparts packed up equipment and departed on trucks.

## US pursues direct diplomacy

Says a state dept official as Pyongyang slams 'incurably mentally deranged' Trump ahead of his Asia tour

REUTERS, Afp, Cnn Online

The United States is quietly pursuing direct diplomacy with North Korea, a senior State Department official said on Tuesday, despite US President Donald Trump's public assertion that such talks are a waste of time.

Using the so-called "New York channel," Joseph Yun, US negotiator with North Korea, has been in contact with diplomats at Pyongyang's UN mission, the official said.

While US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Oct 17 said he would continue "diplomatic efforts ... until the first bomb drops," the official's comments were the clearest sign the United States was directly discussing issues beyond the release of American prisoners, despite Trump having dismissed direct talks as pointless.

There is no sign, however, that the behind-the-scenes communications have improved a relationship vexed by North Korea's nuclear and missile tests, reported Reuters.

Word of quiet engagement with Pyongyang comes despite Trump's comments, North Korea's weapons advances and suggestions by some US and South Korean officials that Yun's

interactions with North Koreans had been reined in.

"It has not been limited at all, both (in) frequency and substance," said the senior State Department official.

Meanwhile, North Korea slammed Trump as "incurably mentally deranged" in a personal attack ahead of his first visit to Asia, reported AFP.

Trump, the North's state-run KCNA news agency said late Tuesday, "disclosed his true nature as a nuclear war maniac before the world and was diagnosed as 'incurably mentally deranged'".

A senior administration official announced Tuesday that President Trump would not visit the DMZ in South Korea during his tour.

And speaking to parliament yesterday, President Moon said South Korea will never tolerate North Korea as a nuclear state, nor will Seoul have nuclear weapons.

On Monday, the first two of 12 US Air Force F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets arrived in Okinawa, where the group of stealth aircraft will begin a six-month deployment in Japan as part of Pacific Command's "theater security" program, a spokesperson for the service confirmed to CNN.

## N KOREA TENSIONS

Trump will not visit DMZ: White House

Seoul will never own nuke weapons: Moon

US Air Force F-35s arrive in Okinawa

## NEWSIN brief

### Abe re-elected as PM

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's parliament yesterday formally re-elected Shinzo Abe as prime minister after his party's crushing election victory, setting the 63-year-old on track to become the country's longest-serving premier. Abe's conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) swept to a two-thirds "super majority" on October 22.

### Wedding tragedy

AFP, New Delhi

At least 13 people including a pregnant woman were killed when an electricity transformer exploded outside a wedding ceremony in western India, police said yesterday. Dozens of guests had assembled for the ceremony outside a family home in the western state of Rajasthan when the transformer exploded, spewing hot oil and metal shards.

### Brexit talks on Nov 9

AFP, London

British and EU negotiators are due to resume Brexit talks in Brussels on November 9, London's Brexit ministry said yesterday, correcting an earlier date of November 8 given by the minister. Britain is set to leave EU in March 2019.

### India clears \$3.2b for naval choppers

AFP, New Delhi

India will purchase more than 100 armed helicopters for its navy to replace its outdated French-designed fleet in a military deal worth \$3.2 billion, an official said yesterday. The government will identify a foreign military hardware company and a local defence firm to develop the helicopters in a joint partnership.

