

NEWS IN brief

India, Pak exchange nuke installation list

TOI, New Delhi

India and Pakistan yesterday exchanged lists of their nuclear installations under an agreement that aims to prevent both sides from attacking such facilities. The exchange was done through diplomatic channels simultaneously at New Delhi and Islamabad, said the ministry of external affairs (MEA) in a statement.

Four killed in London New Year violence

AFP, London

Four young men were stabbed to death in unrelated incidents in London on New Year's Eve, while a fifth is in a critical condition in hospital, police said yesterday. At least 80 people were killed in stabbings in London in 2017, more than half of them under the age of 25. Detectives launched four separate murder investigations into the overnight attacks.

Costa Rican plane crash kills 12

REUTERS, San Jose

A Costa Rican plane crashed into woodland off a popular tourist beach on Sunday, killing 10 U.S. citizens and two local pilots, the Costa Rican government said. The accident occurred in the mountainous area off the Punta Islita beach town in the province of Guanacaste, about 230 km west of the capital of San Jose.

Air strikes in Syria kill 12 civilians

AFP, Beirut

Air strikes on one of the last villages still held by the Islamic State group in eastern Syria killed 12 civilians, including four children, a monitor said yesterday. The strikes were carried out late Sunday on the village of Susa in Deir Ezzor province, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.



Protesters take part in the annual New Year's Day pro-democracy rally in Hong Kong yesterday. Angry protesters marched through Hong Kong against what they described as suppression by Beijing, days after Chinese authorities ruled that part of a city rail station would come under mainland law.

PHOTO: AFP

JERUSALEM ROW

Palestine recalls envoy to US

AFP, Ramallah

The Palestinians said Sunday they were recalling their envoy to the United States for consultations in a move that follows US President Donald Trump's designation of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Palestinian foreign minister Riad al-Malki decided to recall PLO envoy to Washington Husam Zomlot to consult, official Palestinian news agency WAFA said, without providing further details.

Trump's December 6 announcement regarding the disputed city deeply angered the Palestinians and led to unrest.

Palestinian officials had earlier said president Mahmud Abbas would refuse to meet US Vice President Mike Pence during a visit to the region that had been planned for December but which was later cancelled.

Abbas has also said he would accept no further role for the United States in the Middle East peace process.

Violence since Trump's announcement has left 13 Palestinians dead, with most killed in clashes with Israeli forces.

On Sunday, while marking the 53rd anniversary of the Fatah movement, Abbas called Jerusalem "the eternal capital of the Palestinian people".

Jerusalem's status is perhaps the most sensitive issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel sees the entire city as its capital, while the Palestinians want the eastern sector as the capital of their future state.

Israel occupied east Jerusalem and the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War. It later annexed east Jerusalem in a move never recognised by the international community.

'Nuclear button on my desk'

North Korean leader warns US it will never be able to start a war, offers olive branch to Seoul in his New Year's message

AFP, Seoul

US President Donald Trump has responded to each test with his own amplified declarations, threatening to "totally destroy" Pyongyang and taunting Kim, saying he was on "a suicide mission".

But far from persuading Kim to give up his nuclear drive, analysts say Trump's tough talk may have prompted the North Korean leader to push through with his dangerous quest.

"(The North) can cope with any kind of nuclear threats from the US and has a strong nuclear deterrence that is able to prevent the US from playing with fire," Kim said yesterday.

"The nuclear button is always on my table. The US must realise this is not blackmail but reality."

When asked for a response to Kim's claim that he had a nuclear button on his desk, Trump said "We'll see, we'll see", in comments to reporters during the New Year's Eve party at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida.

Kim also sugar-coated his speech with a conciliatory tone towards Seoul, indicating for the first time that the North is considering taking part in the South's Winter Olympics next month.

"(The Olympics) will serve as a good chance to display our Korean people's grace toward the world and we sincerely hope the Games will be a success," he said.

Don't extinguish hopes

Pope Francis urges understanding for migrants while addressing mass on World Day of Peace

REUTERS, Vatican City

papacy.

During a trip to Myanmar and Bangladesh last year, he met Muslim refugees as the world's "weakest and most needy" yesterday, using his traditional New Year's address to "give voice" to people he has urged leaders to do more to help.

Francis

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who gathered in St Peter's Square at the Vatican that he had chosen the plight of migrants and refugees as the theme for the Roman Catholic Church's World Day of Peace, which is celebrated every January 1.

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