

News in brief

◆ **Former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, 96, successfully underwent an “elective medical procedure”** and is expected to be discharged in a few days, the National Heart Institute said yesterday. The procedure was uneventful and went as planned, “the institute said in a statement. Mahathir was admitted into the institute on Friday, the second time in as many months that he has been hospitalised. Mahathir, who has a history of heart problems, was admitted on Dec. 16 before being discharged a week later.



**Mahathir successfully underwent medical procedure**

◆ **Israeli foodtech startup Remilk has raised \$120 million to scale up production** of an animal-free protein that can be used in vegan dairy products like cheeses, yogurt and ice cream, the company said. Remilk developed a yeast-based fermentation process to generate proteins that it said taste and function the same as proteins in cow milk. They are free of lactose, cholesterol, and growth hormones, and the process reduces the environmental impact of dairy farming, it said. The funding round was led by NY-based Hanaco Ventures.

**Israel's Remilk raises \$120 million for animal-free dairy**

◆ **Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state and a key battleground for Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and opposition groups, will hold elections in seven phases starting from Feb. 10. Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra said on Saturday. The outcome of the election in the northern state, currently ruled by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), will be seen a barometer for national elections due in 2024. Voting will be finalised on March 7, with results expected from March 10, the Commission said. It has announced polling dates for five states at a time when the country is facing a soaring number of coronavirus infections.

**Elections in India's most populous state to start in Feb. 10**



◆ **The northern coastal city of Tianjin began testing its population of around 14 million yesterday** after at least two local cases of the highly-transmissible Omicron variant were detected, state media reported. Residents in four districts would be tested over the next 24 hours while other districts would be tested the next day, the Tianjin government said. Residents will only get the green health code necessary to travel once they receive a negative result, it said. The city advised residents not to leave town for unnecessary reasons, the government said late on Saturday. So far no full lockdown order has been given. The Tianjin outbreak poses risks to Beijing and the upcoming Winter Olympics, because of the large number of commuters working and living in the two cities, the state-owned Global Times said, citing an unnamed immunologist.



**China's Tianjin begins city-wide testing after at least two local Omicron cases detected**

# Kazakhstan says situation stable president firmly in charge after

● 5,800 people had been arrested in connection with the unrest

● Internet remained heavily restricted, with access only available to the presidential website

● Magnum, the biggest supermarket chain, said of the 68 stores in Almaty, 15 had been completely looted



A Kazakh law enforcement officer stands guard near a burnt truck while checking vehicles in a street following mass protests triggered by fuel price increase in Almaty, Kazakhstan

Reuters | Almaty

and terrorists.

Kazakhstan authorities said yesterday they had stabilised the situation across the country after the deadliest outbreak of violence in 30 years of independence, and troops from a Russian-led military alliance were guarding “strategic facilities”.

Security and intelligence officials briefed President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev that they were continuing “clean-up” actions in what he has called a huge counter-terrorism operation across the oil-producing former Soviet republic that borders Russia and China.

Dozens of people have been killed, thousands detained and public buildings torched over the past week, prompting Tokayev to issue shoot-to-kill orders to end unrest he has blamed on bandits

At Tokayev's invitation, the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) sent troops to restore order, an intervention that comes at a time of

high tension in Russia-US relations ahead of talks this week on the Ukraine crisis.

“A number of strategic facilities have been transferred under the protection of the united peace-

keeping contingent of the CSTO member states,” the presidential office said in a statement detailing the security briefing chaired by Tokayev.

It did not identify the facilities. Last week, Russia's space agency said security had been strengthened around Kazakhstan's Baikonur Cosmodrome, used by Russia for space launches. The protests disrupted production at the Chevron-operated Tengiz oil field.

“The situation has been stabilized in all regions of the country,” it said, adding law enforcement agencies had seized back control of administrative buildings and vital services were being restored.

What began a week ago with demonstrations against a fuel price rise exploded into a wider protest against Tokayev's government and the man he replaced



A man walks past the office building of the Nur Otan ruling party, which was damaged during mass protests triggered by fuel price increase, in Almaty, Kazakhstan

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	60,954,028	859,046
2 India	35,528,004	483,790
3 Brazil	22,499,525	619,981
4 UK	14,333,794	150,057
5 France	11,815,121	125,348
6 Russia	10,650,849	316,163
7 Turkey	9,916,725	83,529
8 Germany	7,510,185	114,674
9 Italy	7,281,297	138,881
10 Spain	7,164,906	89,934
11 Argentina	6,237,525	117,465
12 Iran	6,206,405	131,878
13 Colombia	5,300,032	130,288
14 Indonesia	4,266,195	144,129

Global tally

306,304,874

Deaths

5,504,015

Recovered:

259,111,400

New cases

+382,263

New deaths

+1,609

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	391,945		21,938		326,265	43,742
Saudi Arabia	578,753	+3,460	8,893	+1	546,614	23,246
UAE	785,625	+2,759	2,174	+1	753,033	30,418
Kuwait	430,920		2,471		413,309	15,140
Oman	307,722	+373	4,118	+1	300,964	2,640
Qatar	266,962		618		247,553	18,791

# Baby lost in chaos of Afghanistan airlift found, returned

Reuters | Kabul, Afghanistan

An infant boy handed in desperation to a soldier across an airport wall in the chaos of the American evacuation of Afghanistan has been found and was reunited with his relatives in Kabul on Saturday.

The baby, Sohail Ahmadi, was just two months old when he went missing on Aug. 19 as thousands of people rushed to leave Afghanistan as it fell to the Taliban.

The baby was located in Kabul where a 29-year-old taxi driver named Hamid Safi had found him in the airport and took him home to raise as his own.

After more than seven weeks of negotiations and pleas, and ultimately a brief detention by Taliban police, Safi finally handed the child back to his jubilant grandfather and other relatives still in Kabul.

They said they would now seek to have him reunited with his par-



Hamid Safi, a 29-year-old taxi driver who had found baby Sohail Ahmadi in the airport, cries as he hands over Sohail to his grandfather Mohammad Qasem Razawi in Kabul, Afghanistan

ents and siblings who were evacuated months ago to the United States.

During the tumultuous Afghan evacuation over the summer, Mirza Ali Ahmadi - the boy's father who had worked as a security guard at the US embassy - and his wife Suraya feared their son would get crushed in the crowd as they neared the airport gates en route to a flight to the United States.

Ahmadi told Reuters in early November in his desperation that day, he handed Sohail over the airport wall to a uniformed soldier who he believed to be an American, fully expecting he would soon make it the remaining

5 meters (15 feet) to the entrance to reclaim him.

Just at that moment, Taliban forces pushed the crowd back and it would be another half an hour before Ahmadi, his wife and their four other children were able to get inside.

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But by then the baby was nowhere to be found.

Ahmadi said he searched desperately for his son inside the airport and was told by officials that he had likely been taken out of the country separately and could be reunited with them later.

The rest of the family was evacuated - eventually ending up at a military base in Texas. For months they had no idea where their son was.

On the same day Ahmadi and his family were separated from their baby, Safi had slipped through the Kabul airport gates after giving a ride to his brother's family who were also set to evacuate.

Safi said he found Sohail alone and crying on the ground. After he



Baby Sohail Ahmadi is carried by a relative