

Son will be killed if involved in drugs

Says Philippines' Duterte

AFP, Manila
Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has said he will have his son killed if drug trafficking allegations against the younger politician are true, and that the police who carry out the hit will be protected from prosecution.

Paolo Duterte, 42, this month appeared before a senate inquiry to deny accusations made by an opposition lawmaker he was a member of a Chinese triad who helped smuggle in a huge shipment of crystal methamphetamine from China.

President Duterte did not refer to the allegations specifically but reiterated his statement from last year's election campaign that none of his children were involved in drugs, but they would face the harshest punishment if they were.

"I said before my order was: 'If I have children who are into drugs, kill them so people will not have anything to say.' Duterte said in a speech on Wednesday night before government workers at the presidential palace in Manila.

"So I told Pulong (Paolo Duterte's nickname). 'My order is to kill you if you are caught. And I will protect the police who kill you, if it is true,' he said.

Duterte, 72, won the presidential election on a brutal law-and-order platform in which he promised an unprecedented campaign to eradicate illegal drugs in society by killing up to 100,000 traffickers and addicts last year.

Since he assumed office in the middle of last year, police have reported killing more than 3,800 people in anti-drug operations while thousands of others have been murdered in unexplained circumstances.



Protesters burn an effigy during a protest against Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte near the Malacanang palace in Manila yesterday. Activists are holding a series of protests to denounce drug war killings and what they say is a slide to tyranny under Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

EU MIGRANT CRISIS

More than 100 people missing in Med: Libya

AGENCIES
More than 100 migrants are missing after a shipwreck off the coast of western Libya, the Libyan navy said yesterday.

Rescuers found at least seven survivors on Wednesday after they had remained for three days at sea, navy spokesman Ayub Kassem said, without providing further details.

The shipwreck occurred off the town of Sabratha, hub for the illegal migration to Europe that has seen violent clashes between rival armed groups since Sunday.

Last week, Libya's coastguard rescued more than 3,000 migrants, aiming to cross the Mediterranean to Europe, while Italy picked up another 2,000, reported AFP.

Though the numbers at least suggest the voyage have dropped off significantly in recent months, the rescues indicate the rally is still very much open.

The route was the highest reported out of Libya for a one-week period since a dramatic fall in numbers in mid-July.

Meanwhile, a powerful armed group, known for smuggling people from Libya, is seeking legitimacy and state security jobs from the Tripoli government in return for allowing its migrant boats from leaving the coast of Sabratha for Italy, a senior group member said.

The group, the Anas al-Bababi brigade, struck a deal with Libya's United Nations-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) this summer to clamp down on trafficking of migrant boats, a group member, who gave his name as Mohamed, told Reuters.

The need for the GNA to strike such a deal would illustrate the power of armed groups in Libya, which continue to hold the real influence locally as they have since a 2011 uprising that ousted Muammar Gaddafi.

Trump serious about peace

Says Palestinian leader, hopes US president's commitment to the deal of the century

REUTERS, New York

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas expressed optimism on Wednesday about reaching a peace agreement with Israel this year and said US President Donald Trump's commitment to the issue would help create the "deal of the century" in the region.

Abbas met Trump on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York and thanked him for his support.

"If this is any proof to anything... it attests to the seriousness of your Excellency, Mr President, to achieve the deal of the century in the Middle East during this year or in the coming months, God willing," Abbas said through an interpreter.

Trump said his team of advisers was working very hard on the issue, as were Israel, Saudi Arabia and other nations.

"I think we have a very, very good chance, and I certainly would devote everything within my heart and within my soul to get that deal made," Trump said.

Abbas said at a very important juncture, there is a small period of time, and we're going to see what we can do. There can be no promises, obviously," he said.

Abbas noted that the Palestinians had met with Trump's team more than 20 times since the US president entered

office in January, and he said the fact that Jews and Muslims were celebrating a new year was a positive sign.

"This is a very sweet coincidence that we can celebrate the new year together within a 24-hour period, and if this is an indication to anything, it means that we can coexist peacefully together," Abbas said.

Later at the UN gathering, Abbas urged the 193-nation body to end the "Israeli occupation of the state of Palestine" within a set timetable.

He also borrowed a campaign line of Trump's, using the phrase "draining the swamp" as an argument for addressing the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. Trump used a similar phrase as a presidential candidate to criticize politicians and policy making in Washington.

"Beyond any doubt, draining the swamp of colonial, occupation of our land and ending its unjust, oppressive and illegal practices against our people would greatly affect the fight against terrorism, depriving terrorists groups of one of the key rallying cries they exploit to promote their regnant ideas," Abbas said in his prepared remarks.

Trump met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier in the week. The Israeli and Palestinian leaders both went out of their way to praise the US president.

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

Trump says his team of advisers working very hard on the issue
Abbas urges UN member nations to end the Israeli occupation in West Bank



Rohingyas not refugees

India's home minister calls them illegal immigrants, says Myanmar willing to take them back

INDY ONLINE

New Delhi Home Minister Rajnath Singh yesterday reiterated that Rohingya Muslims living in India are not refugees but illegal immigrants from Myanmar, and that objections to deport them are baseless since Myanmar has expressed its willingness to take them back.

"They have not come here after following proper procedures. No Rohingya has applied for asylum. They are illegal immigrants," said the minister of the nearly 40,000 people who the Centre has said it will remove from India, provoking international criticism.

separately upon the Supreme Court not to allow their deportation.

But the Home Ministry has submitted written details in the court arguing that the headline stance is justified by the security threat posed by illegal immigrant Rohingya, hundreds of thousands of whom have fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh, from where many have crossed into India.

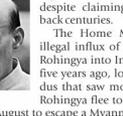
The Rohingya are denied citizenship in Buddhist-majority Myanmar and regarded as illegal immigrants, despite claiming roots that date back centuries.

The Home Ministry said the illegal influx of large numbers of Rohingya into India began four to five years ago, long before an exodus that saw more than 4,00,000 Rohingyas flee to Bangladesh since August to escape a Myanmar military counter-insurgency offensive that the United Nations has called "ethnic cleansing."

The government told Rohingya it has received information on Rohingya involvement in plots by ISIS and other "extremist groups" to ignite communal and sectarian violence in India.

On Monday, the Centre told the Supreme Court that it will confidently shun intelligence information with judging showing Rohingya links with Pakistan-based terrorists.

The Supreme Court is deciding an appeal lodged on behalf of Rohingya against the deportation plan. The top agency for women and children's rights in Bengal has



INDIAN KASHMIR

Grenade attack on minister kills three

AFP, Srinagar

Suspected militants yesterday fired a grenade at the motorcade of a local politician in Indian-administered Kashmir, killing three bystanders and wounding at least 20 others, police said.

The attack occurred as Naureen Abbasi, a local government minister, was passing through the southern town of Tral. He escaped unhurt.

Three civilians were killed in the attack. We are investigating," the director general of police S. P. Vaid told AFP, adding it appeared a grenade launcher was used to fire the explosive.

At least 20 people, including 10 government forces personnel, were also wounded in the blast in the disputed Himalayan territory, he added.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since the end of British colonial rule in 1947. Both claim the restive territory in full.

Rebel groups have been fighting Indian forces for decades demanding independence or a merger with Pakistan. India maintains roughly 500,000 troops in Kashmir.

At least 140 armed militants, including some senior commanders, have been killed since the start of the war by government forces.

Militant ranks have swelled since security forces shot dead a hugely popular rebel commander, Burhan Wani, last year.

Wani died was a native of Tral where yesterday's attack was staged.

His death sparked protests and deadly anti-India riots in the region in the past weeks, with more than 100 civilians dead and thousands more injured.



Protesters shout slogans and wave Esteladas (Catalan separatist flags) as they gather outside the High Court of Justice of Catalonia in Barcelona, Spain, yesterday.

CATALUNYA INDEPENDENCE BID

Spanish crackdown dealt a blow: VP

AFP, Barcelona

Catalonia's independence yesterday admitted that plans to hold an outlawed independence referendum had been dealt a major blow by a crackdown the previous day, as people gathered in Barcelona for a second day of protests.

Thousands took to the streets of the Mediterranean seaside city on Wednesday after police detained key members of the team organising the vote slated for October 1 in a region deeply divided over independence.

Authorities seized nearly 10 million ballots destined for the vote, seriously damaging separatist plans for a referendum with a semblance of legitimacy, even if it was never going to be recognised by Madrid or abroad.

After a day-long protest that lasted well into the night, several thousand independence supporters gathered again yesterday in front of the high court in what international separatist organisations said would be a "permanent mobilisation" until the officials are freed.

Oriol Junqueras, the region's vice-president whose deputy was among those arrested, told Catalonia's TV3 television that the operation meant "the rules of the game have been changed."

"The circumstances today are different because a significant part of our team, half of the economic team, has been arrested," he said.

Second Indian journo killed in one month

AFP, New Delhi

A reporter covering political unrest in India's northeast was beaten to death during violent clashes, officials said yesterday, two weeks after the high-profile murder of another prominent journalist.

Shantanu Bhattacharya was set upon with sticks as he reported on violence Wednesday between warring political factions and police outside Agartala, the capital of remote Tripura state.

State police superintendent Abhijit Saptarishi said more than a dozen officers were also injured in the fracas and tensions remained high in the troubled region.

"We later found the journalist's body at the site of the clashes," he told AFP from Tripura.

No arrests have yet been made in connection with the reporter's death, but four people were detained on separate charges related to the political violence, Saptarishi said.

Bhattacharya's death brings the number of reporters killed in India since the early 1990s to 29, according to figures from the Committee to Protect Journalists.

It comes just a fortnight after the murder of Gauri Lankesh, a newspaper editor and outspoken critic of the ruling Hindu nationalist party whose death sparked an outpouring of anger.

The 55-year-old was shot dead by three unknown gunmen as she entered her home in the southern city of Bangalore in Karnataka state on September 5.

Merkel's party dips in poll before vote

REUTERS, Berlin

Angela Merkel's conservatives dropped one percentage point in a poll released yesterday, three days before a German election in which the chancellor is expected to win a fourth term, while the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) gained two points.

The GMS poll put Merkel's bloc up 37 percent with her main opponent, the Social Democrats (SPD), unchanged on 22 percent.

The AfD, poised to enter the Bundestag for the first time, rose to 10 percent with the pro-business Free Democrats and radical Left both on 9 percent and Greens on 8 percent.

Trump's strategy will work

Says Ghani, gives Obama credit for his decision to maintain some US forces in Afghanistan

REUTERS, Kabul

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said on Wednesday that US President Donald Trump's strategy to win the war in Afghanistan will work where his predecessor's failed because the Afghan army is stronger and Trump wants a regional approach and a harder line with Pakistan.

Ghani also said that former President Barack Obama "did not have a partner in Afghanistan," implicitly criticizing former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who frequently distained US policy and the US-led international military force.

"President Trump is not just an individual (but) a team of partners in Afghanistan," Ghani told the Asia Society in New York, where he is attending the UN General Assembly. "The Trump administration's strategy has the uniqueness of immense

WAR ON TALIBAN



consultations with us."

At the same time, Ghani said, Obama's decision to maintain some US forces in Afghanistan "ensured our survival" despite advances by Taliban insurgents.

US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Monday that more than 3,000 additional US troops are being deployed to Afghanistan under the new strategy announced last month. The number of US forces would rise to more than 14,000, compared to a high of more than 100,000 under Obama.

Asked how Trump's strategy differs from Obama's, Ghani said Trump's plan takes a "regional line" approach and a "harder line with Pakistan" while preserving a new opening for peace talks.

"The message to Pakistan to engage and become a responsible stakeholder in the region and in the fight against terrorism has never been clearer," Ghani said.

NEWS IN brief

Erdogan to meet Putin on Syria peace plan

REUTERS, Istanbul

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday he will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin next week to discuss a plan agreed by their countries and Iran to reduce the fighting in Syria's northwestern Idlib province. The three countries agreed last week to de-escalate and observe around the province.

NY's 'Village Voice' in last print edition

AFP, New York

New York's venerable "Village Voice" newspaper delivered its final print edition on Wednesday after six decades as a print publication. The paper is now going digital only. The paper announced the end of its print edition at the end of August, saying it hoped to "rethink" and "reinvent" the "Village Voice" brand.

China bans anti-Islam words on social media

PTI, Beijing

"Islamophobic" terms used by China's internet users to stigmatize Muslims have been blocked by authorities as a preventive measure, officials said yesterday. China has over 21 million Muslims in Xinjiang and Uighur community in Ningxia province.

Sixth arrest over London Underground attack

AFP, London

A sixth man was arrested in Britain early yesterday as part of the probe into the bomb attack on a London Underground train last week, police said. The man, aged 17, was detained under anti-terrorism powers in Thornton Heath.