

US-Canadian family were held in Pakistan

Says CIA director Pompeo

AFP, Washington

A North American family who were kidnapped by a Taliban faction in Afghanistan were held for five years in Pakistan before their release last week, CIA director Mike Pompeo said Thursday.

The account is at odds with the Pakistani military's version of events, which said it rescued the couple and their three children born in custody after a tip-off that the family had been moved into Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal areas from across the border in Afghanistan, where they were captured in 2012.

"We had a great outcome last week, when we were able to get back four US citizens, who had been held for five years inside of Pakistan," Pompeo told a Washington policy forum.

The amount of time US citizen Caitlan Coleman and her Canadian husband Joshua Boyle spent on either side of the lawless Afghanistan-Pakistan border is significant for US authorities.

Washington suspects Pakistan of collusion with the Haqqani group, a hardline Taliban faction that targets the US-backed government in Kabul and is thought to have held the hostages.

Pakistani officials secured the family's release last week, just ahead of a key visit next week by US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson during which he is expected to pressure Islamabad.

Some US and Canadian officials have cast doubt on whether the family was rescued, hinting in North American media that the recovery was more of a "negotiated handover."

"I think history would indicate that expectations for the Pakistanis willingness to help us in the fight against radical Islamic terrorism should be set at a very low level. Our intelligence would indicate the same," Pompeo said.

"I think we should have a very real conversation with them about what it is they're doing and what it is they should do and the American expectations for how they should behave," he said.

US President Donald Trump wants to convince Afghan Taliban rebels that they have no hope of military victory and should try to negotiate a peace deal with Kabul.

But, Pompeo said, there is no chance the Taliban will do this if their fighters continue to enjoy the benefits of a safe haven on the Pakistan side of the border.

Tangail

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Local MP Hasan Imam Khan Sohel Hazari visited the spot on October 14 and assured the locals of dumping concrete blocks to stop the erosion, the mayor added.

Contacted, Shajahan Siraj, executive engineer of WDB in Tangail, said, "No dredging work was conducted in the river this year. The issue of sand lifting is supposed to be monitored by the local administration."

On August 20, train service between the capital and the northern and southwestern districts was suspended for 36 hours as soil under one of the approaches to the Pungli Railway Bridge was washed away by floodwater, said several traders at Pungli Bazar.

Abdur Rashid, executive engineer of Bangladesh Railway (Joydevpur), said on information of the erosion, he sent a railway team to see the matter.

"After visiting the area, the team told me that the erosion could not harm the railway bridge as it is happening far from the bridge," he said.

There was nothing to be worried about as the flow of water in the river was very low now and the erosion was taking place on the opposite side of the damaged approach road, he added.

Call of duty

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need for feminism in the world. According to the report, Guarnotta was walking alone at 11:30pm in the city, in Italy's northern Tuscany region, when she was approached by the group near Piazza della Repubblica.

She said the men were drunk, called her a "whore", spat at her and then tried to take her away to an unknown location.

Guarnotta said the Italian men at first tried to convince her to have sex with all of them. She tried to run away but they called her a "slut" and a "whore".

She alleged they dragged her by the arm and even took off her glasses. Hossein Alamgir noticed the commotion and came to her aid, chasing the men away.

After rescuing Guarnotta, he took her to a safe place and fed her. He also provided her with towels so that she could wash, and gave her a rose as a present.

It was not known whether Guarnotta contacted the police. Alamgir, 58, has been in Italy since 2005, according to Diritanews.

ROHINGYA CRISIS Erdogan assures Dhaka of 'maximum support'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday emphasised the need for political stability in Myanmar, and assured that Ankara would give maximum support for Rohingya and Bangladesh, particularly in the OIC and the UN.



Among others, first-vice President of Iran also acclaimed the humane approach of Bangladesh and reassured the country of their support.

The D-8 leaders also stressed the implementation of recommendations made by the Kofi Annan commission over the Rohingya issue.

The Rohingya issue featured prominently in the ninth D-8 Summit held in Istanbul with the Turkish president in the chair.

Terming it an ethnic cleansing, D-8 member states assured that they would provide their political and humanitarian support to the crisis for a durable solution, said a foreign ministry press release.

Erdogan thanked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the government for opening borders for the forcibly displaced Rohingyas and making efforts for a solution to the problem.

He called upon all to share the huge burden of Bangladesh. He expressed interest in building shelters with hospitals and health camps for Rohingyas, the release added.

Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia Ahmad Zahid Hamidi recalled his recent visit to Bangladesh, and stressed on further mobilising international support to address the Rohingya crisis.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam led the Bangladesh delegation to the summit.

He briefed the D-8 members on Bangladesh's "open door policy" towards the refugees and emphasised on the five-point proposal placed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the last UNGA for bringing a lasting solution.

He also sought continued support from the D-8 members for an action-oriented UN Security Council resolution to bring an early solution to the crisis, the release added.

The ninth D-8 Summit was held with the theme "Expanding Opportunities through Cooperation".

The D-8, also known as Developing-8, is an organisation for development cooperation among Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey.

Nine Rajshahi AL leaders expelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Awami League in Rajshahi has expelled nine leaders of Bagmara upazila who last month held lawmaker Enamul Haque responsible for fuelling militancy, outlawed activities and intra-party feuds.

The decision was taken in the district executive committee's meeting held at Nanking Darbar Hall in the city from 3:00pm to 8:00pm on Thursday, said district AL General Secretary Asaduzzaman Asad.

Of the expelled leaders, Bagmara Upazila Parishad Chairman and upazila unit AL General Secretary Zakirul Islam and Taherpur Municipality Mayor and municipal unit AL General Secretary Abul Kalam Azad showed interests in contesting the upcoming general elections.

Other expelled leaders are Jogipara Union Parishad Chairman and union AL General Secretary Mostafa Kamal, upazila unit Joint Secretary Mahbubur Rahman, Organising Secretary Ziaul Haque, Science and Information Affairs Secretary Mamunur Rahman, Freedom Fighter Affairs Secretary Sahar Ali, and executive committee members Abdus Salam and Abdus Sobhan.

Earlier on September 26, 11 AL leaders from Bagmara went to the city unit and raised different allegations against Enamul Haque, lawmaker from Rajshahi-4 (Bagmara) constitu-

ency. They accused him of patronising militants and communist outlaws, committing corruption and creating intra-party feuds.

The next day, the upazila AL unit, of which Enamul Haque is the president, proposed to expel the 11 for violating party discipline by holding a press conference.

Following the proposal, the district AL committee sent show cause notices to the 11 leaders.

"The expulsion decision was taken after reviewing their answers," said Asaduzzaman Asad.

Sreepur Union Parishad Chairman and upazila AL Vice-President Mokbul Hossain Mridha and Galkandi UP chairman Alamgir Sarker were not expelled as they sought lenient action from the party, he added.

He further said lawmakers Enamul Haque, Ayen Uddin and Akter Jahan attended the district executive committee meeting, which was convened following a directive from the party's central unit.

Expelled leader Zakirul Islam, who was also a member of the district executive committee, was not allowed to attend the meeting.

Last night, Zakirul along with a huge number of his supporters took position at the district AL office in Lakshmipur area creating anxiety in the city.

A huge number of law enforcers were deployed in Lakshmipur and C&B intersection to avert any untoward situation.

Step up support

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Rakhine State. They are Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide Adama Dieng and Special Adviser of the Responsibility to Protect Ivan Simonovic.

The two have been following the situation in Rakhine for several years and have warned that there was a risk that atrocity crimes could be committed there, says a statement issued on Thursday.

Risk factors they identified included very deeply rooted and long-standing discriminatory practices and policies against the Rohingyas.

"Despite warnings issued by us and by many other officials, the government of Myanmar has failed to meet its obligations under international law and primary responsibility to protect the Rohingya population from atrocity crimes. The international community has equally failed its responsibilities in this regard", they stated.

There are clear needs for comprehensive psychosocial assistance or support programmes for a deeply traumatised population, who will need help over the short, medium and long term if their full physical, mental and emotional recovery is to be assured.

HARROWING JOURNEYS The international community should address a range of urgent needs of Rohingya refugees, from transportation to camps, to medical and life-saving assistance at every stage, said Amnesty.

Refugees interviewed by Amnesty recalled harrowing journeys from their villages, where they came under attack, to the camps in Bangladesh.

Many said they had been forced to pay extortionate sums to be transported in boats to Bangladesh. Those without money told Amnesty that they were forced to part with jewellery and

other valuable possessions to pay for the boat crossing.

"Rohingya refugees who walked for days -- often barefoot, hungry and injured, depleting all reserves -- are faced with extortion to make the last leg of their journey," said Charmain Mohamed.

Given the failure of accountability in Myanmar when it comes to human rights violations against the Rohingya, including crimes against humanity, many refugees told Amnesty of their fear of returning to Myanmar unless conditions allow them to do so safely and with dignity.

Beyond the immediate needs, the international community must help Bangladesh cope with the humanitarian crisis going forward. This includes calling for accountability for crimes against humanity and the dismantlement of the entrenched system of discrimination that the Rohingyas have long endured in Myanmar.

Body formed

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Khandakar Diliruzzaman, Amit Talukdar and Rashed S Jahangir, deputy attorney generals; and Bashir Ahmed, assistant AG.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mahbubey Alam said he formed the committee with his colleagues for studying and examining the relevant legal points for preparing and filing the review petition with the SC.

The petition would be filed once it is prepared, he said.

According to the AG, the government in the review petition will pray to the apex court to restore parliament's power to remove SC judges.

Nakla upazila chairman found dead

Suicide suspected

A CORRESPONDENT, Sherpur

Police yesterday recovered the body of Nakla Upazila Parishad Chairman Mahbub Ali Chowdhury alias Munir Chowdhury from his house in the upazila's Ishibpur area.

The body was hanging from a ceiling fan and was recovered around 10:30am, police said.

They suspect Mahbub, 65, also former joint convener of Sherpur unit BNP, committed suicide.

Abdul Halim Siddiqui, officer-in-charge of Nakla police, said no injury mark was found in the body.

"We suspect he has committed suicide hanging himself from the ceiling fan with a scarf," the OC said, adding, the body was sent to Sherpur Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Rabbinur Chowdhury, eldest son of Mahbub, filed an unnatural death case.

He said his father was suffering from different types of diseases for a long time and his mother was also seriously ill.

"My father was somewhat disappointed for all these. That is why he has committed suicide," he said.

Mahbub was elected the upazila parishad chairman in 2014. Before that, he was elected Union Parishad chairman for a couple of times, family members said.

Unique temple

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of a Kolkata school. Ghosh was a landlord. He was a powerful businessman and ultimately an assistant director of public instruction. To him the British granted the title 'Roy Bahadur'. He built the temple in front of his now-abandoned house.

The building's doorways are of wood, engraved with snake figures and the image of Lord Shiva. Its octagonal pillars and pilasters, each set upon a square plinth, feature inverted lotus designs at the top.

Cornices meanwhile are decorated in flower, leaf and spear patterns. But the temple's most unique quality is inevitably its sandstone.

Until at least a decade ago with the encouragement of a Hindu teacher, puja services were observed; nowadays the temple is unused. There isn't any Hindu community close at hand.

Kharshuti Shiva temple is the story of a precise history lost, of adornments plundered, of religious services fallen silent. And now, through a lack of maintenance, the future of the very building is at risk. Could there come a day when all one will see are a few broken sandstone slabs?

Many in the local community are attached to the building. They hope it can be preserved. "Archaeology department officials have visited the site several times and promised to take care of it," notes the school's current headmistress Shalina Parvin.

"But no repair work has been undertaken. If the archaeology department wants us to relocate our school so the temple can be saved, we will do that."

"This sandstone temple is an asset in our locality," says the chairman of Boailmari upazila council, MM Mosharof Hossain. "I want the archaeology department to preserve it so future generations can admire our architectural heritage."

Afghan mosque

FROM PAGE 1

Sectarian tensions have raged for some time between members of the Sunni and Shiite denominations of Islam. But there were no immediate claims of responsibility for yesterday's attacks. ISIS has claimed responsibility this year for other attacks on Shiite mosques.

The violence comes a day after Taliban militants stormed a base in Kandahar, in the south, and killed dozens of Afghan troops, the country's Defence Ministry said.

The ministry said 43 of the base's 60 troops died in the attack. A further nine were injured, six are missing and two were not harmed. Ten attackers were killed in the assault.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for that attack, according to a statement from the group's spokesman, Qhari Yosouf Ahmadi.

Taliban raids on Afghan military installations aren't uncommon. In April, a deadly raid on a northern army base left as many as 140 feared dead. That attack was revenge for the deaths of two Taliban officials in the region, a spokesman for the group told CNN.

Around 41 people, including chief, killed in attack on Afghan police headquarters.

On Tuesday, at least 41 people were killed and scores were injured in an attack on police headquarters in the Paktia provincial capital of Gardez, located in eastern Afghanistan.

Two car bombs exploded at the gate of the police headquarters, Danish said.

Afterward, five attackers entered the building and a five-hour gunfight ensued.

Nonstop rain cripples life

FROM PAGE 1

wind at most places over Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Chittagong, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions today.

The ceaseless deluge that started Thursday night flooded much of the capital by yesterday afternoon.

People who dared leaving home on the weekend, waded through flooded streets or paid additional fares for transport.

A number of major thoroughfares as well as lanes and by-lanes were inundated as the drains got clogged with rubbish deposited by water.

Mamunur Rashid, who lives in Jatrabari, said he had to wade through knee-deep water to go to Jatrabari intersection.

"I was completely drenched in the rain and my umbrella could not withstand the wind."

Bitheeka Nipty had a similar experience. A resident of Siddheshwari, she also had to walk on flooded streets to Mouchak yesterday afternoon.

"Whenever it rains, the lanes and allies of Siddheshwari go under water and today the area turned into a swamp. I do not understand what our utility service providers do."

Many vehicles, especially CNG-run three-wheelers broke on flooded streets, adding to people's sufferings.

Anwar Hossain, a resident of Shankar, said, "The CNG-run three-wheeler that was taking me to Gulshan stalled on the flooded Dhanmondi 27."

He said he had to find another vehicle.

A resident of Lalmatia, said a bus full of passengers broke on Dhanmondi-27. Passengers got down in the rain and waded through knee-deep water.

BUS AND FERRY SERVICES DISRUPTED

Shimulia-Kathalbari ferry services were suspended, causing tailbacks on highways on both sides of the Padma river.

Launches and speedboats services in Mawa-Kawrakandi also remained suspended. Over 500 vehicles were stranded at Shimulia.

Khandakar Shah Newaz, assistant managing director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation, said only six ferries operated till 4:00pm.

"As the intensity of rain and wind velocity increased due to the depression, we suspended all types of services around 4:30pm."

Pollution biggest killer

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Aside from outright poisoning, pollution causes an array of deadly ailments such as heart disease, stroke, lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The deadliest form, responsible for more than two-thirds of deaths, was air pollution, they added.

CALL TO ACTION

This includes outdoor pollution from factory and car emissions, and indoor pollution from wood, charcoal, coal, dung or crop waste being burnt for heating and cooking.

After water pollution in second place with 1.8 million deaths, "workplace pollution including exposure to toxins and carcinogens was linked to 0.8 million deaths," said the report.

These included the lung disease pneumoconiosis in coal workers, bladder cancer in dye workers, and asbestosis and lung cancer in workers exposed to asbestos.

"Lead pollution was linked to 0.5 million deaths that resulted from high blood pressure, renal failure and cardiovascular disease," said the report.

In a separate comment, The Lancet editors Pamela Das and Richard Horton said the report came at a "worrisome time, when the US government's Environmental Protection Agency, headed by Scott Pruitt, is undermining established environmental regulations."

The latest findings, they added, should serve as a "call to action".

"Pollution is a winnable battle... Current and future generations deserve a pollution-free world," the pair wrote.

Pruitt announced this month the US would pull out of former president

Barack Obama's Clean Power Plan.

There was some good news in the report too.

Deaths due to water and household air pollution dropped from 5.9 million in 1990 to 4.2 million in 2015, said the report authors, as poor countries became richer.

On the other hand, deaths from pollution associated with industrial development -- such as outdoor air pollution, chemical and soil pollution, increased from 4.3 million to 5.5 million over the same period.

Living next

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in the small space of a city can also contribute to chronic stress.

With almost 70 percent of the world's population expected to be living in cities by 2050, the findings have implications for urban planning.

Lead author Dr Simone Kuhn, of the University Medical Centre Hamburg-Eppendorf, said: "Research on brain plasticity supports the assumption the environment can shape brain structure and function."

"That is why we are interested in the environmental conditions that may have positive effects on brain development."

"Studies of people in the countryside have already shown living close to nature is good for their mental health and wellbeing. We therefore decided to examine city dwellers."

Co-author Ullman Lindenberger, of the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin, said: "Our study investigates the connection between urban planning features and brain health for the first time."

'IS capital' Raqa liberated

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"The future of Raqa will be decided by its people," Silo said, as he urged the international community to support their rebuilding efforts.

But later in a statement SDF said Raqa will be part of a decentralised federal Syria, tying its future to Kurdish-led plans to set up autonomous regions in the north.

It said the people of the majority Arab city and surrounding province would decide their own future "within the framework of a decentralised, federal democratic Syria".

"We pledge to protect the frontiers of the province against all external threats," the SDF said.

The plans for autonomous zones in northern Syria have encountered broad opposition from the United States, neighbouring Turkey, and the Syrian government in Damascus.

A daunting task lies ahead of Raqa's recently created civilian council, made up of local citizens, as they seek to restore the devastated city.

The announcement was made in the same dusty Raqa stadium where IS fighters made their last stand earlier this week.

SDF commanders told CNN that the choice of location was intended to add insult to injury following the extremist group's defeat there.

Local officials, dignitaries and tribal chiefs from Raqa and neighboring towns and cities were among those to attend, alongside members of the Syrian Democratic Council, which is tasked with helping to rebuild the city.

Footage from the former soccer stadium showed jubilant SDF fighters dancing hand-in-hand to music pumping from loudspeakers as they gathered ahead of the ceremony.

The SDF believe IS held many detainees within the stadium, the group's biggest prison in the city, SDF chief press officer Mustafa Bali said. The SDF had hoped to find around 300 "missing" Kurds when the stadium was seized from IS control but they were not there, he said.

IS turned the changing and locker rooms on the lower level of the sta-

dium into prison cells and interrogation rooms, Bali said.

On the lower level, CNN saw room after room with holes punched through the walls to create a kind of "rat run," through which ISIS fighters could move. A number of rooms appeared to have been used as cells. Some had what the SDF said were detainees' names, with dates next to them, written on the walls.

A few IS fighters are believed still to be at large in the network of tunnels that IS dug under the city.

It could take months to clear the city of explosives, one Kurdish commander, Rojda Falat, told CNN.

A sustained effort to retake the city began in early June, in an operation led by the SDF and supported by coalition airstrikes.

The US-backed SDF announced the last phase of the operation at the weekend. IS finally lost control of the city on Tuesday, when the terror group's black flag was hauled down from Raqa's stadium.

The SDF declared "major military operations" over, although pockets of resistance remained.

Seized in early 2014, Raqa soon became the nerve center of the group's sprawling bureaucracy. It also was the hub for planning overseas terror attacks -- especially in France and Belgium -- because so many foreign fighters called it home.

Now, it is a symbol of the terror group's decline. IS controls only a small strip of territory along the Euphrates River in northern Syria.

'Drug dealer'

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acting on information that a large consignment of yaba tablets was going to be sold there.

Sensing the presence of Rab members, the drug dealers opened fire. The Rab members returned fire, triggering a "gunfight". Faruk was found dead on the spot after the "shootout" and the others managed to flee, he added.