

DUTERTE PRAISES POLICE KILLINGS OF 32, URGES MORE



MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte holds documents containing a list of suspected drug dealers and users during the 19th Founding Anniversary of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption at the Malacanang Presidential Palace in Manila yesterday. — AP

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday urged police to kill dozens of drug suspects every day, as he praised officers who shot dead 32 people this week in "shock and awe" raids.

Duterte's incendiary comments came as he acknowledged major problems in his drug war, which has claimed thousands of lives, admitting he could not win it as quickly as promised and lamenting a corrupt police force. In one of the deadliest operations of the war, police reported killing 32 people in raids on Monday on suspected drug traffickers in Bulacan province, which neighbors the capital of Manila.

"The ones who died recently in Bulacan, 32, in a massive raid, that was good," Duterte said in a speech to an anti-crime organization that has backed the drug war. "If we could kill another 32 everyday, then maybe we can reduce what ails this country." Earlier in the day Bulacan police chief Romeo Caramat held a press conference in Manila to publicise the raids, in which 109 suspects were also arrested. "We wanted to shock and awe these drug personalities," Caramat said.

"Other drug personalities will think twice before continuing with their drug trade," Caramat insisted the police had killed the suspects in self-defense, adding that pistols and grenades had been seized in the raids. "We know we have done nothing wrong," Caramat said.

He later told AFP that no police had been killed or wounded. When asked how it was possible there had been no police

wounded if the raiding officers had been acting in self defense, Caramat said: "Don't ask me to explain".

Police have killed 3,450 people in similar drug raids since Duterte came to office in the middle of last year, according to government data. More than 2,000 other people have been killed in drug-related crimes and thousands more murdered in unexplained circumstances, according to police data.

'Happy to slaughter'

Rights groups accuse police and state-sanctioned vigilantes of carrying out mass murder as they follow Duterte's orders to eradicate drug traffickers and addicts. Duterte said last year he would be "happy to slaughter" three million addicts. Rights groups say such statements are incitements to kill, and Duterte may be orchestrating a crime against humanity. Duterte easily won last year's presidential election largely on a vow to kill tens of thousands of drug traffickers and addicts, which he said was necessary to stop the country's slide to narco-state status.

He also promised during the campaign he would win his drug war in three to six months, a vow that resonated with voters fed up with high crime rates and corrupt politicians.

However Duterte, who is limited by the constitution to serving a single term of six years, has conceded in a series of speeches over the past week that he will not be able to eradicate the drug trade quickly as promised. — AFP

INDIA'S BONDED LABORERS BATTLE CAPTIVITY MENTALITY AFTER RESCUE

CHENNAI: After his rescue from abuse and overwork as a bonded laborer in a brick kiln in south India, Shanmugam Paneer has set up his own business making household items from bamboo.

But the lifeless monotone he uses to describe his five-year ordeal betrays an inner struggle to move on from one of India's most prevalent forms of human trafficking.

"For many, the process of coming out with the truth is far more painful than actually living those years in bondage," said Loretta Jhona, a counsellor with the US-based charity International Justice Mission.

"Freedom becomes an alien concept and they constantly battle with their captivity mentality." Though India banned bonded labor in 1976, it remains widespread, with millions working in fields, brick kilns, rice mills and brothels, or as domestic workers to pay off debts.

India announced an ambitious goal last year to rescue more than 18 million bonded laborers by 2030 and to increase fivefold the compensation that is paid to them, as part of a wider drive to tackle modern slavery. Rescued workers need more psychological help to become truly free, counsellors say, as they are often too scared to admit to suffering, such as sexual abuse, for fear of retribution from their former owners.

"People are released physically but not really released from the burden of the debt, or the mental trauma they have undergone," said Umi Daniel, a migration expert at the Aide et Action International charity. Many former slaves instinctively

curl up in their beds, used to spending a couple of hours sleeping in a cramped space, Jhona told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

While survivors of sex trafficking often receive help in shelter homes, rescued bonded laborers simply return to their villages and completely shut down.

"Very often there is no talk of the years spent in bondage," said Jhona, adding that workers often find it hard to tell her of their hopes for the future. "They ask us how they can have aspirations, when even to eat or sleep they needed permission from their owners," she said.

"It is heartbreaking to see people with nil dreams and no aspirations, even for their children. They don't think a better future can exist and most refuse to talk about any of it for months."

No fear

Some rescued bonded laborers are coming together to lobby for their rights and share their stories. Rukamana Deep says he finally "felt free" when he gave a lecture at the Odisha National Law University in April, describing how his family of four were trapped in a brick kiln. Deep was able to tell his tale in detail, recounting his anger, despair and helplessness as they worked round the clock to make up to 1,000 bricks a day for 100 Indian rupees (\$1.56). "There was no fear that day," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a telephone interview from his village in the eastern Indian state of Odisha. "I just wanted to tell my story." — Reuters



In this June 17 2016 photo, an Indian tourist rides on a horse back at the Pangong lake high up in Ladakh region of India. The Chinese soldiers hurled stones while attempting to enter Ladakh region near Pangong Lake on Tuesday but were confronted by Indian soldiers, said a top police officer. — AP

CHINA, INDIA SOLDIERS HURL STONES AT ONE ANOTHER

INCIDENTS ESCALATE TENSIONS IN BORDER STANDOFF

SRINAGAR: Chinese and Indian soldiers yelled and hurled stones at one another high in the Himalayas in Indian-controlled Kashmir, Indian officials said yesterday, potentially escalating tensions between two nations already engaged in a lengthy border standoff elsewhere.

The Chinese soldiers hurled stones while attempting to enter Ladakh region near Pangong Lake on Tuesday but were confronted by Indian soldiers, said a top police officer. The officer said Indian soldiers retaliated but neither side used guns.

China did not comment directly on the reported incident, but called on India to comply with earlier agreements and help maintain peace and stability along the border. An Indian intelligence officer said the confrontation occurred after Indian soldiers intercepted a Chinese patrol that veered into Indian-held territory after apparently it lost its way due to bad weather.

The officer said that soon the soldiers began shouting at each other and later threw stones. He said some soldiers from both sides received

minor injuries. After nearly 30 minutes of facing off, the two sides retreated to their positions, he said. An Indian military officer said the skirmish was brief but violent and for the first time stones were used.

All the officers spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. Soldiers from the two countries are already locked in a bitter but non-violent standoff in Doklam, an area disputed between China and India's ally Bhutan, where New Delhi sent its soldiers in June to stop China from constructing a strategic road.

China demands that Indian troops withdraw unilaterally from the Doklam standoff before any talks can be held, while New Delhi says each side should stand down. China and India fought a border war in 1962 and much of their frontier remains unsettled despite several rounds of official-level talks.

In Beijing, foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Chinese troops sought to avoid confrontations and said India should "make tangible efforts to maintain the peace

and stability of the border areas between the two countries." "I have no knowledge of the details you mentioned, but what I can tell you is that Chinese border troops have always been committed to maintaining the peace and tranquility of the China-India border areas," Hua told reporters at a regularly scheduled news conference.

The website of New Delhi-based English weekly India Today quoted a report by the Indian military intelligence, which said the use of stones was unprecedented and appeared intended to heighten tension without using lethal weapons. The report said the worst that has happened earlier was an isolated slap or pushing between soldiers from the two sides.

India's worries over Chinese repeated border crossings into Kashmir's Ladakh region have seen a massive Indian army buildup in the cold desert in recent years. The disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir is divided between nuclear-armed India, Pakistan and China. The part held by China is contiguous to Tibet. — AP



JAKARTA: Dressed in traditional outfit, Indonesian President Joko Widodo (center), and his wife Iriana (right), share a light moment with House Speaker Osman Saptaningrat (second left), and his wife Serviati (left), as they prepare for a group photo after Widodo delivered his State of The Nation address ahead of the country's Independence Day at the parliament building in Jakarta yesterday. — AP

News

in brief

US blacklists Kashmir militant group Hizbul

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration has added a Kashmiri militant group fighting to end Indian rule in the disputed Himalayan region to several terrorism blacklists. The designation blocks any assets the group may have in US jurisdictions and bars Americans from doing business with it. The State and Treasury departments said yesterday they had designated Hizbul Mujahideen a foreign terrorist organization and also added it to list of specially designated global terrorist groups. Hizbul Mujahideen is the largest of Kashmir's militant groups. Its founder, Syed Salahuddin, was designated a terrorist by the US in June, ahead of a visit to Washington by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Salahuddin has vowed to continue fighting until India relinquishes control of Kashmir.

Militants kill police officer in Pakistan

PESHAWAR, Pakistan: Pakistani police say militants riding on motorcycles have shot and killed a junior police officer in an attack in the country's northwest, before fleeing. Local police chief Abdul Rahman says yesterday's drive-by shooting took place in the town of Bannu, which is not far away from the troubled North Waziristan tribal region. He says the slain officer was passing through a bazaar on his motorcycle when the assailants targeted him. A Taliban splinter group, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, claimed responsibility shortly after the attack. Asad Mansoor, the group's spokesman, gave no further details. Pakistan has carried out several military offensives against militants in Bannu and elsewhere in recent years but the violence has continued unabated.

INDIA HEDGES PLEDGE TO EXPEL ROHINGYA MUSLIMS AMID OUTCRY

NEW DELHI: A day after the UN chief voiced concern about Indian plans to potentially deport tens of thousands of Muslim Rohingya refugees, an Indian government official said yesterday that authorities are only working to identify those who fled persecution in neighboring Myanmar - not expel them.

An estimated 40,000 Rohingya Muslims have taken refuge in various parts of India, though fewer than 15,000 are registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Last week, India's Home Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju told lawmakers that state authorities had been asked to identify and deport illegal immigrants, including but not only Rohingyas. A ministry memo sent Aug. 8 to the states warns that immigrants are susceptible to recruitment by "terrorist" organizations and "not only infringe on the rights of Indian citizens but also pose grave security challenges."

Yesterday, a Home Ministry official said worries of Rohingya being shipped back to Myanmar were overblown, and that the government was only trying to count and identify how many refugees were in the country. Contrary to what was said in last week's memo, the official said no decisions had been made about deporting any refugees. He refused to give his name as he was not authorized to speak with media. A day earlier, the head of the United

Nations said any plan to send refugees back to a country where they face persecution was cause for alarm, according to his spokesman. "Obviously, we have our concerns about the treatment of refugees," said Farhan Haq, deputy spokesman for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. It was not immediately clear if Rohingyas who had yet to be registered with the UNHCR would receive any of the same protections. The Rohingyas face severe discrimination in Buddhist-majority Myanmar and are the targets of violence in Rakhine state, where security forces have been accused of abuses against them. They have long been denied citizenship, freedom of movement and basic rights in Myanmar.

In recent years, tens of thousands have fled either to neighboring Bangladesh, India and other countries, where they are often seen as illegal immigrants - even those who have lived there for decades. Many who have come to India have settled in areas with large Muslim populations, including the southern city of Hyderabad, the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, the capital of New Delhi and the disputed Himalayan region of Jammu.

Earlier this year, a body of traders and industrialists launched a campaign to "identify and kill" the thousands of Rohingyas settled in Hindu-dominated Jammu.

"We did issue a threat to them. But we didn't execute it, because the government of India promised action against them," said Rakesh Gupta, who heads the body. "The government said they (Rohingyas) would be deported from the state soon, and we accordingly withdrew the threat. But we will review the situation soon." Myanmar's presidential spokesman said the government had yet to receive any official notification of

planned deportations. "The Indian government had told the Myanmar ambassador about the deportation of the refugees," spokesman Zaw Htay said. "But as to the government, we have not been told directly by the Indian government, and that's why we cannot tell anything yet and the issue is still under discussion." — AP



NEW DELHI: Children of Rohingya refugees attend a temporary school run by a non-governmental organization at a camp for Rohingyas in New Delhi yesterday. — AP