

# DUTERTE PAINKILLER USE DRAWS CONCERN

**MANILA:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's admission that he used a powerful painkiller has prompted concern about his health, with lawmakers urging him yesterday to undergo a medical examination and disclose the results. Duterte on Monday revealed that he used to take fentanyl, often prescribed for cancer pain and other chronic ailments, because of a spinal injury from previous motorcycle accidents. He however said his doctor made him stop using it on learning he was "abusing the drug" by using more than the prescribed patches.

The firebrand leader has attracted controversy over his war against suspected users of illegal drugs, which has claimed thousands of lives, and his incendiary language against the United States and the United Nations. Lawmakers said Duterte's remarks revived speculation about his health, including rumors during the election campaign that he suffered from cancer - a claim Duterte repeatedly denied.

"To end this speculation, it would be better if his physician explains how the president manages the pain that he suffers," Duterte ally congressman Carlos Zarate told AFP. Zarate added that a medical bulletin would clarify the state of Duterte's health, as fentanyl became controversial after pop legend Prince died of an accidental overdose of the drug in April. Fentanyl, highly potent and addictive, is estimated to be up to 100 times stronger than morphine.

An outspoken Duterte critic, Senator Leila de Lima, supported Zarate's call. "It is not just the illness itself that we should be worried about, but also the impact or side effects that the medications he is taking may have, especially on his lucidity and ability to make decisions with a clear mind." At 71, Duterte is the oldest president of the Philippines. He has said he suffers from daily migraine and ailments including Buerger's disease, a cardiovascular illness characterized by inflammation of blood vessels usually due to smoking.

Duterte cited ill health as the reason for skipping events during summits abroad. In Cambodia last week he said he might not even finish his six-year term. Another critic, Senator Antonio Trillanes, told AFP Duterte's admission that he took more than the prescribed fentanyl dosage showed he "qualified as a drug addict". However Duterte on Saturday denied any addiction. "When there's regularity, my friend, when you take it and when there's a monkey on your back, that's addiction," he told a BBC reporter.

Doctors said fentanyl was regulated in the Philippines, with physicians needing a license from the drug agency to prescribe it. "The ones using (fentanyl) are usually people with harrowing pain or terminal diseases. Doctor monitoring manages risks of addiction," said Leo Olarte, former president of the Philippine Medical Association. "A medical bulletin is good so the public won't be rattled." — AFP

# 52 YEMEN SOLDIERS DEAD IN IS-CLAIMED BOMBING

## KERRY DISCUSSES YEMEN ON SAUDI TRIP

**ADEN/RIYADH:** A suicide bomber from the Islamic State group killed at least 52 Yemeni soldiers in Aden yesterday, the latest in a string of deadly attacks against recruits in the country's second city. Military officials and medics said dozens more were wounded in the attack that targeted a crowd of servicemen who had gathered to collect their salaries near a base in northeastern Aden. Aden health chief Abdel Nasser Sarea, in Al-Arish district, near Al-Sawlaban base. Sarea said the bomber "took advantage of the gathering and detonated his explosives among them". Images from the blast scene showed bloodstains and scattered shoes across the sandy ground.

IS claimed responsibility for the attack, saying in a statement that a "martyrdom seeker" had gotten through security checkpoints before blowing himself up. The attack comes eight days after a similar bombing at Al-Sawlaban claimed by IS killed 48 soldiers and wounded 29 others. Yemeni authorities have fought a months-long campaign against jihadists who remain active in the south and east of the impoverished Arabian peninsula country.

IS and its jihadist rival Al-Qaeda have taken advantage of a conflict between the government and Yemen's Houthi rebels, who control the capital Sanaa, to bolster their presence across much of the south. The two extremist groups have carried out a spate of attacks in Aden, Yemen's second city and headquarters of the internationally recognized government whose forces retook the port city from the Houthis last year. But Al-Qaeda has



**RIYADH:** Saudi King Salman meets US Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday. — AFP

distanced itself from the Dec 10 attack, claiming that it tends to avoid "the shedding of any Muslim blood" while focusing on fighting the "Americans and their allies."

### Kerry in kingdom

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State John Kerry met Saudi King Salman and others yesterday to discuss the war in Yemen, a visit to the kingdom that likely will be his last as America's top diplomat. Kerry's trip, ahead of the inauguration of Republican President-elect Donald Trump, comes as diplomatic ties between the two longtime allies have been strained by the Iran nuclear deal championed by Democratic President Barack Obama and other issues.

Any tensions weren't immediately visible as Kerry held meetings with the king, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef and other royalty in Riyadh, the Saudi capital. "In turbulent times, it's good to have solid friends," Kerry told journalists yesterday night. "That's why the United States' partnership with Saudi Arabia is rightly so valuable."

Kerry earlier joined diplomats from Britain, Oman and the United

Arab Emirates to speak with Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the United Nations special envoy to Yemen. The UAE is part of the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis, while Oman has served as an interlocutor for them. On Twitter, British Middle East Minister Tobias Ellwood said the meeting discussed a political process to end Yemen's war, something he described as "the only way to bring peace".

Kerry said he hoped to have parties involved "within two weeks" to agree to terms earlier set out by the UN. But he and Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir offered few specifics on how that would be accomplished, especially as the UN has proposed sidelining Saudi-backed President Abed-Rabbo Mansour Hadi and giving the rebels a share of power - concessions the kingdom strongly opposes. "You can see from the humanitarian situation, which is dire and deteriorating rapidly, that it is urgent that we try to bring this war to a close," he said. "But we also need to bring it to a close in a way that protects the security of Saudi Arabia." — Agencies

# ERDOGAN OPENS NEW TRABZONSPOR STADIUM

**ISTANBUL:** President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday opened the new 40,000-plus capacity stadium of Turkish football team Trabzonspor, the latest ambitious infrastructure project to take shape in the country. Erdogan cut the ceremonial opening ribbon alongside visiting Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani of Qatar, one of Ankara's top allies. The stadium, spectacularly located on Trabzon's Black Sea coast, is said to be the most modern in Turkey with a capacity of almost 41,500. Construction began in 2013.

Erdogan has spearheaded a drive to build new stadiums, airports, bridges and tunnels across Turkey. On Tuesday he will inaugurate the first road tunnel under the Bosphorus in Istanbul. The president admitted that the killing of 14 Turkish soldiers on Saturday in an attack blamed on Kurdish militants had cast a shadow over the opening. But he added: "The fight against terror will continue without a break and we will make our investments, bring our projects to life and reach our targets."

Trabzonspor have traditionally been the only club from outside Istanbul to challenge the domination of teams from the mega city, picking up six Turkish league titles. But the last of those titles dates back to the 1983-84 season and the club has been going through a thin period, currently only standing in 11th place in the league. Trabzonspor are also known for their fanatical fan base who frequently allege a bias in favor of the Istanbul sides and are proud to be hated by everyone else in Turkey.

Their standout player of all time was Turkish international goalkeeper Senol Gunes who played a role in winning all of its titles, managed Turkey to third place in the 2002 World Cup and is now enjoying success as manager of Besiktas in Istanbul. There were suggestions that the stadium could be named after Erdogan - who hails from the nearby Rize region - but the president confirmed the honor had gone to Gunes. "We decided to name it Senol Gunes stadium," he said, donning a scarf in the club's claret and blue colors. — AFP

# CANADIAN TOURIST AMONG 10 KILLED...

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HH the Amir also prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow his mercy on the dead, and grant the wounded speedy recovery. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Jordanian monarch.

The first attack took place when a police patrol went to check on a fire that had broken out in a house in Karak, the general security department said. "As soon as they reached the area, unknown gunmen who were inside the house opened fire on the patrol, wounding a policeman, and then fled by car," it said in a statement carried by the official Petra news agency. "Shortly afterwards, gunmen opened fire on another patrol without causing any casualties," it added.

At the same time, gunmen in the Crusader castle opened fire on the Karak police station, "wounding several policemen and passers-by" who were rushed to hospital. "Police and security forces have surrounded the castle and its vicinity and launched an operation to hunt down the gunmen," the statement said, adding that the search was still under way.

A senior security source said some people were trapped in a lower floor of the citadel when the gunmen took shelter there, but denied media reports that they were being held hostage. "There are no hostages. But some people who were on a lower floor were afraid of

leaving as the gunmen traded fire with the security forces," said the source who did not wish to be identified. He said that the gunmen were on a higher level inside the fortress.

The Jordan Tourism Board described the Karak citadel, which dates back to the 12th century and has withstood many sieges, as a "maze of stone-vaulted halls and endless passageways". The general security department statement said "five or six gunmen" were thought to be involved in the shootings. However, Prime Minister Hani Al-Malki, who was addressing parliament at the time of the shootings, said that "special forces and policemen are surrounding 10 gunmen holed up inside the Karak citadel".

It was not immediately clear who was behind the shootings, but Jordan has been hit by attacks in the past. Jordan is a leading member of the US-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group in neighboring Iraq and Syria. It has carried out air strikes targeting IS, and also hosts coalition troops on its territory. Maaz Al-Kassasbeh, a Jordanian fighter pilot, was captured by the jihadists when his plane went down in Syria in Dec 2014, and he was later burned alive in a cage. Karak is Kassasbeh's hometown.

In June, a suicide bombing claimed by IS killed seven border guards near the Syrian frontier. According to sources close to Islamists, almost 4,000 Jordanians have joined jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria, and an estimated 420 have been killed since 2011. — Agencies

# MPs CALL TO AMEND SPORTS LAWS TO END...

Continued from Page 1

The government has repeatedly charged that Kuwaitis occupying leading posts in international sports organizations conspired to cause the suspension by complaining to them. In the past few months, the government dissolved the Kuwait Olympic Committee, Kuwait Football Association and several other federations citing financial and administrative violations. A decision on whether to hold the emergency session on Wednesday or not is expected today. The government should agree to the session for it to go ahead or it can demand delaying it.

Meanwhile, a number of opposition lawmakers directly warned Prime Minister HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah over the issue of reinstating citizenships revoked by the government for political reasons and over applying increased electricity and water charges. MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf warned the prime minister that patience was running out quickly and if the government does not show the required cooperation on the issue of citizenships, the prime minister must prepare himself for a grilling. He said that all should shoulder their responsibilities, because playing with cit-

izenships is like playing with the nation, which is totally unacceptable.

MP Mohammad Hayef said the period in which citizenships were revoked has ended and the citizenships must be returned in order to strengthen the internal front. He said that tension over the revoked citizenships must be defused, "otherwise we will be compelled to grill", adding that the Kuwaiti people know that citizenships were revoked because of a political struggle and this is unjust.

MP Mohammad Al-Dallal also insisted that the government should take steps to resolve this issue, because the citizenships were revoked for political reasons. Dallal, who is the head of the legal and legislative committee, said the panel will meet next Sunday to discuss a large number of legislations including the citizenship and DNA test laws. The committee will also discuss the controversy over the election of the deputy speaker and will take the opinion of legal experts.

MP Mohammad Al-Mutair called on the government to halt the implementation of a law to raise power and water charges from next year. Mutair gave the government until May to make the required amendment, otherwise he vowed to file to grill the prime minister.

Kuwait Times

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