

International

Turkey court lifts house arrest on US consulate staff Canturk

Turkey to lose F-35 warplane if Russia arms deal goes ahead

ISTANBUL: A Turkish court yesterday lifted the house arrest of a US consulate staffer charged with terrorism offences, just days before President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is due to meet US counterpart Donald Trump, an embassy official said. Mete Canturk is one of three consulate staffers arrested for links to a group accused of an attempted coup in 2016. Canturk, a Turkish citizen, still faces trial and is barred from leaving the country, with his next hearing set for October 2. US charge d'affaires Jeffrey Hovenier welcomed the decision to release him from house arrest.

"We continue to see no evidence to support the charges brought against him and we reiterate our call for this process as well as other processes involving our unjustly detained staff to be resolved quickly, transparently and fairly," said Hovenier. Relations between Ankara and Washington have been strained over several issues, including Turkey's purchase of a Russian missile defence system and US support for a Kurdish militia in Syria. Erdogan is due to meet Trump this week on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Osaka, Japan.

A Turkish-American former NASA scientist, Serkan Golge, detained in Turkey for nearly three years on similar terrorism charges, was released in May. Another Istanbul consulate staffer, Metin Topuz, who also faces espionage charges, is due back in court this week. A third staffer, Hamza Ulucay, from the Adana consulate, has already been sentenced to 4.5 years for "aiding a terror

organization". They are suspected of links to US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen, whom Ankara blames for orchestrating the failed coup.

Russia arms deal

Meanwhile, the US envoy to NATO said yesterday that US will stop Turkish forces flying and developing its F-35 stealth jets if Ankara goes ahead with the purchase of a Russian air defense system. Washington and its allies have urged fellow NATO member Ankara not to install the S-400 system, saying that would let the technology learn how to recognize the F-35s, which are built to avoid tracking by enemy radars and heat sensors.

But Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan vowed anew yesterday to press on with the S-400 purchase despite allies' concerns. "We will hopefully start to receive the S-400 systems we purchased from Russia next month," Erdogan told members of his AK Party in parliament. "Turkey is not a country that needs to seek permission or bow to pressures. The S-400s are directly linked to our sovereignty and we will not take a step back."

Turkey has said its S-400 deal with Russia is final, exacerbating a diplomatic rift with the United States already widening over conflicting strategy in Syria, Iran sanctions and the detention of US consular staff. "Everything indicates that Russia is going to deliver the system to Turkey and that will have consequences," Kay Bailey Hutchison, the US ambassador to NATO, said in Brussels. "There will be a disassociation with the F-35 system,

we cannot have the F-35 affected or destabilized by having this Russian system in the alliance," she told reporters.

The United States says the jets, made by Lockheed Martin Corp., give NATO forces a number of technological advantages in the air, including the ability to disrupt enemy communications networks and navigation signals. Turkey produces parts of the F-35s fuselage, landing gear and cockpit displays. Hutchison said Ankara was an important partner in that production but that security concerns about Russia were paramount. "So many of us have tried to dissuade Turkey," she said.

Problems with alternatives

The United States offered Turkey the more expensive Patriot anti-missile defense system, and then with a discount, but there were issues with the US ability to deliver the Patriots quickly. Turkey also says that NATO allies have not helped it during times of heightened security concerns, and it therefore had to seek alternatives, and Russia came into the picture. Germany and the United States stationed Patriot surface-to-air missile batteries in Turkey on a temporary basis in 2013 but moved them out in 2015, citing demands on assets elsewhere.

Washington also warned Ankara that it will face US sanctions over the agreement with Moscow, a move that could deal a significant blow to Turkey's ailing economy and its defense industry. Turkey has dismissed the US warnings, saying it would take the necessary



ANKARA: Turkish President and leader of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party Recep Tayyip Erdogan makes a speech during his party's parliamentary group meeting at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara yesterday. — AFP

measures to avoid complications, and proposed to form a joint working group with Washington to assess concerns. It has said US officials have yet to respond to the offer. The Pentagon has already stopped training Turkish pilots on the jets.

Erdogan is expected to discuss the issue with US President Donald Trump at the G20 summit in Japan later this week. One senior NATO diplomat said that was probably the

last chance of finding a solution. NATO defense ministers, who meet for two days in Brussels from today, are not planning to formally raise the issue, but there could be some diplomacy in informal meetings, diplomats said. "It's not over until its over, but so far Turkey has not appeared to retract from the sale," Hutchison. "The consequences will occur, we don't feel there's a choice in that." — Agencies

Scores ill, schools closed in Malaysia due to toxic fumes

KUALA LUMPUR: Scores of people have fallen ill and hundreds of schools have been closed in Malaysia due to toxic fumes believed to have come from a chemical factory, authorities said yesterday. It was the second serious incident involving poisonous gas in Pasir Gudang district, in southern Johor state, in three months after thousands of people became sick in March when waste was dumped in a river and emitted noxious fumes.

Residents first noticed the fumes wafting across the industrial area late last week and many people, including schoolchildren, started vomiting and developing breathing difficulties. Johor chief minister Sahrudin Jamal said 75 people had so far been sent to hospital for treatment, according to official news agency Bernama.

Authorities have now ordered the closure of all 475 educational institutions in the area until Thursday, including three institutes of higher education, 111 public schools, 14 private schools and 347 kindergartens. The latest incident is not believed to be linked to the first. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad vowed to act against those responsible. "It seems like there are factories that are not very concerned about safety," he



PASIR GUDANG: Emergency personnel wearing protective suits check the air quality in Pasir Gudang yesterday, after toxic fumes were reported in the area. — AFP

said. "We have to identify those responsible for causing the pollution and take stern action against them."

Residents expressed anger over the latest toxic leak. "This is also affecting our livelihood as many people are shying away from buying food in this area," Normah Ahmad, a 63-year-

old trader, told The Star newspaper. "I hope the authorities will take this seriously." It was not clear what had caused the latest incident. Sahrudin said authorities were investigating 30 chemical factories in the area. After the March incident, three men were arrested and charged over dumping waste. — AFP



COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan Special Forces soldiers perform as they demonstrate their skills at Maduroya Special Forces training camp, some 314 km east of Colombo. — AFP

Sri Lankan police overturn council ban on Muslims

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's police yesterday stepped in to prevent a local council from banning Muslim traders from a weekly fair in another backlash from the devastating Easter attacks blamed on Islamic extremists. The local government body had ordered minority Muslims not to participate in the farmer's market in the town of Dankotuwa, 47 kilometers north of the capital.

"We got a court order against the Wennappuwa Pradeshiya Saba (council) because we can't allow this Islamophobia," local police Superintendent KAB Kumarapeli told AFP by telephone. He said the local council chairman representing a political party affiliated to former president Mahinda Rajapakse ordered Muslims to

stay away, saying their presence could trigger violence in the region.

The region has a high concentration of Christians who suffered the most in the April 21 suicide bombings that targeted three churches and three hotels. At least 258 people were killed and nearly 500 wounded in the attacks. However, police said there was no basis for yesterday's action by the council when communal tensions had eased and the region was returning to normality after several days of anti-Muslim riots last month.

"We have asked courts to take action against the council chairman for causing tension between communities," Kumarapeli said adding that a hearing has been scheduled for Friday. Sri Lanka has been under a state of emergency since the Easter Sunday suicide bombings blamed on a local jihadi group which pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group. At least one Muslim man was killed and hundreds of Muslim-owned businesses, homes, vehicles and mosques were destroyed in the riots last month. — AFP

Parents of Indian girl who died in US desert 'desperate' for asylum

ARIZONA: The parents of a 6-year-old migrant girl from India who died of heat stroke in an Arizona desert said they sought asylum in the United States because they were "desperate." "We wanted a safer and better life for our daughter and we made the extremely difficult decision to seek asylum here in the United States," said the girl's mother, Ms Kaur, 27, and her father, Mr Singh, 33, in a joint statement released through the US Sikh Coalition that did not give their first names.

"We trust that every parent, regardless of origin, color or creed, will understand that no mother or father ever puts their child in harm's way unless they are desperate." The girl, identified as Gurupreet Kaur, died in a remote desert area west of Lukeville, Arizona, a US border town 50 miles southwest of Tucson, after her mother left her with other Indian migrants she was traveling with to go in search of water, a medical examiner and US Border Patrol said.

The girl's death earlier this month, the second recorded fatality of a migrant child this year in Arizona's southern deserts, highlighted the danger of summer heat as a surge of migrant families, mainly from Central America, cross the US-Mexico border to seek asylum. Gurupreet's father has been in the United States since 2013 with a pending asylum application before the New York immigration court. Singh and Kaur, both Sikhs, had not seen each other since 2013, approximately six months after Gurupreet was born, according to the statement.

According to Indian media reports, the parents are from Punjab. Gurupreet's body is being flown to New York City for her funeral. An increasing number of Indian nationals are entering the United States from Mexico, according to immigration officials. Indian asylum seekers range from Sikhs claiming political persecution to lower caste "untouchables" facing death threats for marrying outside their class, according to immigration lawyers.

They are among thousands of African and Asian migrants also making the arduous journey, led by smuggling cartels. Gurupreet's mother was released from an Arizona ICE processing facility on June 18 and allowed to travel by bus to New York City, where she has a notice to appear before an immigration court. Up to May 30, the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner, which records migrant deaths in much of Arizona's southern deserts, counted 58 such fatalities, most due to heat. It recorded 127 deaths in 2018. — Reuters

Indian police arrest publisher in midnight raid

SRINAGAR: Police arrested the publisher of one of the most widely read newspapers in Indian-controlled Kashmir in a midnight raid over a decades-old case, the police and his brother said yesterday, highlighting the difficulties facing media in the region. Tension has run high in the Himalayan region since more than 40 Indian police were killed in a February suicide car bomb attack by a militant group based in Pakistan.

Muslim-majority Kashmir is at the heart of more than seven decades of hostility between nuclear archrivals India and Pakistan. Each claims it in full but rules only a part. Gulam Jeelani Qadri, 62, a journalist and the publisher of the Urdu-language newspaper Daily Afaaq, was arrested at his home in the region's main city of Srinagar, half an hour before midnight on Monday.

"It is harassment," his brother, Mohammad Morifat Qadri said. "Why is a 1993 arrest warrant executed today? And why against him only?" Qadri was released on bail after a court appearance yesterday. The case

dates from 1990, when Qadri was one of nine journalists to publish a statement by a militant group fighting against Indian rule in Kashmir. An arrest warrant for Qadri was issued in 1993, but it was never served.

Qadri had visited the police station involved in the arrest multiple times since the warrant was issued, most recently in 2017 to apply for a passport, his brother added.

Asked why Qadri was arrested at night, Srinagar police chief Haseeb Mughal told Reuters, "Police were busy during the day." The Kashmir Union of Working Journalists condemned the arrest, saying it seemed to be aimed at muzzling the press. "Qadri was attending the office on a daily basis and there was absolutely no need for carrying out a midnight raid at his residence," it said in a statement.

Journalists in Kashmir find themselves caught in the crossfire between the Indian government and militant groups battling for independence. Both sides are stepping up efforts to control the flow of information, with the situation at its worst in decades, dozens of journalists have said. India is one of the world's worst places to be a journalist, ranked 138th among 180 countries on the press freedom index of international monitor Reporters Without Borders, with conditions in Kashmir cited as a key reason. — Reuters

CONSUMER PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

RECALL INFORMATION

Mercedes-Benz Cars

Model: C Class (205)

Model year: 2019

RECALL REASON

The mounting bolts of the turbocharger oil return line and crank case ventilation line might have been interchanged on a certain vehicle range with a 4-cylinder engine produced between 12/2018 and 01/2019. Due to a too long mounting bolt, the pretension of the bolt connection might be insufficient and could lead to an oil leakage at the turbocharger oil return line.

REMEDY

To replace the mounting bolts of the turbocharger oil return line and of the crank case ventilation line as a precautionary measure. The required work will certainly be carried out free of charge.

CONTACT

Please contact Al Mulla Automobiles Co.
Phone 1-887-888 at Extension 1721, 1722, 1723, 1724, 1726
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This Recall is run pursuant to articles (42,43,44,45,46 and 47) of no. (27/2017) issuing the executive by laws of law no. (39/2014) on Consumer Protection.

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