



Delhi resists call for 'pollution lockdown'

Singapore death row man's family pleads for his life

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MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (left) sprays paint over the word 'vice' as senator Christopher 'Bong' Go amended his candidacy to run for president in the 2022 elections before the November 15 deadline at the Commission on Election in Manila. — AFP

Philippines' Duterte to run for Senate

Duterte's daughter Sara to contest for vice president

MANILA: Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday filed to contest the Senate elections next year, seeking a way to remain in politics while facing an international probe into his deadly drug war. Duterte, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a second six-year term, submitted his candidacy at the Commission on Elections office, minutes before a deadline to join the race. A lawyer submitted the paperwork on behalf of the president, according to documents seen by AFP, quelling speculation he would run for vice president - the same post his daughter, Sara, is contesting.

Duterte, 76, had previously said he would run for the country's second-highest office, before changing his mind and announcing plans last month to retire from politics - which was met with deep scepticism among analysts. Duterte made a similar declaration in September 2015, saying he "will retire from public life for good", only to announce a presidential bid two

months later. University of the Philippines political science professor Jean Franco said Duterte was running for the Senate because he was "scared of the lawsuits and the ICC".

International Criminal Court judges authorised a full-blown investigation into Duterte's anti-narcotics campaign in September, saying it resembled an illegitimate and systematic attack on civilians. Rights groups estimate the drug war has killed tens of thousands of people. As a senator, Duterte would be shielded from arrest for crimes carrying a jail sentence of "not more than six years" while the Congress was in session, Franco said, citing the country's Constitution.



President seeks a way to remain in politics

She added Duterte also wanted to "have bargaining power in the next administration". Carlos Conde, Human Rights Watch senior researcher for the Philippines, told AFP Duterte was "clearly scared" and "wants to cover all the bases" to ensure he would be protected from prosecution. "Even with his daughter running for vice president and his trusted aide Bong Go running for president - those are apparently not assurance enough that he can attain his objective after

his term ends," Conde said. Sara Duterte had been widely expected to seek the presidency in a bid to succeed her father, and potentially protect him from criminal charges in the Philippines and from the ICC investigators. But on Saturday she filed for the vice presidential race and that appeared unchanged by 5:00 pm deadline. Her tilt for the second-highest office was immediately endorsed by the party of presidential front runner Ferdinand Marcos Jr, the son and namesake of the former dictator, to be his running mate in the poll.

Sara's decision to run for vice president leaves Marco Jr in a strong position in the presidential race. The elder Duterte has been an ally of the Marcos family. Twelve Senate seats will be up for grabs on May 9 when the election is due to be held. Duterte is not the first president in the Philippines to seek to stay in politics, said Mark Thompson, director of the Southeast Asia Research Centre at the City University of Hong Kong. "Given the one-term limit (as president) it's an opportunity to be in the national spotlight," he added. — AFP

Four held over Liverpool's taxi 'terrorist' blast

LIVERPOOL: Police in northwest England yesterday said they were treating a deadly blast outside a hospital in Liverpool as a "terrorist incident" involving a homemade bomb that was reportedly foiled by a quick-thinking taxi driver. Russ Jackson, in charge of counter-terrorism policing in the region, said the motivation for Sunday's blast in a taxi was unclear.

But he said the improvised explosive device, which ignited in the cab, turning it into a fireball, was "built by the passenger" who died. The explosion outside the Liverpool Women's Hospital came just minutes before a Remembrance Sunday service at nearby Liverpool Cathedral. That has prompted speculation the event was the intended target. Jackson told a news conference: "We cannot at this time draw any connection with this but it is a line of inquiry, which we are pursuing."

"Although the motivation for this incident is yet to be understood, given all the circumstances, it has been declared a terrorist incident." Three men aged 21, 26 and 29 were arrested under the Terrorism Act soon after the explosion in the nearby Kensington area of the city and were taken for questioning. A fourth man, aged 20, was detained earlier yesterday, Jackson said, adding that "significant items" had been found at a second address in Sefton Park, near Kensington.

The blast and fireball sent thick smoke into the air just seconds before Britain fell silent in tribute to its

war dead and military veterans at 1100 GMT. There was immediate praise for the taxi driver, who reportedly locked the passenger - a man - inside the cab after growing suspicious about his intentions.

The passenger had wanted to go to the annual service at Liverpool's Anglican cathedral, according to UK media quoting investigators and friends of the cabbie. But road closures forced the taxi to detour and they ended up at the nearby hospital, where the bomb went off just after the driver had escaped, the Daily Mail reported. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said moments before the news conference that it would be premature to comment in detail about the incident, with the investigation ongoing.

"But it does look as though the taxi driver in question did behave with incredible presence of mind and bravery," he told reporters in London. Liverpool Mayor Joanne Anderson said: "The taxi driver, in his heroic efforts, has managed to divert what could have been an absolutely awful disaster at the hospital. "We knew that the taxi driver had stood out and locked the doors, we knew that early on," she told BBC radio, while also warning against further speculation.

Jackson gave few details but said the taxi driver picked up the passenger from the Kensington area and was asked to be taken to the hospital. "As the taxi approached the drop-off point at the hospital, an explosion occurred from within the car. This quickly engulfed it in flames," he added. "Remarkably, the taxi driver escaped from the cab. He's been treated for his injuries that he sustained and he's now been released from hospital."

2,000 at cathedral

Some 2,000 people attended the religious service of remembrance, one of the biggest outside London, according to the Liverpool Echo newspaper. The



LIVERPOOL: Police forensic officers work outside the Women's Hospital in Liverpool yesterday - the scene of yesterday's taxi explosion. — AFP

event concluded with a military parade on the closed roads outside the cathedral. Senior Conservative politician Oliver Dowden said the driver's actions contrasted with "the cowardice of terrorist attacks".

"Clearly we'll have to see exactly what happened there," the ruling party's co-chairman told Sky News, stressing reports of the driver's response had to be confirmed. "But if that is the

case, that's another example of true bravery and courage," Dowden said. The scene at the hospital remained cordoned off yesterday, as did the streets around the two properties under investigation, where forensic officers in white suits were seen. The domestic intelligence service MI5 is also assisting in the investigation, according to The Guardian newspaper and BBC. — AFP