

Taliban reject rape, murder claims of freed Canadian hostage

KABUL, OCT 15 /-- The Taliban today rejected claims by freed Canadian hostage Joshua Boyle that his kidnappers had killed his child and raped his wife during the family's captivity, saying the woman had a "natural miscarriage". Boyle and his American wife Caitlan Coleman were seized by the Taliban while hiking in Afghanistan in 2012, and then turned over to the group's affiliated militant Haqqani network in Pakistan. The couple and their three children born in captivity were freed Wednesday in a Pakistani military operation triggered by US intelligence and are now back in Canada. After landing in Toronto on Friday Boyle accused his captors of killing his baby daughter and raping his wife - accusations which the Taliban said were "fake".

In a statement read on his arrival Boyle condemned the Haqqani network's "stupidity and evil of authorising the murder of my infant daughter" in "retaliation for my repeated refusal to accept an offer that the miscreant of the Haqqani network had made to me, and the stupidity and evil of the subsequent rape of my wife".

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said

Boyle and Coleman were never separated during their captivity, "precisely due to the fact that the mujahideen did not want to incite any suspicion", but he admitted a baby had died. "During a period of detention an incident did take place when the woman became ill. The area was remote, no doctors were present and due to that was two years later the woman had a natural miscarriage of a girl," Mujahid said in a statement.

The allegations floating around in the media have nothing to do with the reality because the said people are now in the hands of our enemy," the Pakistani shadowy military official said.

In an unusual move, the country's Supreme Court (SC) said yesterday the apex court judges earlier this month decided not to sit in the bench of Sinha over 11 "grave" charges brought against his notice against him by the President. The Supreme Court issued a statement as Sinha overnight left for Australia, saying he was "embarrassed" over the controversy surrounding his July ruling. He also denied claims by the government that he was "pregnant" (as claimed by the government) and I am not fleeing either. Sinha said while leaving, adding that his departure was "temporary". "What he (Sinha) said (about his departure) is a lie," Hui said reading out Sinha's letter to the president in which he had conveyed to him about his sickness and willingness to go abroad. Asked if

B'desh's Chief Justice to face graft investigation

DHAKA, OCT 15 /-- Bangladesh's first Hindu Chief Justice S K Sinha will face a probe for "grave" graft charges and moral lapses, the Law Minister said today, a day after he was accused of money laundering following his departure to Australia. Minister Anisul Huq said the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will investigate "almost all of the allegations" levelled against Sinha by the country's president Abdul Hamid. "Nobody is above the law," Huq told reporters after the apex court issued the statement, sparking media uproar. He, however, said "it is the prerogative of the President to take (the subsequent) actions if the charges are proved". The government's row with the judiciary sparked in July this year when the apex court delivered a verdict declaring void 16th constitutional amendment, scrapping parliament's authority over impeaching Supreme Court judges.

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Sinha could resume office on return after the one-month leave, Huq answered in negative, saying "he does not have the scope to resume office until the disposal of the allegations".

Huq, however, said since the Chief Justice's office is an "institution" nothing would be done in haste and all steps would be taken in adherence to the law of the land. The Supreme Court statement said President Hamid on September 30 had invited all the five apex court judges to Bangladesh presidential palace barring the Chief Justice and held a long discussion. "The honourable president handed over to them the evidence of 11 specific allegations against Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha," it said, adding that it included some grave charges like money laundering, financial irregularities, corruption and moral lapses. The five judges, it said, then met the Chief Justice at his official residence on the same day and raised the matter seeking his explanation. "But despite long discussion the five judges of Appellate Division didn't give any acceptable explanation or reply from him (Sinha) and so all of them clearly conveyed to him that until the disposal of those charges it will not be possible for them to share with him the bench to deliver justice," it read. Sinha told them that "he will resign" but he would let them know about his final decision on October 2.

(But) on October 2, 2017, without informing anything to those afore-said judges, he filed an application to the honourable president seeking one month leave and the president subsequently approved it," the statement said. The July verdict declaring void 16th constitutional amendment was hailed by lawyers as a cru-

cial step towards a secular judiciary in the Muslim-majority nation. The dispute grew in the subsequent weeks as several senior government leaders virtually attacked Sinha over his comments blasting the government for its reaction and referred to Pakistan's instance where former prime minister Nawaz Sharif was stripped of his premiership under an apex court ruling. Prime Minister Hasina accused him of defaming parliament and president and "humiliating" Bangladesh by referring to Pakistan's instance premier's removal saying "the (chief justice) should have quit (and) the most humiliating thing is the comparison with Pakistan which is intolerable". Sinha, Bangladesh's first Hindu chief justice whose tenure expires in January 2018, in his written statement said he was a "bit worried about the independence of the judiciary".

He explained that the judge who became the acting chief justice to perform the "routine" job in his absence was encouraged by the government to bring changes to the Supreme Court administration soon. Meanwhile, Bangladesh today launched a process to transfer senior officials of the Supreme Court as part of a major reshuffle in the apex court's administration. "In consultation with the Supreme Court, a process is being launched to transfer 10 of its officials, including the registrar general and the Chief Justice's private secretary," a law ministry official told PTI, preferring anonymity. He said the officials of the Supreme Court registrar's office belonged to the country's lower judiciary and could be appointed as lower court judges while the others in the list were likely to be transferred to different offices of the apex court. (PTI)

14k lone children among Rohingya refugees: B'desh



COX'S BAZAR (BANGLADESH), OCT 15 /-- Nearly 14,000 children who have lost one or both parents are among the more than half a million Rohingya refugees who crossed in Bangladesh to escape violence in Myanmar, an official said today. The UN says 536,000 mainly Rohingya refugees have arrived from Myanmar's strife-torn Rakhine state since August 25, the majority of them children. Bangladesh's social services department said 13,751 children without a parent or parents were identified in a survey of the crowded refugee camps along its border, where charities warn that a humanitarian crisis is unfolding. "The majority of them said they lost one or both parents in the violence in Rakhine," Pritam Kumar Chowdhury, a department deputy director, told AFP. "Others said they didn't know what happened to their parents, and they came to Bangladesh with relatives."

The UN has described the violence in Rakhine as a textbook case of ethnic cleansing, with displaced Rohingya Muslims in Bangladesh describing whole villages being razed, gang rapes and massacres. Those who survived and fled to Bangladesh include an estimated 320,000 children, one-third of whom are under five years of age. Bangladesh is building the world's largest refugee camp - sprawling three thousand acre (1,200 hectare) settlement - capable of housing 800,000 plus Rohingyas. Last month a junior minister asked that 200 acres be set aside in the camp for children's facilities. Chowdhury said an orphanage would be built for unaccompanied minors, and those without a parent would be given extra assistance and familial support. Aid agencies have warned there is a real concern that vulnerable children could be victims of abuse or trafficking. (AFP)

Typhoon Khanun to hit southern China early on Monday: Xinhua

BEIJING, OCT 15 /-- Typhoon Khanun is likely to hit southern China early on Monday with winds of up to 114 kph (70 mph), China's meteorological agency said, as authorities in the financial hub of Hong Kong raised the third highest warning. The typhoon is expected to make landfall between Zhanjiang, in Guangdong province, and Wenchang, in Hainan province, the official Xinhua News Agency cited the National Meteorological Centre as saying. The agency has issued an orange alert, the second highest in China's four-tier, colour-coded alert system for severe weather, with red being the most severe followed by orange, yellow and blue. From Sunday to Monday morning, parts of Zhejiang, Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan provinces will be drenched in heavy rain, Xinhua warned.

In some areas, precipitation is expected to be up to 200 millimetres (7.8 inches), it said. In Hong Kong, some transport services were disrupted on Sunday because of strong wind. Ferries linking Hong Kong, to Macau and nearby islands, were suspended while some flights to Taiwan and mainland China were cancelled, transport authorities said. The storm comes about two months after Typhoon Hato, a maximum category 10 storm, caused havoc in Hong Kong and deaths in nearby Macau, with extensive flooding and disruption to transport. Xinhua said in Hainan, high-speed train services were suspended from early Sunday, while ferries on the Qiongzhou Strait, which connects the island province with Guangdong on the mainland, were suspended on Saturday, Xinhua said.

Pak withdraws Saeed's detention request under anti-terror law

LAHORE, OCT 15 /-- The Pakistan government today withdrew its request for extending the detention of Mumbai attack mastermind and JUD chief Hafiz Saeed under the anti-terror law. On January 31, Saeed and his four aides were detained by the Punjab government for 90 days under preventive detention under the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. They have been under house arrest since then. An official of the Home Department of Punjab government told a three-member federal judicial review board headed by Justice Ejaz Afzal Khan of the Supreme Court that the government did not require the extension of Saeed and his four accomplices' detention any more. "The provincial government does not require extension to the detention of Saeed, his aides - Abdullah Ubbid, Malik Zafar Iqbal, Abdul Rehman Abid and Qazi Kashif Hussain - under the anti-terrorism law. Therefore it requests the board to accept withdrawal of extension to detention of Jamaat-u-Dawah leaders," he said.

The board accepted the government's plea and disposed of the matter. Explaining as to why the government withdrew its application, a senior official of the Punjab government told PTI that since the government has extended the detention of Saeed and four others till October 24 under the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance 1960 it does not require to have them house-arrested under the anti-terrorism law. He said the government was to produce Saeed and others before the review board for their detention under 11 EEE (I) and 11D of Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. "But since since all five of them are detained under the public order there was no binding on the government to produce them before the review board today to seek extension to their detention," the official said. The Punjab Home Department issued an order extending the house arrest of Jamaat-u-Dawah chief Hafiz Saeed and four other JUD men for another 30 days with effect from September 28 to the public order. The review board's detention order issued on July 28 was expired on September 25. The last two extensions were made on the 'public order'. The JUD has already been declared as a foreign terrorist organisation by the United States in June 2014. The JUD chief carries a reward of USD 10 million announced by the US for his role in terror activities. (PTI)



A man fixes an air conditioning unit in a hutong alley that is decorated with Chinese national flags in an old part of Beijing as the capital prepares for the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China —REUTERS

No threat to democracy from Pak Army: Army spokesperson

ISLAMABAD, OCT 15 /-- Pakistani Army poses "no threat" to democracy in the country, a top army General said today as he cautioned the political leaders that there could be a danger to the democratic institution if feelings of the people are not met. Military spokesman Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor also defended Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa's remarks on the economy, saying the "economy and security are interlinked." "There is no threat to democracy from the Pakistan Army; [but] there could be a threat to democracy if its [democracy's] requirements are not being met," Ghafoor said. In Pakistan, there was a civilian supremacy and every decision ranging from appointment of army chief and military operations is coming from the head of the government and being implemented, he said.

Civilian supremacy is conceded who appoints army chief and naval chief... All operations are approved by civilian government. All the state institutions work within law and the final decision is taken by the head of the government," he said, amidst growing unease between the military and the civilian government. His remarks came a day after Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that Pakistan Army should re-



train from commenting on economic issues as "irresponsible" statements could tarnish the country's image globally. Iqbal's response came a day after Ghafoor told a private TV channel that, "If the economy is not bad, it is not doing so well either." The powerful army, which enjoys considerable influence over policy decisions in Pakistan, has ruled the country for much of its life since it gained independence 70 years ago. Earlier, the Army chief had said that economic stability was tied deeply to Pakistan's security concerns. Bajwa had said that national security and economy were interlinked and called for broadening tax base and bringing in fi-

nancial discipline. Reacting to Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif's statement that Pakistan was ready for joint operation with the US in destroying safe havens of the Haqqani Network if it provides evidence, Ghafoor ruled out any such possibility of joint operations with any country against militants in the country. "The joint military operations in Pakistan were out of question. There is no concept of joint operation on Pakistani soil. There was never such cooperation (in the past) and there will not be such cooperation (in future). Full stop," he said.

To a question, he said that cooperation in security matters with the US was an ongoing process. "Our cooperation with the US is ongoing and we will do everything which is in the interests of Pakistan and security cooperation (with US) is part of it," he said. Sharing details of the rescue operation to free the complete held hostage since 2012, from militants, the spokesman said that the US approached Pakistan through its ambassador in Islamabad and "we moved troops in response." He also cautioned about the social media, saying it has become a tool of new warfare and it is the responsibility of everyone to be careful about it. (PTI)

Lanka prez faces Tamil black flag protesters in north

COLOMBO, OCT 15 /-- Sri Lanka President Maithripala Sirisena today walked into a group of Tamil protesters who raised black flags demanding the release of over 160 political prisoners, during his visit to northern Jaffna city. "I met a small group of protesters with black flags and invited them to have talks with me. They said they want their demand granted first before talking to me," Sirisena said addressing a gathering on the Tamil National Day observed in Jaffna. Minority Tamil nationalist groups had warned they would raise black flags Jaffna against Sirisena's visit there while urging him to release Tamil political prisoners held since the ethnic conflict with the LTTE ended in 2009.

There are over 160 Tamil political prisoners. We have been urging for their release over the last eight years," M K Shivajilingam, a Tamil hardline politician said. Shivajilingam said they told Sirisena that if he cannot release the prisoners then who else could. "How can the president resolve the Tamil issue when he is unable to address this small issue," he said. Sirisena in his address said he was much intent on achieving national reconciliation in the country where communal harmony would be guaranteed. "Today's protest is the sign of a healthy democracy. If they try to weaken me by holding protests other forces will become stronger. I am ready to talk with anyone and resolve issues through discussions," Sirisena said. However, Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene has said the prisoners in question are not political detainees. "They are those who have been charged for serious crimes during the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) time. Their cases have to be dealt with by the court," he said. Both Tamil and international rights groups have demanded repealing of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) which gives wide powers to security forces to detain people indefinitely. Tamil groups charge that LTTE suspects are being held indefinitely under PTA without charges being framed against them in certain cases.

The government says they are in the process of reforming counter terrorism laws with a modern anti-terrorism Act which will maintain international standards. Sri Lanka faced UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolutions for alleged human rights abuses during the last phase of the brutal three-decade-long civil war against the LTTE that ended in 2009. Sri Lanka's human rights record, particularly over the impunity enjoyed by law enforcement officers, has been the subject of international condemnation. The UNHRC has demanded accountability mechanisms to probe rights abuses blamed on both the LTTE and the government. But Sri Lanka is averse to setting up of an international hybrid court with local and foreign judges to investigate alleged war crimes committed by government troops and the LTTE in the last phase of the war. According to government figures, around 20,000 people went missing during various conflicts, including the civil war, in the north and east which claimed at least 100,000 lives. (PTI)

