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NKANDLA, South Africa: Former South African president Jacob Zuma walks back to his home after addressing his supporters in front of his rural home on Sunday for the first time since he was given a 15-month sentence for contempt of court. —AFP

## Zuma refuses to surrender by deadline

### Interpol issues 'red notice' against Zuma's allies, the Guptas

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's police minister was yesterday awaiting court instructions on whether to arrest ex-president Jacob Zuma, who has been given a 15-month jail term for contempt of court. The country's top court last week convicted Zuma for contempt and ordered him to turn himself in by end of Sunday to start his sentence. If he failed to do so, the police would be told to arrest him within the following three days.

But Zuma on Friday lodged a last-ditch application to halt execution of the arrest order. The application will be heard in a high court today. "We hope that we will be getting the clarification, because when we were given the instruction there were no other legal activities taking place," Police Minister Bheki Cele told reporters yesterday. In responding documents, the investigators slammed Zuma's latest attempt to evade jail as "a continuation of a pattern of abuse by of the court process". "Courts should not entertain such abuse any longer," it said. Zuma, 79, has also pleaded with the Constitutional Court order to reconsider and rescind its decision to jail him. That challenge will be heard on July 12.

Despite a raging coronavirus pandemic with new daily infections peaking at record highs of 26,000 at the weekend, Zuma's case has pre-occupied the continent's worst-hit country. Crowds of supporters have rallied outside Zuma's rural home in recent days, defying all COVID-19 restrictions imposed by President Cyril Ramaphosa to curb the spread being fueled by the highly-contagious Delta variant.

All gatherings are banned except for funerals, but hundreds of supporters in ruling African National Congress (ANC) party regalia and traditional Zulu warriors converged outside Zuma's Nkandla home in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Without a mask and wearing a black shirt embroidered with ANC colors, Zuma addressed scores of mask-less

chanting supporters before breaking into his signature liberation struggle rendition Awlethu Mshini Wam, which translates to 'bring me my machine gun'.

#### 'Treasonous'

Police did not disperse the crowds at Nkandla and the minister said they understood that around 100 of the supporters had firearm and acted circumspectly to avoid "bloodshed" or another Marikana scenario. He was making reference to the incident in 2012 where police brutally broke up a wildcat labour strike leading to the loss of 34 lives - the worst massacre since the end of apartheid in 1994.

A Zulu elder and opposition politician Mangosuthu Buthelezi, 92, lambasted the crowds congregating in support of Zuma in the midst of a pandemic as "the greatest irresponsibility of all" adding that what was going on in Nkandla was "treasonous". "With all due respect for the sympathy people may have for Mr Zuma's plight, challenging the state and risking lives is unacceptable," said Buthelezi.

Speaking from Nkandla on Sunday night, Zuma vowed he would not hand himself to the police by the set deadline because of the pending court applications. "I'm very concerned that South Africa is fast sliding back to apartheid-type rule," he said. "I am facing a long detention without trial," he added. "Sending me to jail during the height of a pandemic, at my age, is the same as sentencing me to death."

The defiant politician has repeatedly attacked the judiciary and did not hold back from lashing out again. "I'm very concerned that South Africa is fast sliding back to apartheid-type rule," he said. "I am facing a long detention without trial," he added. "Sending me to jail during the height of a pandemic, at my age, is the same as sentencing me to death."

#### Interpol 'red notice'

Meanwhile, South African prosecutors yesterday announced a key step in their bid to extradite Indian-born brothers who were allegedly at the center of a massive web of corruption. The three Gupta brothers - Ajay, Atul and Rajesh - are at the center of a long-running probe into the embezzlement of state assets under Zuma.

In a statement, the prosecution authority's chief investigator, Hermione Cronje, said Interpol had issued a "red notice" against two of the brothers, Atul and Rajesh. Red notices are a global alert enabling law enforcers to arrest a person sought for prosecution or serving a sentence and detain them pending extradition.

The three brothers are at the center of a 2016 graft report by South Africa's anti-corruption watchdog, which claims they paid bribes in exchange for massive state contracts and influence ministerial appointments. They fled South Africa shortly after a judicial commission started in 2018 and are suspected to be in the United Arab Emirates. Last month South Africa said it was close to finalizing an extradition treaty with the UAE.

The third brother, Ajay, who is not named in the red notice, is part of a separate case, Cronje's office said. His siblings Atul and Rajesh Gupta are being sought in connection with a 25-million-rand (\$1.76 million) contract paid to a Gupta-linked company, Nulane Investments, to conduct an agricultural feasibility study, it said. The red notice also applies to Atul Gupta's wife, Chetali. In 2019, the US Treasury slapped sanctions on the Guptas, effectively freezing their assets under US jurisdiction, and forbade Americans - particularly international banks with any US operations - from transactions with them. —AFP

## 150 Algeria bathers sick after sea polluted

ALGIERS, Algeria: Nearly 150 people were hospitalized after swimming on Sunday in seawater suspected to have been polluted at Tenes in north-western Algeria, a regional official said, quoted by local media. Three beaches and a desalination plant have been closed and an investigation launched in Chlef, a locality that includes Tenes, the reports said. Local government official Lakhdar Seddas told the privately owned Echourouk TV channel that "149 people suffered nausea, fever and redness of the eyes and were taken to hospital".

Seddas said that around 50 people had since left hospital, and that polluted seawaters may have made them ill. Suspicions centered on a ship carrying livestock that had arrived recently at Tenes port, he added. The website Ennahar Online named the ship as the Tanzanian-flagged Barhom II, and said it had arrived from the southern French port of Sete. Twenty-eight divers and seven civil defense workers who were sent to investigate were also reported to have become unwell. An official statement said an environment ministry team had taken air and water samples from the port at Tenes, beaches and other locations. —AFP

## Pope Francis, 84, recovering after colon operation

ROME, Italy: Pope Francis, 84, was recovering in hospital yesterday from surgery for an inflamed large colon, a potentially painful condition that could see him bed-bound for several days. The pontiff was admitted to Rome's Gemelli hospital Sunday for a scheduled operation under general anesthetic for symptomatic diverticular stenosis of the colon. Afterwards, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said he had "reacted well to the surgery". The Vatican press office told AFP yesterday it expected to issue a fresh medical bulletin around midday (1000 GMT).

A week earlier, on the eve of the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, Francis seemed to hint at the upcoming operation, saying: "I ask you to pray for the pope, pray in a special way. The pope needs your prayers". The Argentine is likely to stay in hospital for at least five days, according

to Italian news agency ANSA. The Vatican said it could not confirm how long the stay would be.

The pontiff has already put his Wednesday general audience on hold for the summer, and has no other official appointments in his calendar until next Sunday, when he is to lead the Angelus prayer. Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi sent Francis "affectionate get well soon wishes" yesterday, as did the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University, Sheikh Ahmed el Tayyeb, who wished him "a speedy recovery".

Francis is in the same suite on the 10th floor of the Gemelli hospital used by Pope John Paul II, according to Catholic website Cruxnow.com. The late pope underwent surgery there several times, including after an attempt on his life in 1981, and for a tumor in the colon in 1992, it said. Francis's condition causes potentially painful inflammation of the diverticulum, a pocket that can form on the colon walls and which tend to multiply with age.

"Stenosis" here means an abnormal narrowing of the colon, and patients with diverticulitis may experience lower abdominal pain, fever, or rectal bleeding.

ransom in northwest and central Nigeria, but since the start of the year they have increasingly targeted schools and colleges. The attackers opened fire and overpowered security guards after storming the Bethel Baptist High School in Kaduna state in the early hours of yesterday, abducting most of the 165 pupils boarding there overnight.

"The kidnapers took away 140 students, only 25 students escaped. We still have no idea where the students were taken," Emmanuel Paul, a teacher at the school told AFP. Kaduna state police spokesman Muhammed Jalige confirmed the early yesterday morning attack, but could not give



ROME, Italy: A night view of the Policlinico A. Gemelli Hospital in Rome, where Pope Francis arrived in the early afternoon to undergo a surgery on Sunday. —AFP

The condition may be caused by high pressure within the colon or a diet low in fiber and high in red meat, according to the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons. The pontiff had arrived at the clinic in the afternoon accompanied by his driver and one close aide, and Italian media said he was in the operating room a few hours later. Born on December 17, 1936 in Argentina, Francis lost part of his right lung at the age of 21. He also suffers from a hip problem and sciatica. —AFP

details on the number of pupils taken. "Tactical police teams went after the kidnapers," he said. "We are still on the rescue mission."

Police said they had safely rescued 26 people, including a female teacher. Around 1,000 students and pupils have been abducted in Nigeria since December. Most have been released after negotiations with local officials, although some are still being held. Often, gangs target rural schools and colleges where students stay in dormitories and security is light, allowing them to easily transport large numbers of victims to forest hideouts to negotiate ransoms. —AFP

## Gunmen kidnap 140 school students in northwest Nigeria

KADUNA, Nigeria: Gunmen kidnapped 140 students from a boarding school in north-western Nigeria yesterday, a school official said, the latest in a wave of mass abductions targeting schoolchildren and students. Heavily-armed criminal gangs often attack villages to loot, steal cattle and abduct for



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