



Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon

Scot free - push for fresh vote to quit UK

GAVIN CORDON
in London

THE Scottish National Party has warned British PM Theresa May not to try to block plans for a fresh referendum on Scottish independence before Britain leaves the EU.

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's bombshell announcement yesterday overshadowed the House of Lords vote that cleared the way for the Prime Minister to start the formal Brexit process.

The move drew a furious response from Mrs May, who said that a vote would only create "more uncertainty and division".

Her comments suggest she will not allow the referendum to go ahead until after the Brexit process is complete - expected to be in early 2019.

However, SNP deputy leader Angus Robertson dismissed the idea that Westminster could seek to block a second independence vote.

"I just cannot see how a democratically elected UK government will say to a democratically elected Scottish government, which was elected on a mandate to hold a referendum ... one's not going to allow a vote," he said.

Ms Sturgeon said if Scotland was to have a "real choice" the vote should take place once the Brexit terms were known but "before it is too late to choose our own course".

She will go to the Scottish Parliament next week to seek authority to agree a "Section 30 order" - the procedure that allows legislation for an independence referendum - with the UK government, with a view to a vote in late 2018 or early 2019.

The row erupted as landmark legislation to allow the start of the Article 50 withdrawal process from the EU completed its passage through parliament without amendment.

Dilemma awaits Connor as jail sentence handed down



Sara Connor in Denpasar District Court, where she was jailed for four years

CINDY WOCKNER
in Denpasar

SARA Connor faces a dilemma - appeal against her four-year sentence and risk having it increased, or not appeal and end up serving less than three years.

The 46-year-old mother of two from Byron Bay was sentenced late on Monday, almost seven months after her arrest over the fatal assault of a police officer in Bali.

Connor and British boyfriend David Taylor were found culpable for the death of Wayan Sudarsa, whose battered body was discovered on Kuta Beach in the early hours of August 17.

His face was covered in blood and he had dozens of wounds across his chest, neck and head.

Hours before Connor heard her fate, Taylor was sentenced to six years. Both terms were less than the eight years prosecutors sought for the offence of fatal assault in company.

The sentence will include the seven months they have already served.

If they show good behaviour while in Kerobokan prison, the terms may be reduced further.

Former DJ Taylor, 34, said he would not be appealing, but what Connor or prosecutors will do next is unclear.

She now also faces a nervous wait to find out if prosecutors will lodge an appeal to have her sentence increased.

This is a high possibility. If a sentence is less than two-thirds of what prosecutors had demanded, they generally appeal as a matter of course.

Both sides now have seven days in which to lodge a notice of intention to appeal the sentence to Bali's High Court.

Poison pal appeal fails

JAKARTA: A woman jailed for killing her friend with a cyanide-laced coffee has lost a High Court appeal against her conviction, in which she criticised key evidence found in Australia.

Former Australian resident Jessica Kumala Wongso, 28, was sentenced last year to 20 years in prison for murdering Wayan Mirna Salihin, with whom she studied at a Sydney college.

Judges found Wongso, jealous of seeing her friend happily married, poured cyanide into Mirna's iced coffee at a Jakarta cafe.

In an appeal, her lawyers criticised key witness testimony gathered in Australia.

Yesterday lawyer Hidayat Bustam announced the appeal had been rejected.

Under the Indonesian system, appeals can be fraught with danger as sentences can just as easily be increased as decreased.

So if Connor appeals, she could face a much longer term or even be found guilty of murder - a charge that judges in the District Court rejected but which the High Court could reinstate.

Connor has, from the beginning, maintained she is innocent of any role in the police officer's death.

Her dilemma is that in trying to clear her name, which she is desperate to do, she runs the high risk of making things worse.

- WITH LAUREN FARROW

Indonesians regard drug trafficking as worse than murder

CINDY WOCKNER
ANALYSIS

SCHAPELLE Corby, right, got 20 years, later reduced to 15 years, for trafficking 4.1kg of marijuana into Bali.

Two of the Bali Nine were executed in 2015 and most of the rest are serving life sentences for their roles in attempting to smuggle 8kg of heroin from Bali to Australia.

Yet Brit David Taylor admitted to violently bashing an Indonesian police officer with a beer bottle, binoculars, a mobile phone and his fists and leaving him to die a lonely death on a Kuta beach and he got six years in jail.

His girlfriend Sara Connor was found guilty of playing a



role in the attack and has been jailed for four years.

So why do the sentences seem so lenient, a few years for taking a life, compared to the death penalty for drug traffickers?

The maximum sentence in Indonesia for murder which is unpremeditated is 15 years. Premeditated murder, involving complex planning, can be punishable by death.

The answer to why murders are often sentenced lighter than drugs lies partly with Indonesian society and Government attitude toward drugs.

The Indonesian Government sees drugs as a menace to society, as a scourge which is destroying the young generation who are addicts in what they say are increasing and alarming numbers. Indonesia's National Narcotics Agency,

the BNN, has recently received new weapons and instructed officers to shoot drug dealers and users who resist arrest.

Indonesia's President Joko Widodo has said that if a shoot-on-sight policy for drug dealers and traffickers was allowed he would enable the police to do so, echoing the policies of The Philippines, where thousands have been gunned down.

Beast won't be shown

KUALA LUMPUR: Walt Disney has shelved the release of its new movie *Beauty and the Beast* in mainly Muslim Malaysia, even though film censors said yesterday it had been approved with a minor cut involving a "gay moment."

The country's two main cinema chains said the movie, due to begin screening tomorrow, has been postponed indefinitely with no reason given.

Film Censorship Board chairman Abdul Halim Abdul Hamid said scenes promoting homosexuality were forbidden and the film was given a P13 rating - parental guidance for children under 13 years of age.

"We have approved it but there is a minor cut involving a gay moment," he said. "It is only one short scene but it is inappropriate because children will be watching this movie."

About-face on tapping

WASHINGTON DC: After launching an investigation into US President Donald Trump's wire-tapping allegations against his predecessor Barack Obama, the White House is now back-peddalling on a key point.

According to CNN, White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer said Mr Trump (pictured) wasn't referring to actual "wire-tapping" when he



tweeted the serious accusation, which mentioned the word wire-tapping directly.

"The President used the word wire-taps in quotes to mean, broadly, surveillance and other activities," Mr Spicer said.

Turkey tensions rising

ANKARA: Turkey has upped the ante in its ongoing diplomatic disputes, cutting off all high-level contacts with the Netherlands, as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused German Chancellor Angela Merkel of supporting terrorists.

Tensions between Turkey and other European countries are high after several countries have barred Turkish ministers from rallying expatriate voters

in advance of an April 16 constitutional referendum.

The Netherlands blocked visits by two ministers at the weekend. Turkey responded yesterday by closing its airspace to Dutch diplomats.

Mr Erdogan accused Merkel of lending support to terrorists and also accused German "state television" of backing "terrorist organisations".