

Fonseka to face court martial Afghan avalanches may have killed 70

AFP, AP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's former army chief and defeated presidential candidate Sarath Fonseka is to be court-martialled, officials said yesterday, a day after he was hauled from his office by armed troops.

Hours before his dramatic arrest, Fonseka told reporters he would face any international probe into alleged war crimes committed by Sri Lankan troops last year in the final stages of the conflict with Tamil Tiger rebels.

Fonseka was holding meetings at the offices of the opposition parties that had supported his candidacy when military police came for him on Monday night.

"They grabbed him and virtually carried him away," a spokesman for the People's Liberation Front told AFP. "There must have been over 100 soldiers."

Fonseka's wife Anoma gave a tearful press briefing Tuesday, saying her husband had been treated "like an animal".

"This is not an arrest. It is an abduc-

tion," she said. "What I want to tell the government is: 'Just be reasonable. Treat him like a human being.'"

Anoma told reporters that she has not been allowed to meet her husband or told where he is being held.

Fonseka had vowed to challenge the result of the January poll in the Supreme Court, and also said he was keen to contest parliamentary elections, which the government is expected to call within days.

His detention prompted concern from the United States, which said it could worsen divisions as the island recovers from war.

"There is a tremendous need for the government of Sri Lanka to work to overcome the fissures that exist within its society," State Department spokesman Philip Crowley told AFP.

"It has to be very cautious that any actions it takes are designed to heal the split within Sri Lankan society, not to exacerbate it," he said.

In a brief statement on its website, the defence ministry said Fonseka would be charged with "certain fraud-



PHOTO: AFP
Anoma Fonseka, the wife of former Sri Lankan army chief and presidential election candidate Sarath Fonseka, weeps at a press conference in Colombo on Tuesday, as she is worried about her husband's fate after arrest.

ulent acts and other military offences". Fonseka has been moved to an undisclosed military establishment ahead of disciplinary proceedings, a military official said.

"He will face a court martial even though he is not a serving officer," said the official, who declined to be named.

Fonseka, 59, the only four-star general in the army, quit in November after falling out with his commander-in-chief, President Mahinda Rajapakse, whom he later challenged in last month's presidential election.

Shortly after the January 26 poll, which Rajapakse won comfortably, the government accused Fonseka of plotting a coup to overthrow the president and assassinate his family members.

And earlier this month, Rajapakse sacked a dozen senior military officers described by the defence ministry as a threat to national security.

The government is also concerned about Fonseka's apparent willingness to testify before any war crimes probe relating to the defeat of the Tamil Tigers.

Afghan avalanches may have killed 70

Says minister

AP, Kabul

Officials say Afghan avalanches on a mountain pass north of Kabul may have killed up to 70 people as rescuers evacuated more than 400 injured.

Interior Minister Hanif Atmar said yesterday that rescuers have already recovered 24 bodies but fear that more than 40 others have already died. Some 2,500 people have already been rescued from their snow-blocked vehicles, he said.

Afghan and coalition forces have evacuated about 430 injured, with 180 taken by coalition helicopters to Bagram Airbase for medical treatment, the Defence Ministry said. The 250 others were taken to hospitals nearby.

The avalanches struck Monday following heavy snow in the 12,000-foot Salang Pass that links the Afghan capital Kabul with the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Avalanches roared down a mountain pass north of Afghanistan's capital, killing at least 28 people and leaving hundreds more stranded in their vehicles on snow-blocked roads, officials said Tuesday.

Another 70 people were injured and transported to hospitals as the military and police continued rescue efforts to dig out those trapped in the snow, an Afghan Defence Ministry statement said. Some 1,500 people were rescued, it said.

The avalanches struck Monday following heavy snow in the Salang Pass that links the Afghan capital Kabul with the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Suhrah Ali Safari, acting public works minister, told The Associated Press in a phone interview from Salang a strong snowstorm overnight triggered a major avalanche that covered about 2 miles (3.5 kilometres) of road.

UN calls for aid pledges for displaced Pakistanis

AFP, Islamabad

The United Nations led an appeal yesterday for millions of dollars to feed and assist more than one million people displaced by conflict in Pakistan's northwest and in border areas with Afghanistan.

The appeal focuses on funds needed to implement the Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan (PHRP) 2010, which the United Nations, international and local aid groups have drawn up with the cash-strapped Pakistan government.

"The PHRP requires 537 million dollars for assistance over the next six months to cover the most immediate humanitarian needs," UN humanitarian coordinator for Pakistan Martin

Mogwanja said.

Last year, a total of 3.1 million people were displaced from their homes in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the Afghan border, the official said.

Nearly two million people have returned home, but more people are being uprooted in the districts Bajaur, Orakzai and Mohmand, which are part of Pakistan's tribal belt on the Afghan border, he added.

"Considering that the number of IDPs (Internationally Displaced People) from Orakzai agency has risen nearly tenfold in the last two months, the emergency in Pakistan seems far from over," the official told a news conference.

Taliban inform Mehsud dead, Jamal acting successor

ANI, Karachi

The Orakzai faction of the Taliban yesterday confirmed the death of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) chief Hakimullah Mehsud, who was believed to have been killed in a US drone attack earlier last month.

According to sources, Hakimullah was critically injured in the missile hit, and was taken to Karachi from South Waziristan, however, he succumbed to his injuries near Multan.

Indian HC quashes Muslim quota

West Bengal grants 10pc quota

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, BSS, New Delhi

While a bench of the High Court of a southern Indian state Monday quashed a legislation providing four percent reservation to Muslims in education and jobs, West Bengal government granted ten percent quota for Muslims in government jobs.

The seven-member bench headed by High Court Chief Justice AR Dave said in a 5-2 majority judgment that the Andhra Pradesh Reservation in Favour of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes of Muslims Act 2007 is "religion-specific and potentially encourages religious conversion" and ruled that reservation cannot be provided on the

basis of religion.

The bench said the government is enacting the law providing for the four percent reservation for the Muslim groups was based solely on "unscientific" findings of a Commission.

Many Muslim groups in Andhra Pradesh staged protests on Tuesday, mounting pressure on the state government to press for a constitutional amendment in higher education and jobs, a day after the high court struck down reservations for the community a third time.

Blaming the state government for its failure to put up a strong case in favour of reservations, the Muslim groups wanted the government to take all necessary steps to protect their interests.

Meanwhile, the West Bengal Government on Monday accepted the Ranganath Mishra Commission report granting 10 percent reservation in government jobs for Muslims under the Backward Castes (OBC) category.

Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee told media persons in Kolkata that "ten per cent of the jobs in our government will be reserved for members of the minority community who are educationally, socially and economically backward".

The announcement by Bhattacharjee came ahead of elections to 82 municipalities in West Bengal, including Kolkata Municipal Corporation, with a few months followed by fresh polls to the state legislature next year.



PHOTO: AFP
Kashmiri women shout slogans as they take part in a protest in Srinagar on Tuesday, after the death of a 17-year-old youth in the Himalayan state. The city has witnessed a series of violent protests in the past few days, following the killing of two teenage boys, allegedly by the security forces.

Ready to talk on any issue if Naxals halt violence: Chidambaram

PTI, Kolkata

After a meeting of four Naxal-affected states, the Centre said it was ready to hold talks with the Maoists if they "halt" violence. "My appeal to all the Naxals on behalf of all the chief ministers who participated in the conference two days ago, on behalf of Naxal affected states, if you abjure violence that is if you say a halt to violence, we are not asking you to do anything more, if you halt the violence we are prepared to talk to you on any matter," Home Minister P Chidambaram said.

He was talking to reporters after a meeting of chief ministers of Naxal-affected states, which was not attended by chief ministers of Bihar and Jharkhand Nitish Kumar and Shibu Soren respectively. Kumar told reporters in Patna that he could not be away from Patna for long and yesterday is the scheduled day for the state cabinet to meet.

Soren, who had cited illness for not attending the meeting, had deputised his two deputy chief ministers. Against the backdrop of reports that Kumar kept away at the instance of Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee, Chidambaram sought to play down his absence.



PHOTO: AFP
Indian Home Minister P Chidambaram (L) addresses the media as West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee looks on after a meeting to discuss strategy to deal with Maoists and coordination among neighbouring states in Kolkata on Tuesday.

PM pulls for law abiders

FROM PAGE 1

The PM was addressing a meeting of the expatriate Bangladeshis at Bayan Palace here yesterday afternoon.

"We will not tolerate if Bangladesh labour market is affected for misdeeds by a few workers. We must take action against them," Hasina said.

She further warned that it would not be accepted if any wrongdoer feels that he will be safe in Bangladesh after committing crime in Kuwait. Those wrongdoers must face legal action at home as well.

The PM said her government carried out a special investigation into the crimes committed by some Bangladeshi workers in Kuwait in collaboration with some Kuwaitis.

"I know what misdeeds have been committed, but I will not disclose those to defame some people," she told the meeting.

Hasina clearly stated that she told the Kuwaiti government to take action against those who committed crimes.

"We want to work together with the Kuwaiti government in this respect," she said, adding that the two governments will work together so right people could come to Kuwait.

Referring to her discussion with the Kuwaiti leaders, the PM said she requested the Kuwaiti government not to send back Bangladeshi workers who are now employed in the oil-rich country.

She said steps would be taken so more workers could be recruited from Bangladesh.

The premier said the Kuwaiti government praised the Bangladeshi peacekeepers stationed in Kuwait. However, she deplored that she would have been happy if she could feel proud of all Bangladeshi workers.

Hasina said none will be

able to commit dirty work after introduction of machine-readable passport and smart card. It can't be accepted that majority workers would suffer for wrongdoings of a few.

She sought cooperation from the expatriate Bangladeshis and asked them to abide by the Kuwaiti laws and rules.

On air link between Bangladesh and Kuwait, the PM said she requested the Kuwaiti government to start direct flight to Sylhet and Chittagong and increase frequency of flight with capital Dhaka.

She said an agreement will be signed for introducing Bangladesh flight for Kuwait.

Expatriate's Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and State Minister for Environment Hassan Mahmud were present at the reception.

Rice trader shot dead

FROM PAGE 1

angry demonstrations in Babubazar and Badamtali wholesale rice markets and brought out a protest march in the city, carrying Apil's body in the afternoon. They marched from Babubazar to the National Press Club and back taking over three hours.

They declared that rice trading in Babubazar and Badamtali wholesale rice markets will be suspended today protesting the killing.

Meanwhile, Shabbagh police last afternoon arrested Khaleq, 23, with a revolver in his possession in suspicion of his involvement in the incident.

Ramna Zone Deputy Commissioner of Police Krishnapada Roy said, "Arrested Khaleq of Naria upazila in Shariatpur is a suspect in the incident, and we are trying to be sure about it."

Khaleq was arrested around 4:00pm from Fuller Road on Dhaka University campus, while two of his associates managed to flee abandoning a motorbike, said Additional Deputy Commissioner of Ramna Zone Syed Nurul Islam.

Labh Zone Deputy Commissioner Anwar Hossain told The Daily Star that Khaleq was arrested after the news of the incident in Babubazar had been rapidly phoned to all police stations in the city.

Witnesses said a gang of seven armed young men on three motorbikes took part in the fatal mugging as Apil was getting down from a rickshaw in front of his residence on the east side of the 2nd Buriganga Bridge at Babubazar around 3:30pm.

"Three men on a motorbike snatched away a bag from Apil and pumped bullets into him in front of Jewel Rice Traders while

four others on two other motorbikes were escorting the killers," said a witness Abul Bashar, an employee of Jewel Rice Traders. "The killers sped away firing shots into the air," he added.

Abul Bashar said, "We did not dare to chase them as they were firing gunshots." The perpetrators were aged somewhere between 22 and 30, he added.

Mohammad Farid, a nephew of the victim, said his uncle had gone out of the house for Malibagh Bazar around 10:00am, and was attacked when he returned to the market area after collecting money from different clients in the city.

Farid, however, could not tell how much money his uncle was carrying in the bag, or whether there was any other motive for the killing as well.

Nizam Uddin, general secretary of Badamtali-Babubazar Rice Depot Owners' Association, said protesting Apil's killing, and demanding arrest of the killers and also security for traders, they will keep rice trading suspended today in Babubazar and Badamtali rice markets.

Nizam said the amount of money looted from Apil might cross Tk 10 lakh as he used to collect Tk 10 lakh to Tk 20 lakh everyday from his clients.

Talking to The Daily Star at Shabbagh police station, arrested Khaleq claimed his two associates who managed to evade arrest are Shimul, a student of Dhaka University, and Raihan, a professional thug who operates in Manda area of the capital and often resides in a Dhaka University dorm with Shimul. Khaleq however denied any involvement in the killing.



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This assignment involves educating local and national level journalists regarding business journalism in a larger scale giving them sector specific exposure. The contracted organization is expected to arrange multiple training sessions for capacity building in different geographical locations.

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The bidder should note that they submit the bid in two separate sealed covers marked "Technical Bid" & "Financial Bid" on the face of the covers.

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Chief Executive Officer,
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