

DIFFERENT BITES

4,000 Taiwan men reported abuse by wives

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Taipei
More than 4,000 Taiwan men sought help after being abused by wives last year, the Central News Agency said yesterday.

In 2009, 4,428 men called the family abuse hot line set up by the interior ministry to seek help, after being abused by their wives, up from 1,325 in 2002, it said.
'These men suffered verbal or physical abuse from their wives. One reason is that some women earn more money than men, so they play a dominant role at home and begin to curse or beat their husbands,' the agency quoted Chang Hsiu-yuan, a ministry official in charge of domestic violence, as saying.

New age, tweet-up diplomacy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

This is instant diplomacy in the twitter age. When Bahrain's Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al Khalifa met Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor last week, a ministerial tweet-up followed. This was perhaps the first time there was real time reporting on a bilateral diplomatic meeting in India - by the participants themselves!

The two reported it to the world, just like any two avid twitter users, by photographing themselves on the camera phone. And then, it was uploaded on to twitter.

The Bahraini minister has been in regular touch with Tharoor over twitter. He had even had what he called as a 'tripartite' meeting over twitter when the Bahraini and Egyptian foreign ministers met at a cafe and then sent a friendly message to Tharoor.

Rushdie accuses AI of 'moral bankruptcy'

ANI, London

Salman Rushdie has slammed Amnesty International's association with former Guantanamo Bay detainee Moazzam Begg, by saying that the charity is suffering from "moral bankruptcy" as it "has lost the ability to distinguish right from wrong."

The Booker prize-winning author, whose plight was championed by Amnesty when he was placed under a fatwa by the Iranian regime for his novel The Satanic Verses, said the charity had done "incalculable damage" to its reputation by collaborating with Begg and his organization Cageprisoners.

"It looks very much as if Amnesty's leadership is suffering from a kind of moral bankruptcy and has lost the ability to distinguish right from wrong," The Times quoted.



US marines pass a Danish army Leopard 2A5EK tank as they clear Improvised Explosive Devices from a main route in Trikh Nawar on the North Eastern outskirts of Marjah on Sunday. Afghan police prepared to take control of a town at the centre of a US-led offensive against the Taliban, as trapped residents said they were running out of food.

Marines corner Taliban holdouts in Afghanistan

Nato reports 3 soldiers dead

AP, AFP, Marjah/ Kabul

Marines and Afghan units converged on a dangerous western quarter of the Taliban stronghold of Marjah yesterday; with Nato forces facing "determined resistance" as their assault on the southern town entered its second week.

Fighter jets, drones and attack helicopters hovered overhead, as Marine and Afghan companies moved on a 2-square-mile (5.2-sq-kilometre) area of the town where more than 40 insurgents have apparently holed up.

"They are squeezed," said Lt Col Brian Christmas, commander of 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. "It looks like they want to stay and fight but they can always drop their weapons and slip away. That's the nature of this war."

Insurgents are putting up a "determined resistance" in various parts of Marjah, though the overall offensive is "on track," Nato said Sunday, eight days after thousands of Afghan and international forces launched their largest joint operation since the Taliban regime's ouster in 2001.

Meanwhile, 3 foreign soldiers have died in Afghanistan, Nato reported Sunday, though neither was involved in a high-profile military operation against Taliban militants in southern

Afghanistan.

In brief statements, Nato's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) said both soldiers were killed on Saturday, one in the country's east and the other in the south.

Isaf did not give the nationalities of these soldiers, according to policy.

Late last week, Maj Gen Nick Carter, head of Nato forces in southern Afghanistan, said he believed it would take at least 30 days to complete securing the Nad Ali district and Marjah in Helmand province, a hub for a lucrative opium trade that produces militants.

The Marjah operation is a major test of a new Nato strategy that stresses protecting civilians over routing insurgents as quickly as possible. It's also the first major ground operation since President Barack Obama ordered 30,000 reinforcements to Afghanistan to curb the rise of the Taliban.

Once the town is secure, Nato plans to rush in a civilian Afghan administration, restore public services and pour in aid to try to win the loyalty of the population and prevent the Taliban from returning.

Twelve Nato troops and one Afghan soldier have died so far in the offensive. Senior Marine officers say intelligence reports suggest more than 120 insurgents have died.

CIA wants Pakistan to hand over Baradar to Afghanistan

ANI, Washington

The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) wants Pakistan to extradite the Taliban's second-in-command Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who was nabbed earlier this month in Karachi, to an American prison near Kabul for further interrogation.

Senior US officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, told media persons that Washington is not satisfied with Baradar's interrogation and wants to take charge.

"CIA Director Leon Panetta and other officials have proposed moving Mullah Baradar to the US-run prison at the Bagram Air Base north of Kabul," The Dawn quoted a report in the US media, as saying.

"Mullah Baradar is an Afghan, so it's only logical that his home country might be considered as an ultimate destination," said a US official.

The reports came just hours after Pakistan Interior Minister Rehman Malik said that

Baradar would not be handed over the US in any case.

Malik said Pakistani agencies would first investigate Baradar's links with the banned terrorist network, and could hand him over to Afghanistan if the need arises but not to the US.

"First we will see whether they have violated any law. If they have done it, then the law will take its own course against them, but at the most if they have not done anything, then they will go back to the country of origin, not to the US," Malik said.

According to some reports the CIA was denied direct access to Mullah Baradar for about two weeks after his arrest, and had since worked alongside Pakistani interrogators who continued to control the questioning.

It is also believed that Mullah Baradar had longstanding ties Pakistan's intelligence agencies, and this is the prime reason why Pakistan is reluctant to hand over the Taliban deputy to the US.

Militants blow up 2 Pak boys' schools

AFP, Islamabad

Militants blew up two boys' schools in northwest Pakistan yesterday, the latest in a wave of attacks by Islamist extremists targeting educational institutions, local officials said.

No one was hurt in the pre-dawn attacks on the two schools located in the Mohmand tribal region near the Afghan border.

Local administration official Maqsood Khan blamed the attack on Taliban militants avenging ongoing military offensives against Islamist insurgents across the northwest.

Another tribal administration official, Roshan Khan, said the bomb attacks completely destroyed the two schools.

UN returns empty handed from Myanmar

AFP, Bangkok

A visit by a UN rights envoy to Myanmar has yielded little progress ahead of elections, experts say, in the latest setback for the world body's efforts in the military-ruled nation.

Making his third trip to Myanmar, Tomas Ojea Quintana had his request to meet opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi turned down and said he was given no information about the polls promised for some time this year.

Myanmar authorities also continued to lock up dissidents during his stay, gave no sign that it would free Suu Kyi, and even denied there were any "prisoners of conscience" in the country.

"It clearly hasn't gone

well," said Benjamin Zawacki, Myanmar expert for the London-based rights group Amnesty International.

"Despite the fact that the government has claimed that cooperation with the UN is a cornerstone of its foreign policy, it's quite clear it's not."

The UN's efforts to foster democratic reform in Myanmar have met with little apparent success, with secretary general Ban Ki-moon also being refused access to Suu Kyi, the world's only Nobel Peace laureate still in detention.

Quintana, who was appointed in 2008, left Myanmar after a five-day visit on Friday with a parting shot for the regime, saying that he "deeply regretted" its denial of a meeting with Suu Kyi.

Pak intelligence warns of terror attack on NWFP assembly

ANI, Peshawar

Pakistani intelligence agencies have warned about a possible terror strike on the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) assembly building.

According to the sources, the intelligence wing of the special branch has warned the concerned authorities that militants may target the assembly building during the ongoing session.

Security has been beefed up following the warning, and elaborate arrangements have been made to thwart the nefarious aims of the terrorists, The Daily Times reports.

The warning comes hours after suicide bombers struck two police stations in Balakot and Mansehra.

Water Disputes with India Pakistan shelve plan of moving to World Bank

ANI, Islamabad

Pakistan has shelved its plans of moving to the World Bank (WB) for resolving the long pending water distribution issues with India, as the two countries are preparing themselves for foreign secretary-level talks later this month.

According to sources, Pakistan, which had earlier threatened to take the Kishanganga dam issue to the World Bank, has now postponed the move and is waiting for the outcome of the foreign secretary-level talks, which is scheduled to take place on February 25 in New Delhi.

Officials of Pakistani and Indian water authorities may hold a meeting in March to discuss various issues pertaining to water distribution and building of dams.

"We have invited the Indian team in March in Islamabad to review the overall water issues, controversies and dispatching of an inspection team to Indus Rivers Indian sites," The News quoted sources, as saying.

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), inked between India and Pakistan in 1960, provides appointment of a neutral expert by the World Bank as a last option to resolve water related issues between both countries.

Pakistan has been blaming India for an unsporting attitude during bilateral talks, which were initiated to resolve the impending water dispute.

Pakistan has been opposing the construction of the Kishanganga hydropower project on Ganga River in Kashmir, which is called Neelum upon entering Pakistan. Pakistan has said that the diversion of the waters of the Neelum is not allowed under the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, and it will face a 27 per cent water deficit, when the project gets completed.

Lanka to set up villages for ex-rebels

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Colombo

The Sri Lankan government said Saturday it will set up community villages to rehabilitate former Tamil Tiger rebels.

Over 11,000 former cadres of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are now sheltered in 18 state-run rehabilitation centres. The majority of them surrendered to the military during the last stages of the battle in May last year and the rest were arrested.

The newly appointed commissioner general of rehabilitation, Brigadier Sudantha Ranasinghe, told reporters that the proposal to establish community villages is in the process of administrative clearance before being sent for final approval.

"Initially we want to shelter 200 families of those under rehabilitation. We have already selected the location with 200 houses," Ranasinghe said, adding that there are over 3,000 married members under rehabilitation.



A young girl of Human Rights Network carries chains and a pole during a protest in Karachi on Sunday, in support of US-detained Pakistani woman Aafia Siddiqui. Siddiqui, 37, a neuroscientist who caught the attention of human rights groups after she disappeared for five years, was found guilty of trying to kill American servicemen in Afghanistan by a jury in a federal court.



Nepalese teenager Khagendra Thapa Magar (front) gestures to journalists during a press conference in Kathmandu on Sunday. Magar, 18, who weighs around 4.5 kilogram's and is 56 cm tall, left for a tour of Europe February 21 to campaign for putting his name in the Guinness World Records as the world's shortest person.

Concern over

FROM PAGE 1 He was talking to reporters at his Uttara residence in Dhaka yesterday.

He said army pullout had seriously affected the coexistence of two communities in the hill area.

The BNP leader said security of Bangalee and indigenous people and their properties are now at stake because of the feud. "The government will have to take the responsibility and a quick response from the authorities concerned is needed to ensure the security of inhabitants in the hill area."

Terminating the CHT a sensitive area, Fakhru said BNP had been trying to convince the government not to withdraw the army from the places without having discussions first with parties concerned.

"The decision of army pullout was a blunder. We had expressed our concern at that time saying army withdrawal might invite catastrophic consequences," he said and demanded re-evaluation of the CHT Peace Treaty. Workers Party of

Bangladesh and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) in separate statements expressed concern over the recent violence in the hill area.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, also a lawmaker, and General Secretary Anisur Rahman Mallik in a joint statement said the arson incident at Baghaichhari was the part of a conspiracy to foil the CHT treaty and to create unrest in the hill districts.

"It is unfortunate that the army encourage and to some extent interfere in such incident in hill areas," said the statement.

It added, "It is alleged that army interfered in the Baghaichhari incident."

They slammed the killings of five hill people and demanded exemplary punishment of the persons involved.

Signed by Mohammad Nur Khan, ASK in the statement demanded fair investigation into the matter and trial of the persons responsible for the unrest. It also demanded compensation for the victims of the Baghaichhari clash.

BDR won't get magistracy power

FROM PAGE 1 once the fresh draft is submitted," he added.

BDR Director General Md Mainul Islam told The Daily Star that they wanted to incorporate soldiers from the reserve force of the army as they have the required training. "Recruitment of fresh soldiers and giving them training are a lengthy process," he observed.

A vacuum has been created in the BDR as several thousand soldiers are now in custody and facing trial in connection with the February 25-26 mutiny last year.

On delegating magistracy power to BDR, the draft said, "To combat cross-border offences, the draft law keeps a provision under which the government can issue a gazette notification empowering an additional director-level official to punish offenders."

It added the mobile courts would have the power to award highest two years of imprisonment or fine or both.

BDR sources say the new draft would be sent to the home ministry soon. It would recommend creation of

reserve force in the BDR to recall the recently retired soldiers in an emergency situation like mutiny and sudden crisis on the border in the future.

"We would not have faced the severe manpower crisis in BDR after the mutiny had there been a reserve force," the BDR DG said.

In the army, soldiers can be recalled, if necessary, from the list of reserve force within three to five years of retirement, he added.

The draft titled "Border Guard Bangladesh Law, 2009" would slap a total ban on giving any opinion or disclosing anything to the media and bringing departmental civilian officials and staff under the purview of the new law.

Under the Rifles Order 1972, the civilian guard members cannot be tried even if they get involved in grievous offences.

It would also propose creating three different types of border guard courts, empowering one named Special Border Guard Court to award capital punishment for mutiny or provoking a mutiny or similar grievous

offences. The DG will no longer conduct trials as he is now doing. He will rather constitute courts comprised of senior officers. As per the present laws, the DG presides over trial at the court, which is not possible for the chief of a force.

The Special Border Guard Court will be constituted on orders of the DG or regional commander and comprise three to five officers. A law official will be a member of the court, which will conduct trial of all BDR members and can award capital punishment.

The two other courts are Special Summary Border Guard and Summary Border Guard Court, which will have the power to try different types of offences and give punishment.

The existing law allows the authorities to jail any soldiers for highest seven years for involvement in mutiny. The convicted soldiers may also be fined and dismissed from job. But the force cannot try grievous offences like murder as the existing law does not empower its court to hand

down capital punishment.

As a result, the force is currently conducting the trial of mutiny by its own court, while the accused of killing, looting, arson and other grievous offences will be tried in civil courts.

The draft proposes creating regional headquarters on top of sector headquarters to make the force's command base stronger and dissolve the post of deputy assistant director.

The new draft would be prepared keeping in mind the rights provisions in international laws and evaluating the Bangladesh Army Act, 1952, the Air Force Act, 1953, the Navy Ordinance, 1961, the Armed Police Battalion Ordinance, 1979, the Coastguard Act, 1994 and the Indian Border Security Force Act, 1968.

There are 16 sections and 147 provisions in the proposed new law.

"The new law will have the authority to dismiss or send an official on forced retirement with or without issuing show-cause notices," says a BDR officer asking not to be named.