

WikiLeaks dissidents to open OpenLeaks

AFP, Stockholm

Former WikiLeaks supporters at odds with founder Julian Assange will shortly launch OpenLeaks, a rival project aiming to get secret documents directly to media, one of them said Friday.

"I can confirm that we will be operating under the name 'OpenLeaks,'" former Icelandic WikiLeaks member Herbert Snorrason told AFP.

Unlike WikiLeaks, OpenLeaks will not publish leaked documents directly online but instead make links available to partner media.

"This is not a single website that would gather material and publish it but rather a system provider to which people can upload information anonymously," Snorrason said.

The domain name openleaks.org on Friday redirected to a blank page with a circular arrow logo and the mention "Coming soon!"

"OpenLeaks is a technology project that is aiming to be a service provider for third parties that want to be able to accept material from anonymous sources," Daniel Domscheit-Berg, WikiLeaks' former spokesman in Germany, added in a Swedish public television (SVT) documentary obtained by AFP.

"We will be partnering up with organisations that will have a receiving 'drop box' on their sites operated by them. We will not be receiving nor distributing information directly," Snorrason, a 25 year old history student, said.

The Iclander, who quit WikiLeaks after a public feud with Assange, had already in November told AFP about a rival project.

"If 'Newspaper X' is one of our partners, that paper will

have a 'Send us anonymous information' link on their site. People can then click on that link and forward their information without the risk of the information being traced back to them," he explained.

"If 'Newspaper X' does not want to leak the information they have received, a system will be in place for other partner media to review the information and share it if they choose to do so," he added.

In SVT's "WikiRebels -- The Documentary" to be broadcast Sunday, Daniel Domscheit-Berg and Herbert Snorrason explain how they quit WikiLeaks because of disagreements with Assange on how to run the site and because of personal conflict with the 39-year-old Australian.

"If you preach transparency to everyone else, you have to be transparent yourself. You have to fulfil the same standards you expect of others," Domscheit-Berg says.

"Eventually it ended with me arguing with Julian about basically his dictatorial behavior, which ended with Julian saying to me that if I had problems with him I could just piss off, I quote," says Snorrason.

Founded in 2006, whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks emerged into the media spotlight this year with major document leaks on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It unleashed a major diplomatic storm this month by releasing thousands of secret US embassy cables.

One of the WikiLeaks founders, former hacker Julian Assange, is now in jail in London pending a hearing on extradition to Sweden, where he is wanted for questioning over sexual assault allegations.



Locals at Gabura in Satkhira rebuild an embankment ravaged by Aila last year that caused woes for millions.

FILE PHOTO

Erratum

In the photo caption accompanying the story *Testing time for Forests*, which was published on the front page yesterday, we mistakenly cited 'phayre's leaf monkey' as 'hoolock gibbons' of Lawachhara Forest.

SC goes digital

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The judiciary and reduce sufferings of the litigants.

Preferring anonymity, an SC official said, the apex court requested the law ministry to allocate Tk5 crore for upgrading the site with details of cases at lower courts, and the ministry responded positively.

The CJ also held meetings with lower court judges and directed them to dispose of cases in a short time.

On October 30, he instructed judicial magistrates to dispose of all cases filed before 2005 holding quick hearings on a priority basis.

Some 16 lakh cases now remain pending with lower courts across the country.

According to SC sources, over 7,000 cases await trial at the Appellate Division, and 3,53,000 at the High Court Division.

Taking into account the pressure on the HC Division, Justice Khairul directed the SC registrar to keep the registration section open on Saturday.

Additional Attorney General MK Rahman termed CJ's initiatives unique, and said they would be good for the judiciary.

The next chief justice should continue the reform work, he added. Justice Khairul will retire on May 18 next year.

About upgrading the SC website, he said it will help keep the court records updated and ensure people's easy access to them.

SC and HC judges and their personal assistants have recently been equipped with over 300 computers.

Prof Yunus

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gulty until it is proven," said Nobel laureate Yunus at the capital's Shahjalal International Airport upon his arrival from France in the morning.

He said the issue that gave rise to the allegations against the bank was resolved years back. "But since the matter was brought up again, it seems that the Norwegian minister absolved the institution from the allegations recently."

The country's media could have verified the issue before publishing the report of a Danish journalist aired by a Norwegian television, Yunus said.

"We have to be careful lest we punish the nation through punishing an institution," he noted. People from all over the world saw the reports published in the Bangladesh dailies.

Referring to the reports, he said, "We have caused irreparable damage to the nation."

The journalists of the country relied on the Danish journalist and took his report as irrefutable truth.

"Could we not probe the matter on our own?" he questioned.

Grameen Bank officials said Prof Yunus will hold a formal press conference today.

A documentary, "Fanget i Mikrogløed" or "Caught in Micro debt" aired on the National Norwegian Television, NRK, brought allegations that Grameen Bank had transferred about \$100 million it received from donors to Grameen Kalyan in 1996 and got back the money as loan in breach of the agreement with the donors.

This led to a spat between the Norwegian government and Grameen Bank.

On Wednesday, Erik Solheim, Norwegian minister for environment and international development, clarified that Grameen Bank had not embezzled the fund or used the money for unintended purposes.

Green fund

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Climate Fund" to administer assistance to poor nations, which many experts say are already suffering more floods and drought as temperatures steadily mount.

The fund will be steered by a board of 24 members chosen evenly from developed and developing nations. For the first three years, the new international organisation would be overseen by the World Bank -- a point of controversy for some activists who distrust the Washington-based lender.

The European Union, Japan and the United States have led pledges of 30 billion dollars in immediate assistance, as well 100 billion dollars a year to start by 2020.

A broader issue is just how wealthy nations would raise the money, with few governments enthusiastic to pledge more money in tough economic times. Some envoys advocated setting taxes on airplane and shipping fuel.

The agreement called for "urgent action" to cap temperature rises at no more than two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels and asks for a study on strengthening the commitment to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The proposal says it "recognises that deep cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions are required according to science."

The accord at Copenhagen included similar language, but it was never approved by the full UN-led talks.

The Cancun deal also agreed on ways forward on fighting deforestation, a leading cause of climate change, and on monitoring nations' climate pledges.

But the talks were stuck for days over the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, the landmark treaty whose obligations on wealthy countries to cut emissions run out at the end of 2012.

With a new treaty looking distant, the European Union led calls for a new round of commitments under Kyoto.

Japan opposed a new Kyoto round, pointing out that the treaty named after its ancient capital covers only 30 percent of global emissions because top polluters including China and the United States are not part of it.

In a compromise embraced by Japan, the Cancun agreement called for work on a second period of the Kyoto Protocol "to ensure that there is no gap" but did not oblige countries to be part of the new round.

Japan faced intense pressure to compromise, with British Prime Minister David Cameron telephoning his counterpart Naoto Kan, diplomats said.

The Kyoto Protocol makes no demands on emerging economies to curb emissions. China has refused to be subjected to a treaty, although India in a surprise shift in Cancun said it would at least consider binding action in the future.

Environmentalists were mostly positive. Tim Gore of anti-poverty movement Oxfam welcomed the Green Climate Fund and said the draft Cancun accord "breathes new life" into UN-led talks on climate change.

Taskforce

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Inland Water Transport Authority, shipping ministry, forest and environment ministry, law ministry and water resources ministry for drafting the act.

The committee has completed the draft recently, and the shipping ministry has sent it to all the ministries concerned for recommendations.

"We will scrutinise the draft and the recommendations of different ministries. If the draft is approved, it will be sent to the law ministry for vetting and later to the cabinet for final approval," said a taskforce member preferring anonymity.

According to the draft, the commission will have a chairman and five members.

TIB report

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report is incomplete. TIB should be more cautious while conducting surveys on service oriented organisations like the police, public administration and political parties," he said.

He also expressed doubt whether the survey was appropriate, saying only 1,049 people were interviewed to evaluate a large institution like the police.

The report did not even mention any of the achievements of the force, he added.

According to the police chief, though some police personnel are not free from corruption, greed and other human shortcomings, the whole organisation cannot be blamed for a few.

He also mentioned that it might have an adverse impact on the organisation, though the police are capable of coping with it by maintaining the chain of command strictly.

The TIB on Thursday revealed its public opinion survey report showing police as the most corrupt institution in the country.

Speakers at the meeting said apart from assisting helpless ailing police personnel, RPOWAB is also extending its services to the juveniles who got involved in crimes.

In 1990 the association launched Assistance Plan for Juvenile Delinquents (APJD) project to ensure constitutional rights of the juveniles. Child Vision Bangladesh and Human Development Foundation provided financial support to the project.

The association also introduced SM Ahsan Memorial Award. Each year two police officials have been awarded for their outstanding performance in community policing and social work.

AKM Mosharrar Hossain Miazi, additional superintendent of police (Pabna), and Mohammad Rafiqullah, officer-in-charge of Chandraghona Police Station, were awarded with the prize at the meeting.

Speed up trial

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Quader Chowdhury, former Jamar chief Gulam Azam and other identified war criminals by December 16.

"We had to sacrifice our blood to achieve independence, and there was a spirit behind the sacrifice," said SCF Chairman Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandaker at the opening.

"But unfortunately the objectives of the liberation war have yet to be established though the present government is trying hard to do so," noted Khandaker, also the planning minister.

He said Pakistani authorities had promised to try the 195 soldiers charged with war crimes, but they did not. "They are suffering now for this, as when a sense of impunity grows in a society, rule of law can never be established there," added the deputy commander-in-chief of the liberation force.

Eminent educationist Prof Anisuzzaman said all should urge the government from a united platform to gear up the trial. It is our national failure that we could not try the war criminals in the last 40 years, he observed.

Renowned journalist ABM Musa said there are some ambiguities in the trial process. He said it is unclear whether it is the trial of war crimes, crime against humanity or mass killing.

He demanded that the Pakistani war criminals should also be tried.

Sector commanders Lt Col (ret'd) Abu Osman Chowdhury, Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shafulullah, Maj Gen (ret'd) CR Dutta, among others, spoke at the convention attended by around 700 delegates.

TV, Net links

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subterranean duct to house the cables, is already in place and waiting for the cable operators and ISPs to get connected, power distribution officials said.

"The deadline for them to move their cables underground has already been extended three times over the last few months. But this is the end of the line," said Siraj Ullah.

The last deadline expired on November 30.

The initiative aims to free Dhaka's landscape from the "unsightly" mess of overhead cables, power distribution officials said.

Apart from being an eyesore, the haphazard installation of cables puts pressure on the electricity poles inviting possible accidents and much inconvenience, they added.

"The drive will continue until all the illegal overhead cables from Uttara to Shabbagh via Jahangir Gate are removed out of sight," said Siraj.

"Maybe it will create public sufferings," he said, adding that unless strong steps are taken now the cable mongers will keep on dillydallying.

Cable Operators Association of Bangladesh (Coab) members called the drive symbolic and hoped that the "drive is to scare the operators" so that they remove their cables soon.

"If they bring down the cables, the biggest sufferers of the move will be the people who would not receive cable television feeds or Internet services," said Anwar Parvez.

Leaders of ISPAB during a press conference at a city hotel yesterday said they would increase Internet service charges by 15-20 percent after switching to the underground cable network.

"We will have to pay additional charge for the new network. The government will not subsidise us. So we have no alternative to increasing Internet service charge," said ISPAB president Akhtaruzzaman Manju.

They also demanded reduction of 15 percent VAT on providing Internet service and compensation for the overhead cables that will be useless after the switch.

"During the removal process, Internet connections of many large government and private institutions may get stalled for an indefinite period," said the representatives of ISPAB at a press conference, adding, "We apologise."

Hijacked ship

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the Somali coast.

But to its dismay, none from the ship made any contact or picked up the phone until yesterday evening though the ship was anchored near Somali coast in the early hours of yesterday.

The pirates anchored the ship at about 1:30am, said Rahmatullah, technical officer of the Bangladesh operating firm that was monitoring the position of the ship through satellite.

Despite repeated attempts, the crew could not be contacted, he said.

Meanwhile, with the spread of the information that MV Jahan Moni reached Somali coast, hope rose among the family members of the hostages for their safe return.

The families urged the government to take all-out measures to rescue their near and dear ones unhurt.

Family members of two crewmen of the ship -- Chief Engineer Matuil Mawla and Engine Cadet Md Shahriar Rabbi -- rushed to the office of Brave Royal yesterday afternoon.

Rabbi's mother Bilkis Rahman has been going to the Brave Royal office and the office of Merchantile Marine Department in Chittagong every day since she received the bad news and kept phoning different persons she knew to take steps for her son's rescue.

While talking to The Daily Star, she burst into tears at the Brave Royal office and expressed her dissatisfaction over government's initiative for the rescue of the hostages.

"I so far have no idea about the fate of my son and other crewmen. I don't even know what the government is doing in this regard," said Bilkis.

This was the first trip of her son after he completed his study from the marine academy this year.

"The Brave Royal officials are assuring me that the pirates have wrongly hijacked the ship and would leave the crew if they find out the crew members were from Bangladesh," Bilkis said.

If so, then why did they [pirates] take the ship all the way to Somali coast, she asked.

gise for the inconvenience." "We have already moved our PoPs [point of presence] on major lines from Uttara to Shabbagh area of the capital but at access level many cables still remained on the main road due to shortage of time," said Akhtaruzzaman.

"At the same time, this is unclear what would happen to the redundant links and if there is a problem in the underground network," he added.

The burying of overhead cables has been debated in the telecommunications circle in recent months, with the ISPs and cable TV operators repeatedly asking to extend the government-fixed deadline.

"The city corporation should take the responsibility of building and maintaining underground infrastructure as soon as possible," Manju said.

"At the same time, at least six months time should be given for removing overhead cables in the next phases," he said.

According to the Fibre @ Home Ltd, one of the two nationwide telecommunication transmission network (NTTN) companies that are responsible for building and managing the underground network, it has so far connected 55 ISPs and six cable operators with their underground cable in the city.

Summit Communications, the other NTTN, has completed setting up underground cable network of 18 ISPs.

Fibre @ Home Managing Director Moynul Hoque Siddique told The Daily Star that they would receive a monthly charge of Tk 3 from each ISP and Tk 0.5 from each cable operator for each metre of the cable they use. This is in addition to the charge for the use of bandwidth of the underground cable.

Fibre @ Home Ltd has installed a 300-kilometre-long transmission network in the city and 1,200 kilometres across the country covering 23 districts and 90 upazilas, said Moynul.

An official of the firm said ISPs' cost of operation would not increase after the switch since they would have a large chunk of their overhead network maintenance cost to spare.

BSF kills another cattle trader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole
A Bangladeshi cattle trader was beaten to death by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on Gatipara border of Benapole early yesterday, BDR sources claimed.

They said a BSF troop caught Amir Hossain, 35, when he was crossing the border early in the morning. The BSF men beat him to death and took his body away.

Villagers, however, said another Bangladeshi went missing after the incident.

Samir Hossain, elder brother of Amir, was also killed allegedly by the BSF in November.

Iran TV airs stoning woman's 'confession'

AFP, Tehran
Iran's English-language Press TV on Friday aired footage of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, a woman sentenced to death by stoning, re-enacting what it said was the murder of her husband.

The broadcast came a day after reports from Germany that she had been released, with the Iranian authorities on Friday saying Mohammadi Ashtiani was still in custody and mocking Western talk of her release.

"The defendant's case and judicial situation have not changed and she is still in Tabriz prison. Any news of her release is a sheer lie," Tabriz prosecutor Mousa Khalilollahi told the official IRNA news agency.

"Every once in a while foreign media give this case massive coverage for political aims."

The Press TV report, which included interviews with Mohammadi Ashtiani, her son Sajjad and lawyer Javid Houtan Kian who are also both in jail, did not give new information about the case which has sparked an international outcry.

9 women

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It was presented at a function styled Launching of the Human Rights Report 2009-10 on Indigenous People in Bangladesh, organised by the Kapaeng Foundation in cooperation with Oxfam in the capital's National Planning Academy Auditorium.

Speaking as the chief guest in the programme Justice Golam Rabbani urged the government to establish an "Indigenous Academy" for promoting and patronising indigenous traditions and languages.

He said, "The constitution should be amended so that equal rights and dignity for indigenous communities are ensured."

Justice Rabbani also stressed formulation of a separate law to resolve the land disputes between the indigenous people and Bangladeshes.

Prof Syed Anwar Hussain censured the government for terming the indigenous community as "small ethnic group" in the existing act, which only recognise 27 communities.

He demanded formation of a taskforce comprised of experts on indigenous culture and tradition which would be acceptable to both the parties -- the government and the indigenous community.

Prof Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University alleged that like the previous ones, the incumbent government has been reluctant to address the problems of these people. He also reiterated the demand for immediate implementation of CHT Peace Accord, 1997.

The Kapaeng Foundation study also placed 37-point recommendation to end all sorts of discrimination to indigenous people, protect their rights and develop the indigenous society.

The recommendations include constitutional recognition of indigenous people ensuring land rights and reserved seats in the parliament.

Prof Dalem Chandra Barman of Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at Dhaka University edited the study.

Nirupa Dewan, member of National Human Rights Commission, gave assurance of the best efforts in protecting the rights of indigenous people and stressed the need for creating mass awareness of human rights.

Rabindranath Soren, chairperson of Kapaeng Foundation, its advisor Mangal Kumar Chakma, Country Director for Oxfam Gareth Price-Jones, among others, also spoke at the programme.

Babar, Rahim

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Rahim left the port city for the capital at 10:15am amid tight security.

Rafiqul Kader, jailor of Chittagong Central Jail, said they handed over the two to the Investigation Officer, senior ASP of CID Mohammad Moniruzzaman, at 10:10am on court directives.

In response to a remand petition of the investigation officer, Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate Mahbubur Rahman on December 6 granted a five-day remand for Babar in the arms haul case filed under the Arms Act.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Paresch Chandra Sharma on December 1 placed Abdul Rahim on a five-day remand against a 10-day remand petition in the other arms haul case filed under the Special Powers Act for arms smuggling.

Ten truckloads of firearms and ammunition were seized at the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd on April 2, 2004. Two cases -- one under the Special Powers Act for arms smuggling and the other under the Arms Act -- were filed with the Karnaphuli Police Station the next day against 43 people.

Abdul Kahar Akhand, senior ASP of CID, said Babar and Rahim were brought to the CID headquarters in Dhaka in the evening.

A source in the CID said Babar would be interrogated about his appointment as NSI director general after retirement as Ansar chief. CID would grill Babar to verify the information received from another accused Rezaqul Haider, former director of Directorate General of Forces Intelligence.

Rezaqul had been brought to Dhaka in October, and interrogated during remand at the CID headquarters. He gave information indicating Babar's link with the incident.

The two were supposed to be brought to Dhaka in the morning but it was delayed on security grounds.

4 of a family

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had a feud with the family of Khalil's first wife. Khalil's first wife's brother Sohel might have thrown acid on them, added Suraiya.

OC Asaduzzaman said Borhanuddin, brother of the three sisters, filed a case in the evening, accusing Sohel and three others.