

Sri Lanka warns ex-Tamil rebels against revolting

LANS, Colombo

Sri Lanka has warned former Tamil Tiger rebels not to engage with any group which may be attempting to overthrow the government.

The warning came after a splinter group of a Marxist political party in Sri Lanka claimed it has established contacts with some former rebels who were rehabilitated by the government and released into society, Xinhua reported.

If any former rebels, rehabilitated and released into society, were found to be having links with groups looking at creating an unstable situation in the country, they will be arrested, said the military official in charge of the programme to rehabilitate former rebels from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Commissioner General of Rehabilitation Major General Chandana Rajaguru, however, said that so far they have not come across or received information regarding such activities.

He said former rebels are free to engage in politics but they cannot look to overthrow the government through violent means.

Stop hill

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protecting the hills, instead of destroying them, headed.

However, Brig Gen (ret'd) Hasan Nasir, in-charge of the KEPZ project areas, claimed that necessary permission from the DoE to develop the plots had been obtained.

The DoE in its letter directed the KEPZ to preserve 60 percent of hilly regions and construct plots in the remaining areas, he said.

"We will never exceed the 40 percent limit to construct plots as per our proposed plan," Brig Gen Hasan said.

The DoE team without checking any document arrested a security guard and a driver stationed in the project area, he said.

But the team soon released them when the KEPZ officials showed them necessary approval from the DoE, he added.

The DoE team during the drive found that the KEPZ authorities were cutting hills beyond the permitted limit, said Munir Chowdhury.

Therefore, it asked the KEPZ officials concerned to come to its Dhaka office and show their necessary documents of approval today, the DoE director added.

First class

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student of the batch attained first class in the honours exams result.

Prof Nasima Sultana, the anthropology department chair, declined to comment on the results. "I know nothing about it. The DU exam controller's office oversaw the matter."

Examination Controller Bahalul Haque Chowdhury, however, thought the matter of the student who stood first class first in the honours examinations coming by a second class this time was "unusual". He said his office would take necessary steps in case candidates wanted re-evaluation of answer scripts.

"We only publish results. The departments prepare the tabulation sheets and send those to our office."

Also, it took six months for the results to be published as opposed to the three months as per rule.

Earlier, a professor of the department was discharged from exam-related activities for delay in submitting the examination scores while another teacher of the department was served a warning on similar grounds.

Some students who failed to achieve their expected results accused several teachers of "partial evaluation of answer sheets due to favouritism."

Earlier in 2006, controversy arose after a large number of students obtained first class in master's examinations in political science. In the face of strong criticism, the authorities enquired into the matter and took disciplinary measures against three teachers based on the findings of the investigation.

Hizb-ut shows

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government.

The banned organisation on January 8 circulated provocative leaflets based on fugitive Maj Syed Ziaul Haq's internet message throughout the country, the army said at a press conference on January 19.

The Bangladesh chapter of Hizb-ut-Tahrir was banned on October 22, 2010 for its anti-state subversive activities.

However, instead of ceasing its activities, the outfit tried to bring out processions and hold rallies on several occasions in and outside the capital and advertised several of its publications.

It circulated the internet message of Maj Ziaul, who met a serving officer on December 22 last year and instigated him to engage in activities subversive of the state and democracy.

The banned outfit also circulated a provocative leaflet in Bangla and English in December asking army officers to remove Sheikh Hasina from power and "establish Khilafat".

The army at its press conference said a few arrested and suspected officers involved in the foiled plot were linked with the outlawed outfit.

"If you review the mode of activities of militant organisations, their indoctrination system, ideology and how they work, you will know that two to three officers who admitted their links with Hizb-ut-Tahrir relate to the patterns [mentioned above]," said Brig Gen Mashud Razzaq while responding to journalists' queries.

"Besides, information given on email has been mentioned in Hizb-ut-Tahrir leaflets," he added.

He, however, said the links could be confirmed once investigations had been completed.

Against the backdrop of the latest developments, the law enforcement agencies have strengthened their efforts to trap Hizb-ut-Tahrir activists in the country.

A number of activists have already been arrested in the act of distributing posters, leaflets and other publications.

The outfit, however, continues promoting its activities, thus defying the government ban and challenging the law enforcers. Its members are continuously posting Tahrir posters on walls, bringing out processions, distributing leaflets and carrying out motivational activities across the country.

Posters at different strategic points across the country contain calls to support the outfit to topple the government and implement its proposed Islamic government.

Talking to The Daily Star, several top-ranked officials of the elite Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Detective Branch of police expressed their inability to combat the outfit's activities. They have stressed the need for a separate tribunal to check unabated militancy.

They said they had already launched a crackdown on Tahrir, pointing out that the arrest of five activists in Uttara was a part of the ongoing crackdown.

Lt Col Ziaul Ahsan, director of the Intelligence Wing of Rab, told The Daily Star, "It is tough to stop Tahrir men as they get all kinds of support from the organisation if they are arrested. Families of the detained activists also get financial support. As a result, they don't bother much about the arrest."

Since the ban, some 500 Hizb-ut men have been arrested, but most of them are now out on bail.

In such circumstances, Lt Col Ziaul Ahsan opined, a specific and separate tribunal should be in effect to fight the militants.

"Specials courts through a specific tribunal system should be set up at all district headquarters by enacting a new law for the trial of the militants," he observed.

"As Tahrir has strong financial support, members from JMB, Hizb-ut-Tawhid, Allah'r Dal and other militant organisations are also joining it," added Lt Col Ziaul. "Some teachers of several universities, English medium schools and madrasas, doctors and businessmen have been identified as new leaders in the banned organisation."

Monirul Islam, deputy commissioner of DB (South), said the law enforcers had arrested a large number of people in connection with Tahrir, but most of them resumed their activities after they came out of prison on bail.

He said students coming from solvent and educated families were being exploited and getting involved in Hizb-ut because of motivation based on wrong explanations of Islam and least care from their parents.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir is an international Islamist political party founded in Jerusalem in 1953. It commenced its activities in Bangladesh in 2000.

No link

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Moghbar residence in the capital, Abdullahhil said "imaginary news reports" have been published by different news outlets trying to link him and his younger brother, who lives in the UK, with the "failed coup".

"I strongly protest against such false, baseless, fabricated and motivated news," he said claiming that a vested quarter has been publishing such news in a bid to tarnish the image of him and his family.

The former brigadier general condemned the "attempt to carry out a coup", and demanded stern punishment for those who were involved in it.

Mentioning that he served the army wholeheartedly for 30 years with sincerity, honesty, and discipline, Abdullahhil claimed all serving and retired senior officers including the present army chief and the retired chiefs, who were and have been in the army since his joining in the force, will give testimony in favour of his claim.

"There is no instance of me being punished for violating discipline," he claimed adding that he devoted his whole life for the development and prosperity of the army.

He also claimed neither he nor any of his family members knows the "reported plotter of the coup", Ishraq Ahmed, who "reportedly resides in Hong Kong".

"None of our family has even any remote relation with a person of that name," he said.

News reports about his younger brother Numan Azmi living in Malaysia or Pakistan and contacting Ishraq are also blatantly false, Abdullahhil claimed.

"Actually he [Numan] has never been in any third country other than Bangladesh and the UK," Abdullahhil said adding, "This morning I talked to him several times and he is now in the UK."

He urged all journalists to report news responsibly.

Replying to a query he said, he heard that a Malaysia based television channel interviewed Numan, but claimed he did not listen to a single word of that interview.

On his assessment of "the failed coup attempt", Abdullahhil said the matter is under investigation and he would not make any comment.

Asked why he was dismissed from the army, he said the government on June 23 last year relieved him from the force through a gazette notification. "But there was no allegation of discipline violation against me in the 30 years of my service in the army," he added.

Tax lawyer

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motorbikes around 9:30am and shot my father in the leg and took the bag he was carrying," said Asif in his hospital bed.

He said he tried to run away but a bullet fired from behind hit his right leg and he fell flat on his face. The gang then took the bag he was carrying and left on two motorbikes.

Nazir and Asif were whisked off to Dhaka Medical College Hospital by locals who heard the shots and screams. Nazir was later moved to National Institute of Traumatology, Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation in the capital where he is undergoing treatment.

Sub-Inspector Nurul Alam of Paltan Police Station quoting Nazir said Nazir and his son were taking around Tk 11 lakh stuffed into two bags to deposit the amount at a Sonali Bank branch in Motijheel.

He said the robbers probably had information beforehand about the amount being carried to the bank.

Nazir Ahmed filed a case with the Paltan Police Station last night in connection with the incident. Police said they carried out raids in several places but did not make any arrests until midnight.

In a similar mugging incident, a gang of four took Tk 3.76 lakh from an employee of a filling station at Jatrabari yesterday, police said.

Nazrul Islam, manager of Rana Petrol Pump, was carrying the money to deposit at a bank around 11:30am. The gang, on two motorbikes, stopped his motorbike and took the money at gunpoint, Nazrul claimed.

The gang members fired two shots in the air to clear their escape route.

The BNP statement

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ministration and constitutional system have continued. Memories of bloody military coups and chaos in the past make us sad.

The incident of the killing of 57 smart and meritorious army officers in the Peelkhana tragedy during the tenure of this government remains a scar on our memory. The BNP has the glorious history of being the architect of establishing multiparty democracy on the ashes of one-party Baksalite autocracy. The BNP struggled uncompromisingly against military autocracy and re-established parliamentary democracy.

As the biggest patriotic democratic political institution, the BNP always believes in constitutional politics. We deeply believe in the principle of changing governments through free, fair, neutral and competitive elections. We also believe in forming governments based on people's power and support. We believe that the armed forces as a symbol of national independence and sovereignty will remain the people's institution. They will ensure independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and overall national security.

We don't want to see the armed forces involved in any distrust, clash and disunity. We don't want a brother's hand to get stained with the blood of another brother. We don't want to hear the wails of a mother losing her son, of a widow after losing her husband and a son after losing his father.

Our fervent call goes out to all members at all levels of the patriotic armed forces: maintain unity, solidarity and discipline at any cost; remain alert and conscious; avoid adventurism in the face any provocation. We have now reached a turning point in national history. Everybody will have to remain alert so that enemy spies cannot infiltrate our ranks and create subversion. You cannot step into any trap.

Dear representatives of the print and electronic media,

The present government has been trying to fish in troubled waters by using a sensitive incident. As part of an ill attempt to make the armed forces controversial, they have directed a pointing of the finger at the opposition while describing the incident.

We notice with sorrow that in a description of the incident at Thursday's press conference, some comments were made which could be seen as at an attempt to add a political colour to the incident.

Despite the clear explanation given by the BNP, a fresh attempt to misinterpret a part of Begum Khaleda Zia's speech at a Chittagong rally on December 9 has saddened us. Some comments uttered in the same breath are consistent with the ruling party's political propaganda. As a responsible political party, the BNP wished to refrain from making any comment on a sensitive incident under investigation. But, unfortunately, it became necessary to respond to the untrue, confusing, irresponsible, provocative and aggressive unilateral comments made by the prime minister herself, the ministers, ruling party men and Indian media against the BNP.

Dear journalists, The incident described at Thursday's press conference took place quite a few days ago. Before the investigation has been completed the people have been fed with some incomplete information. Various kinds of confusion have already been created among the people as they have seen the Indian media and the ruling party speak in the same vein. At a time when video footage of the torture of Bangladeshis by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at the border has caused indignation here, ruling party men have made the share market a looting

ground; and the government, plunging into a grave crisis due to its economic bankruptcy, has been trying to divert public attention by publicizing an incomplete version of an incident which took place in December last year.

At a time when people are gasping under the burden of spiralling prices of essentials, disappearances, killings and abductions have become daily incidents. Failing to resolve these crises the government has been trying to mislead and confuse people.

When the demand for Jatiya Sangsad elections under a caretaker government has become a national demand, and Begum Khaleda Zia has announced s "March towards Dhaka" programme to realize the demand, aggressive propaganda has been unleashed against the opposition. Questions have been raised among citizens and in the international community about the trustworthiness of the publicity as the propaganda has been based on incomplete information about an incident which is under investigation.

We call for an unearthing of the whole truth behind the incident through proper investigation and letting the people know the truth. We urge the government to refrain from its tendency to use the national armed forces, which symbolizes national aspirations, for mean political ends. The armed forces were subjected to neglect and made weak through the formation of the Rakkhi Bahini after liberation. Following the introduction of the one party Baksal system the members of the armed forces were compelled to join it. Secret wings of other political parties were also being built up within the national armed forces. As a result, due to partisan and ideological conflict and outside instigation many incidents of clashes and bloodshed took place within the armed forces.

Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, at risk to his life and depending on invincible boldness, took courageous steps to restore discipline, unity, professionalism and chain of command in the armed forces and strengthened it.

The armed forces, which carry the mantle of our glorious liberation war, are a pride for us all and are a symbol of national unity. It is a matter of sorrow that narrow partisan interests at times have given birth to various types of provocation and indiscipline in this force.

In 1975 a faction of Baksal led by Awami League leader Khandker Mustaque Ahmad revolted and captured state power. After that a group of ambitious army officers breaking the chain of command arrested the then chief of army Ziaur Rahman and tried to capture state power. The Awami League supported the bid. It also opposed the investigation and trial process to maintain army discipline.

The party also gave open support to the then army chief Ershad when he captured power by usurping the elected government in 1982 and also to the failed coup attempt by General Nasim in 1996. The Awami League also supported the veiled coup of army chief General Moeenuddin in 2007 when the party described it as a "result of their movement." In this way the Awami League again and again encouraged a violation of army discipline, fanned division in the armed forces in their narrow party interests. It harmed the armed forces and weakened its professionalism.

Members of the armed forces fell victim to killings at Peelkhana after the Awami League came to power. Now we hear about a coup plot in the army. We hope that the army does not fall victim to any big blueprint and conspiracy.

Dear journalist friends,

We know the armed forces cannot give any statement outside the sitting government's guid-

ance. So the statement given at Thursday's press briefing reflected ruling party thought. You have seen that the media published news of several senior army officers being attached to the Log Area. But the press conference was told that some mid ranking officers had been involved in the coup plot. In the information given it has not been disclosed who the court of enquiry consisted of. Except for information about some contacts no elaborate description of the coup bid was given. We hope that everything will be unearthed through proper investigation and made public. We will also hope that all concerned will be careful about trustworthiness and that institutional neutrality is not compromised by making political statements while presenting a serious and sensitive subject.

At this juncture of the nation and the country we call for strong national unity. There may be differences of opinion among us on various issues but in the case of national interest and security all must remain united irrespective of party affiliation or difference of opinion. We urge the government to refrain from the dangerous game of misusing the armed forces for political ends and in the party interest. Any propaganda that may harm the reputation of the forces, which have achieved significant success in the international arena as peace keepers, should also be avoided. The Indian media have already started motivated propaganda about the published news. We all should show restraint, responsibility and far-sightedness in the national interest.

To conclude, we make a fervent call ---no disunity and division, unity and discipline are the demand of the hour. A blame game will not bring any success for any of us. It will rather lead to a deterioration in the situation.

Thankyou all.
Allah Hafez, Bangladesh Zindabad.

Ijtema ends

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from 67 countries other than Bangladesh joined the Ijtema at Tongi near the capital.

The first phase of the Ijtema was held on 13-15.

The massive gathering of devotees of all ages spilled over to the roads and areas around the Ijtema venue on the banks of the Turag river as Akheri Munajat started. The prayers were offered using loud speakers as a solemn atmosphere prevailed in the virtual sea of humanity.

Thousands joined the munajat by raising their hands from the rooftops and terraces of nearby houses, roads and open fields and from the roofs of trains and buses. Many of the devotees called their acquaintances on cell phones to hear the prayers and many more joined as the prayers were telecast.

Vehicular movement towards the venue was stopped since early yesterday. Thousands walked 10 to 15 km to reach the area. Others stopped on the nearby Dhaka-Mymensingh highway, Tongi- Kaliganj and Abdullahpur-Ashulia roads and took part in the munajat from there.

The Ijtema saw stringent security measures in and around the venue. About 12,000 security personnel were deployed to ensure security of the devotees.

Besides, hundreds of volunteers worked round-the-clock to help smooth holding of the congregation. **WOMEN DEVOTEES**

To join the concluding prayers, a large number of women came to Tongi on Saturday night and stayed at nearby slums, shops and hotels. Many other women participated in the congregation since Friday.

DEATHS

A total of 14 devotees died due to illness or old age complications during the Ijtema - 11 in the first phase and three in the second phase.

Saarc secy

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secretary general position expresses views and makes comments on matters related to any Saarc member states, according to the sources.

The first woman secretary general of Saarc, Dhiyana said she had not interfered in any internal affairs of the Maldives, but decided to resign.

Dhiyana gave her resignation letter yesterday to Maldives Foreign Minister Ahmed Naseem, who is the current chair of Saarc Ministers of Council.

Nepalese media quoting Saarc secretariat officials in Kathmandu confirmed the resignation of Dhiyana.

This is for the first time a Saarc secretary general resigned since the founding of the regional body comprised of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in 1985. Later, Afghanistan joined Saarc as its eighth member.

Harassed

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studying under another teacher, the report said quoting the student.

It said Manchharul used to harass her often over trivial matters and sometimes even without any reason.

"Today (Saturday), as I was going to assembly with my friends, he found us at the stairs to the first floor and began to slap me saying 'why are you so late' while he did not say anything to my friends," she said with tearful eyes, according to the report.

The court yesterday also directed the chief executive officer (CEO) of Cittagong City Corporation to submit a report to it in two weeks on what steps have been taken against the teacher for torturing the student.

The HC bench of Justice Farid Ahmed and Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif also issued a rule asking the CEO and Manchharul to explain in two weeks why he (Manchharul) should not be punished for his conduct towards the student.

Deputy Attorney General Motaher Hossain Sajujudated the report before the judges for necessary order against the teacher.

Use foreign

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Of the foreign aid, the government in the first six months of this fiscal year spent only 17 percent -- lowest in the last four years, Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Department (IMED) stats show.

While it spent 35 percent of the allocation from the local fund, highest over the same period.

The Finance Division yesterday issued a notice saying unutilised foreign fund will be deducted from the revised Annual Development Programme (ADP).

The government has taken the step in line with IMF conditions to cut expenditure, the officials said.

The lending agency advised the government to issue a circular to the ministries concerned by January this year indicating that shortfalls in the externally-funded ADP budget will not be substituted with taka funding.

This year, subsidies on fuel import for rental power plants have exerted huge pressure on budget.

As the price of fertiliser, food grains and fuel oil went up in the international market, expenditure on subsidy and interest payment for these items increased to exceed the projection in the original budget, the notice read.

Over the rest of the current fiscal year, expenditure in these sectors is likely to increase further. It compels the government to allocate additional fund for these sectors.

The finance and planning ministries have already discussed with different other ministries the amount of foreign funds they can use in the current FY. They estimated this time the use of foreign funds will not only fall below the projection but also decrease compared to the previous year.

Finance Minister AMA Muhiht at a meeting of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI) last week said, in the last fiscal year local funds were allocated to substitute foreign funds but this year it will not be possible.