

# Jalpaiguri terror-breeding hub

## Says India's national security adviser after meeting Mamata

HINDUSTAN TIMES

The north Bengal district of Jalpaiguri has become a terror-breeding hub, National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval told West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee yesterday after visiting the site of this month's explosion in Burdwan.

Doval also handed over a list of 180 Bangladeshi militants hiding in West Bengal as the state government said it would cooperate with a central probe into the blast.

Sources said Doval and other members of a delegation comprising the country's top security and intelligence chiefs told the chief minister about how operatives of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) used West Bengal as a safe haven over the past two years.

"The central representatives also handed over a list of unrecognised madrassas in the state operating as terror-breeding hubs," said a state government source on condition of

anonymity. The NSA-led delegation went to the blast site in the southeastern Bengal town of Burdwan and took stock of investigations.

"The chief minister and the West Bengal government have assured that the Centre and the state will work together in unearthing the entire case and take all kinds of action to see that such cases are investigated properly and prevented in future," Prakash Mishra, special secretary for internal security in the Union home ministry, told the media after the meeting with Banerjee.

The NSA and his team also referred to the alleged links of a Rajya Sabha member from West Bengal with two Bangladeshi militant groups - JMB and Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB).

The chief minister initially resisted a central probe into the October 2 blast that exposed a terror network of Bangladeshi infiltrators spread over several West Bengal districts. The two people killed while making bombs in

the Burdwan house were found to be JMB operatives.

A National Investigation Agency (NIA) report says that the JMB, a shadowy organisation formed in 2005, has plans to establish an Islamic state encompassing Bangladesh and Murshidabad, Nadia and Malda districts of West Bengal.

Three people, including two women were arrested in the Burdwan case and were interrogated by the NIA that took over the probe after the state government faced a barrage of criticism for allegedly mishandling the investigation.

The main opposition party, CPI (M), has accused Banerjee of allowing extremist elements to flourish in the state for vote-bank politics.

Apart from SIM cards, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), detonators and watch dials, some leaflets and papers with names of al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahri and Chechen rebels were reportedly recovered from the Burdwan house, which the suspected militants had rented a few months ago.

# China plans to scrap death penalty for 9 crimes: Xinhua

AFP, Beijing

China's legislature is considering cutting nine crimes from the list of 55 punishable by death, state media said yesterday, including illegal fundraising which has been at the centre of several controversial cases.

The country executes more people than the rest of the world combined, rights groups say. But a draft amendment to reduce the scope of capital punishment was submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's rubber-stamp legislature, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

China has proposed a series of changes to the legal system. Last week a major Communist party meeting pledged to ensure the "rule of law", although analysts say the ruling party will remain firmly in charge of the courts.

The nine non-violent crimes include smuggling weapons, ammunition or nuclear materials, counterfeiting currency and raising funds by

means of fraud, Xinhua said.

Executions for financial offences have been particularly controversial in China, where much bank lending is controlled by the state and private businesses sometimes struggle to obtain funding.

Last year Zeng Chengjie, a self-made businessman, was executed by firing squad -- with his family not notified beforehand -- after he was convicted of illegal fundraising and defrauding investors of about US\$460 million.

His lawyers argued his assets would have been enough to cover his debts had the state not confiscated them.

A court sentenced a 39-year-old businesswoman to death last year after she was convicted of defrauding her clients of around US\$70 million.

China cut the number of capital crimes from 68 to 55 in 2011. According to a report by the Dui Hua Foundation it executed 2,400 people last year, down from 10,000 a decade ago.

China has occasionally exonerated wrongfully executed convicts after others came forward to confess their

crimes, or in some cases because the supposed murder victim was later found alive.

Its top court examines all death sentences and sent back 39 percent of them last year to lower courts for additional evidence, the Dui Hua report said, citing a report by the Southern Weekly newspaper.

In one landmark case in June the Supreme Court overturned the death sentence on Li Yan, a woman who killed her abusive husband.

Proposals put before the party-controlled National People's Congress are almost certain to be approved.

The ruling party also maintains a firm grip on the legal system, where courts have a near-100 percent conviction rate in criminal cases.

But authorities are looking to address widespread dissatisfaction at corruption. They have publicised promises by the Communist Party's Fourth Plenum last week to centralise control over courts while granting judges increased independence in some cases.

# Suicide bomber kills at least 14 south of Baghdad

AFP, Baghdad

A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-rigged Humvee armoured vehicle near security forces and allied militiamen south of Baghdad, killing at least 14, an officer and a doctor said yesterday.

The blast took place on the northern edge of Jurf al-Sakhr, a large area south of the capital, where the government announced it retook the strategic town of the same name from the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group over the weekend.

Accounts of the attack, which also wounded at least 25 people, differed sharply.

Some sources insisted it took place on Sunday while others reported a similar attack in the same area yesterday.

There were also varying reports on the intended target of the attack, though most agreed it was against soldiers and Shiite militiamen.

Security forces and militia allies have fought for months to regain ground in Jurf al-Sakhr from IS, which spearheaded a major militant offensive that has overrun large areas since June.

The jihadists seized significant quantities of military equipment, including Humvees that have been used in suicide attacks on several occasions, as they swept security forces aside.

The expansive Jurf al-Sakhr area is strategic because of its location along the southern approach to Baghdad and on the way to Amriyat al-Fallujah, a

town that has been hard-pressed by IS in recent weeks.

And Jurf al-Sakhr lies west of the main highway on which tens of thousands of Shiite pilgrims will travel in the coming days on the way to the city of Karbala for the annual Ashura commemorations.

Pilgrims taking part in the commemorations, which mark the death of Imam Hussein, one of the most revered figures in Shiite Islam, are often targeted with bombings during the annual rituals, which peak next week.

Karbala governor Aqil al-Turaihi has said that "Securing Jurf al-Sakhr is securing Karbala and the south completely, as the gateway to the south begins from Jurf al-Sakhr."

# Family tortures, kills Indian woman for 'witchcraft'

AFP, Raipur

A woman has been tortured and beaten to death by her in-laws in central India on suspicion of being a witch and practising black magic, police said yesterday.

Police in the central state of Chhattisgarh said relatives attacked the 55-year-old widow on Sunday after claiming her witchcraft had caused her nephew's ill health.

"Chilli powder was put in her eyes, ears and private parts and they thrashed her severely, because of which she died," Narendra Khare,

Bemetara district police chief, told AFP.

The district is 125 kilometres (75 miles) west of the state capital Raipur.

Khare said the victim's brother-in-law, his wife and other relatives of her late husband confronted her over the sick boy, demanding that she reverse whatever "black magic" had caused the illness.

When she protested her innocence, the relatives attacked her with sticks and punched and kicked her in front of her 28-year-old son. He later took her to hospital where she was declared dead.

Twelve people, including the brother-in-law and five women, have

been arrested over the incident, the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

The incident highlights the persistence of belief in witchcraft and the occult in some impoverished and tribal-dominated areas of India, leading to crimes mainly against women.

In some cases women are stripped naked as punishment, burnt alive or driven from their homes and killed.

In July this year villagers in the eastern state of Bihar -- one of India's most underdeveloped -- killed a woman whom they accused of being a witch.

# BNP to mark Nov 7 with rally in capital

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Hasanul Haq Inu observe Nov 7 as the day of civil-military revolution.

However, the ruling-Awami League, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and some other organisations consider the day as the day of "killing freedom fighters".

Another rally, scheduled to be held in Comilla on November 7, has been rescheduled for Nov 29, said a BNP

press release.

Fakhrul, after placing wreaths along with Jubo Dal leaders at Zia's grave to mark the 36th founding anniversary of the youth front, further said the recent arrests of Jubo Dal chief Moazzem Hossain Alal and 63 members of BNP and its associate organisations proved that Hasina's government is running the country in a "fascist and autocratic

manner."

"But we are reorganising the party as well as its front organisations for the movement," he added.

Meantime, a Molotov cocktail exploded near the BNP's Naya Paltan central office around 9:30am yesterday, Paltan police said. No casualty was reported.

# Nobel peace laureates press Obama on torture

AFP, Washington

Twelve Nobel Peace Prize laureates are urging President Barack Obama to disclose the CIA's use of torture on terror suspects since the attacks of September 11, 2001.

The potential release of a long-delayed Senate report about this "dark period" of American history has brought the country to a "crossroads," the Nobel laureates wrote in an open letter to Obama posted on the website TheCommunity.com.

Obama, who won a Peace Prize himself in 2009, recognized in very direct terms in August that the United States had engaged in torture.

"We tortured some folks," he said at the time.

But the White House is engaged in tough negotiations with lawmakers over how much of the report on CIA torture should be declassified, with the intelligence agency insisting that agents' pseudonyms be blacked out.

# Killings

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and shall never do so in future. He said, "Students are our future and they must raise their head against injustice. People have no reason to feel helpless. We've glorious example of student politics in the past against autocratic rule."

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President ASM Abdur Rab, Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, Nagorik Oikya convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna and ex-Ducusu VP Sultan Mohammad Mansur also spoke at the meeting, chaired by Oikyabaddha Chhatra Samaj President Azam Rupu.

# Acid attack

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"He told me that he could harm me any time," she said.

Immediately after yesterday's attack, locals rushed to her house hearing the hue and cry and caught Mamunur red-handed but he somehow managed to flee, Mukta alleged.

Local UP member Abdur Razzak said the victim had come to him after being stalked by the alleged attacker.

Several arbitrations had warned Mamunur to stay away from the victim, he added.

Mabu Mia, Mukta's father, filed a case with Jaldhaka Police Station yesterday afternoon accusing the man.

Police raided the house of Mamunur but he had already fled, said Moniruzzaman, OC of the police station.

# Paper can detect

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Jim Collins is a leading pioneer in the field of synthetic biology, whose 2000 paper showing genetic circuits could be created in the same way as electronic circuits can be programmed, helped launch the discipline.

Prof Lingchong You, an expert in cellular reprogramming at Duke University, says: "This paper-based approach is incredibly attractive. It feels like you could use it in your garage! It'll give scientists a synthetic-biology playground for a very low cost."

The materials in the powdered biochemical soup include simple enzymes that bacteria need, molecules to power the chemical reactions, amino acids which are the bricks of cell biology, and importantly ribosomes, giant molecular machines that read genetic material and use it to assemble the bricks into functioning proteins.

Meanwhile, Australia said yesterday it was suspending migration from Ebola-hit West African nations to try to prevent the virus from crossing its borders, as a teenager who arrived from Guinea tested negative for the disease.

The United States will help fight Ebola over "the long haul," the American ambassador to the United Nations said on a trip to the West African countries hit by the outbreak, reports AP.

Fujifilm said yesterday it would buy a US vaccine maker as the Japanese firm increases its supply of an experimental Ebola drug to help stem the spread of the virus, reports AFP.

# HC calls

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provide humanitarian aid to the Ebola affected countries and also issued a press release in this regard.

Justice Naima Haider yesterday said the court on October 20 told Eunus several times that there were a lot of mistakes and errors in his petition, and so the court will pass the written order after correcting those.

Eunus placed arguments in a desperate manner before the court, saying that he did not misinform the media, and did not issue any press release.

# Climate rescue mission 'not hopeless': IPCC chief

AFP, Paris

The head of the UN's climate science panel urged national policymakers yesterday not to lose heart in the face of a mighty challenge to tackle global warming.

"It is not hopeless," Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the Nobel-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, said on opening a five-day IPCC meeting in Copenhagen to complete a landmark report.

Policymakers should "avoid being overcome by the seeming hopelessness of addressing climate change," he said.

The meeting must approve a synthesis report encapsulating the three massive volumes, released over the past 13 months, of the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report on the available climate science.

Meeting behind closed doors, scientists and government representatives are to hammer out a "summary for policymakers" and approve a main document on Friday. These will be unveiled on Sunday.

Governments should make decisions "informed by the science", Pachauri said in a speech relayed on the IPCC website.

"I do not envy them. Their task is formidable," he added, and pointed to the "growing peril" of delaying curbs on greenhouse-gas emissions.

"I do not discount those challenges. But... solutions are at hand," he said.

"Tremendous strides are being made in alternative sources of clean energy. There is much we can do to use

energy more efficiently. Reducing and ultimately eliminating deforestation provides additional avenues for action."

The IPCC's latest assessment report says evidence of man-made global warming is overwhelming, and that there are signs of climate change already on the march.

UN members have vowed to limit warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels.

They eye a post-2020 pact, to be sealed in Paris in December 2015, as the mechanism for achieving it.

But heat-trapping carbon emissions are rising so fast that in the worst-case scenario sketched in the IPCC reports, the planet could be up to 4.8 C warmer by 2100 and sea levels up to 82 centimetres (32 inches) higher.

Worse floods, droughts, hunger, homelessness and conflict over resources will be the likely outcome.

Delay beyond 2030 will reduce the chances of reaching the 2 C goal without harsher and probably more expensive mitigation measures in the latter half of the century, says the IPCC.

But the Fifth Assessment Report also sets out policy options for reducing emissions, including a drive on energy efficiency, and a switch to cleaner or non-fossil sources.

This could be achieved at the cost of a tiny reduction in the expected growth of economic consumption -- a brake of 0.06 percentage points against a projected annual increase of 1.6-3.0 percent over the century.

# Tanzania opposition agree united front for elections

AFP, Arusha

Tanzania's main opposition parties have signed a pact to mount a united challenge to the ruling party in presidential and general elections next year, they said in a statement.

Four key parties, which met Sunday, said for the first time they would put up single candidates "at all levels", including for the presidential poll, due in October 2015.

President Jakaya Kikwete's ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party has been in power since independence in 1961, and holds two-thirds of seats in the assembly.

Having served two terms in power, he cannot run again.

The opposition coalition is headed by Chadema party, the Civic United Front (CUF), the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the National Convention for Construction and

Reform (NCCR).

Chadema, the main opposition party, also known as the Party for Democracy and Progress, has supporters mainly in the Tanzania's cities and towns.

The CUF is part of the ruling coalition on the autonomous archipelago of Zanzibar.

The four parties also agreed to jointly campaign against a proposed new constitution, which Tanzanians are due to vote on in a referendum in April.

The opposition is angry because the draft constitution fails to push their demands for greater federalism which would limit presidential powers.

While opposition parties have yet to name their choice for the presidential poll, there are several potential candidates for the ruling CCM party, including Prime Minister Mizengo Pinda.

# Toronto votes for new mayor after Rob Ford

AFP, Ottawa

Canada's biggest city Toronto went to the polls yesterday to elect a successor to crack-smoking Mayor Rob Ford, who quit the race to seek treatment for cancer.

The culmination of a long and sometimes bitter campaign was expected to be close between three main candidates vying to replace the bombastic mayor.

Radio broadcaster John Tory, considered a moderate conservative, led the pack in his second try in a decade for the job of chief magistrate.

But Olivia Chow, a former MP and widow of late popular Canadian politician Jack Layton, and Ford's brother Doug, who stepped in to replace him on the ballot, were close behind, according to polls.

A record 161,147 early ballots were cast across the city's 44 wards in the lead-up to the main event yesterday.

Rob Ford won the last election in 2010 with 47 percent of 813,984 votes

cast.

This one has shaped up to be a fight between the so-called "Ford Nation" of suburban residents demanding lower property taxes and opponents - mostly urbanites -- who desperately want to turn the page on the scandals at city hall, challenging the electorate to vote for anyone but a Ford. They also are hoping for increased transit funding to ease traffic gridlock.

Ford, who earned global notoriety for smoking crack cocaine while in office, last month abruptly ended his re-election campaign to undergo chemotherapy for cancer.

The 45-year-old Ford had only returned to work in June after two months in rehab for drug and alcohol abuse, including the use of crack cocaine.

His drug abuse was first revealed last year when an alleged drug dealer tried to sell a video of him smoking crack to the media.

At first, Ford denied using the illegal

# Polls under nonparty

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meeting with pro-BNP upazila chairmen and vice-chairmen from Barisal and Khulna divisions.

Municipal mayors and ward councillors from the two divisions were also present at the meeting at her Gulshan office.

Khaleda said it was the Hasina government, not the BNP, which lost its footing and would be subjected to mob beatings for its misdeeds and corruption.

"The Awami League knows it very well that people will give them mob beatings after they quit power. That is why they [AL] are trying to cling to power by all means."

Reacting to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent remarks that there

would be no talks with the "killers", the former prime minister said, "Ask her [Hasina] who are the people on her left and her right; they all are killers. Ershad is a killer and Inu [Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu] is another killer."

Accusing the government of indulging in corruption, the BNP chief said although the Anti-Corruption Commission was giving clean chits to the ruling party men, they would be punished someday.

She said the BNP gave the government 10 months to resolve the political crisis through talks, but it did not take any step.

"Now we have to wage a strong movement to save the people from the misuse of this repressive government," Khaleda added.