

Terrorist outfit asks Jamaat to abandon BNP

Reports Hindustan Times

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ansarullah Bangla Team, a terrorist outfit in Bangladesh, has called upon Islamic Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, to stop rallying behind the BNP and break into jails to free Jamaat leaders facing war crimes trials, the Indian English-language daily Hindustan Times reported on Thursday.

In an 11-minute video statement released on January 6, the banned Islamist outfit, led by its absconding chief Tamim al-Adnani, has appealed to Shibir men to shun all democratic practices and join the jihad to free their leaders.

"How long would you continue the jihad in the form of seeking votes for the BNP?" the ABT says in the video.

Teixobactin

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a broad range of fatal infections such as pneumonia and tuberculosis.

Laboratory tests have shown the new antibiotic, called teixobactin, can kill some bacteria as quickly as established antibiotics and can cure laboratory mice suffering from bacterial infections with no toxic side-effects.

Studies have also revealed the prototype drug works against harmful bacteria in a unique way that is highly unlikely to lead to drug-resistance – one of the biggest stumbling blocks in developing new antibiotics.

Such a development would represent a huge boost for medicine because of growing fears that the world is running out of effective antibiotics given the rapid rise of drug-resistant strains of superbugs and the spread of these diseases around the globe.

Prof Kim Lewis of Northeastern University in Boston – who led the research and is working with NovoBiotic Pharmaceuticals, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which owns the patents on teixobactin – said that the first clinical trials on humans could begin in two years and, if successful, the drug could be in widespread use in 10 years.

"Teixobactin is highly effective against tuberculosis and there is an opportunity to develop a single-drug treatment against tuberculosis based on teixobactin rather than a treatment regime based on administering three different antibiotics," Prof Lewis said. Test-tube studies, published in the journal Nature, showed that teixobactin was able to kill bacteria as quickly as the antibiotics vancomycin and oxacillin.

Biswa Ijtema

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prayers at the Ijtema ground in Gazipur today.

Devotees from 32 districts are attending the first phase, while devotees from the other 32 districts will participate in the second phase slated for January 16-18, reports our Gazipur correspondent.

Meanwhile, Islamic Foundation has called upon the BNP-led alliance to call off its countrywide nonstop blockade as it was creating problems for many pilgrims for the lack of transport.

SM Mahfuzul Haque Nuruzzaman, deputy inspector general of police, said around 12,000 policemen were deployed in five zones at the Ijtema ground to ensure security of the devotees.

Rapid Action Battalion, in a press release, said its force would patrol in the area round the clock to prevent any subversive activities.

Gazipur Civil Surgeon Anisur Rahman said two makeshift medical camps had been set up at the Ijtema ground and 12 ambulances would be there to transport sick devotees.

286 vessels

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Asked why no legal step was taken against it, Mongla Regional Operations Officer Alauddin Nayan of the Coastguard said they could not do anything as they didn't officially have any directive on controlling vessel movement through the Shela.

They received the instructions only in the evening yesterday, he added. However, only two vessels crossed the Shela route and no ship entered the river after 11:00am, ranger Belayet said.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka University professor of zoology visited the Sundarbans this week and shared his findings with The Daily Star on return. "Though the spill is no more visible to the eyes, the soil was still smelling of the furnace oil," said Prof M Niamul Naser.

"I have seen swarms of small crabs relocating their nests away from the affected areas," he said, adding the spill would leave a long-term effect on the food chain of the aquatic creatures there.



A bus in flames at Shantinagar in the capital yesterday. Supporters of the nonstop countrywide blockade by the BNP-led alliance are believed to have set it on fire.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

CID given 2 months

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by March 12 after the investigating agency submitted a petition seeking more time.

This is the fifth time Abdul Kahar Akond, a special superintendent of police of CID, who is in-charge of the further investigation, has sought extension of time.

He told the court he came to know that the wife and elder daughter of the victim Manzur were staying in the USA. He went there and communicated with them through their lawyer. Manzur's daughter Lubna Manzur met him and gave a brief statement.

The superintendent also told the court that he was yet to communicate formally with late Gen Manzur's wife for a statement.

A foreign journalist had written a

series of articles on the murder of Manzur. These reports are also yet to be verified, he said as reasons for asking for more time to complete the investigation.

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, the prime accused in the case, had been exempted from personal appearance before the court. His lawyer Sheikh Mohammad Sirajul Islam represented him yesterday.

The other two accused Maj (ret'd) Kazi Emdadul Haque and Lt Col (ret'd) Mostafa Kamaluddin Bhuiyan were present at the court.

The court proceedings against two other accused -- Maj Gen (ret'd) Abdul Latif and Lt Col (ret'd) Shamsur Rahman Shams -- were stayed following a High Court order.

6 injured in AL factional clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

At least six people were severely injured when two factions of Khulna city Awami League clashed on Wednesday night over an arbitration.

ZA Mahmud Don, a former ward councilor, in trying to resolve a dispute between a house owner and a tenant, told the tenant to leave the house. An AL faction, which the tenant belongs to, then vandalised Don's house.

Following the attack, Don filed a case with Khulna Police Station against some people, including Chhatra League leaders Palash and Tito. As he was returning home along

with his associates and supporters, members of the other group fired at him at Satratar More and vandalised some shops and three motorcycles, Don said. Three people sustained injuries at the time.

He added that he had escaped unscathed but the attackers hacked a stuff of Hotel Castle Salam, Poritosh Kumer, and three passengers of Eagle Paribahan.

They also vandalised Eagle Paribahan counter in the area, local people said.

On information, the police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control, said Sukumer Biswas, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Ukraine PM presses Merkel to keep Russia sanctions

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine's prime minister met German Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday to press her to keep up the economic pressure on Russia at joint crisis talks with Vladimir Putin next week.

Arseniy Yatsenyuk's high-stakes trip to the European Union's biggest nation comes with the 28-nation bloc - teetering on the verge of another recession -- mulling an easing of financial restrictions on Russia that have hurt both sides.

Recent comments from members of Merkel's coalition and French President Francois Hollande suggest the two capitals are starting to view the past two months' letup in Ukrainian fighting as justification for mending their Moscow ties.

And even such Kremlin-wary states as ex-Soviet Latvia have signalled a more receptive approach to Putin.

Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics said on Wednesday that he saw "signals there is a certain kind of willingness on the Russian side to work more closely" with the European Union.

"If (the) situation improves in eastern Ukraine, we would certainly support a softening of sanction," Rinkevics said.

Such talk has frightened the staunchly pro-Western Ukrainian leaders who rose to power in the wake of a bloody popular uprising that toppled a Putin-backed president in February.

Yatsenyuk and President Petro Poroshenko accuse Putin of masterminding the pro-Kremlin revolt that engulfed Ukraine's border regions with Russia six weeks later.

The nine-month separatist mutiny has now killed 4,700 people and left Ukraine -- stripped of the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea by Russia in March -- in danger of also losing its industrial heartland and resource base.

Yatsenyuk's office said ahead of the visit that he would discuss "measures to fight Russia's aggression" with Merkel.

It also pointed out that Ukraine's finances were in such dire trouble that the delegation was taking a regular flight to Berlin whose costs and other expenses were "being covered by the hosts".

The January 15 talks between Poroshenko and Putin in the Kazakh capital Astana will include both Merkel and Hollande -- the two main

mediators in Europe's worst conflict since the Balkan wars of the 1990s.

Merkel held a string of discussions with Putin throughout the standoff that appear to have convinced her the Kremlin had no desire to drop its aggressive and diplomatically isolating approach to Ukraine.

But German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel warned in a newspaper interview published on Sunday that further economic reprisals against Russia could plunge the nuclear superpower into chaos and make life more dangerous for Europe.

"The goal was never to push Russia politically and economically into chaos," Gabriel told the Bild am Sonntag.

"Whoever wants that will provoke a much more dangerous situation for all of us in Europe."

Gabriel heads the opposition Social Democratic Party that Merkel was forced into courting in order to form a government.

Berlin's political left has long harboured warmer relations with Moscow and been putting increasing political pressure on Merkel as German's economy slows.

Hollande for his part has been forced to delay the delivery of two warships to Russia that were built in France under a contract negotiated by then-president Nicolas Sarkozy.

The deal may end up forcing Paris to pay hundreds of millions of euros in damages and cost local construction jobs.

Hollande stressed on Monday that he was heading to Astana with firm resolve to make a breakthrough in the conflict.

"I think the sanctions must stop now. They must be lifted if there is progress. If there is no progress, the sanctions will remain," he told France Inter radio.

Putin denies interfering in Ukraine and brands the punitive steps as a sign of the European Union's failure to stand up to an increasingly anti-Russian White House.

But Yatsenyuk yesterday once again accused the veteran Kremlin leader of "starting this aggressive military operation" against Ukraine.

His government hopes the economic sanctions -- due to come up for review at the end of June -- might still be extended because they require a unanimous vote from all 28 EU members to either lift or ease.

Rubel in jail

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Rubel's fate. But there is a good chance that Shafiqul Islam, who will also fly with the team as a stand-by player, will replace him on the 15-member side, given Rubel remained behind bars.

"It is too early to reach any conclusion. We have to wait. This is a very sensitive issue and a complicated one for us as it's totally the player's personal matter. At this moment I cannot say how long we will wait for him, but if he fails to join the squad in time, we have to go for a replacement," said BCB's chief executive officer Nizamuddin Chowdhury.

Chief selector Faruque Ahmed said they could do nothing until the board gave them instructions.

Rubel, who was on a four-week anticipatory bail granted on December 15, appeared before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Anwar Sadat yesterday morning and submitted a bail petition.

On the other hand, Happy, along with her lawyers, also appeared before the court yesterday to oppose the petition saying that the charge brought against Rubel was primarily proved. Her lawyers also appealed to the court for cancelling his bail and sending him to jail.

After hearing both the sides, the court rejected his petition and ordered authorities to send the cricketer to jail.

Happy filed the case under the Women and Child Repression Prevention Act on December 13 accusing Rubel of luring her into an affair with false promises of marriage. The act registered the fraudulence as a rape charge.

On Tuesday, the High Court rejected a writ petition by Happy that sought directives to remove Rubel from Bangladesh's World Cup squad.

FRANCE ATTACK Britain boosts ports' security

AFP, London

Britain has stepped up security at ports serving France following the Islamist massacre in Paris, officials said Thursday, as the M15 intelligence agency offered French counterparts its "full support".

The terror threat level remains at "severe" and officials said the measures were a precautionary measure following the slaying of 12 people at the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo on Wednesday.

India police probe godman over alleged castration of 400 followers

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police said they are investigating a popular self-styled godman for allegedly encouraging 400 followers to undergo castrations at his ashram so they could get closer to god.

The country's top crime fighting agency has registered a case against Gurmeet Ram Rahim, known as the "guru in bling" for his penchant for garish clothes and jewellery, over the operations in the country's north.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said in a statement late Wednesday Rahim is being investigated for criminal intimidation and causing grievous bodily hurt, saying 400 castrations were allegedly carried out.

The guru, who heads the Dera Sacha Sauda organisation based in Haryana state, is already facing trial for conspiracy over the murder of a journalist in 2002 along with claims of sexually exploiting female followers.

The latest case was filed after one of his devotees, Hans Raj Chauhan, lodged a complaint in court alleging he was manipulated into having the "painful" operation at the ashram.

"They were told that only those who

Govt to go

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Hasina, also the Awami League president, told this to her party colleagues at an emergency meeting with AL senior leaders at Gono Bhavan last night.

"If violent activities continue under the auspices of Khaleda Zia, she'll have to face imprisonment. Law is equal for all," Hasina was quoted as saying by a senior AL leader who was present at the meeting.

Earlier in the morning, the PM while addressing the inaugural session of the 19th Biennial Conference of Bangladesh Economic Association said Khaled Zia would have to pay dearly for her mistake of boycotting the January 5, 2014, polls.

At last night's meeting, Hasina asked her party leaders to build resistance against the BNP-Jamaat alliance's "terrorist" activities. She also asked them to identify those involved in unlawful activities and hand them over to law enforcers, sources said.

The AL chief assured party leaders that long-distance vehicles would start plying from today and her government would take necessary steps in this regard.

About the BNP chief's reported ailments, Hasina said she was staging a drama by pretending to fall sick. She also told the meeting that Khaleda wanted to take control of the Paltan area.

The meeting also decided to defer the party's scheduled January 10 rally at Suhrawardy Udyan to mark Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Homecoming Day due to the Biswa Ijtema, the second largest religious congregation of the Muslims. Sources said the rally would be held on January 12 in the capital while at district levels it would be held on the scheduled date.

The AL had requested the BNP to withdraw its ongoing countrywide blockade considering the Biswa Ijtema. The BNP had refused the appeal.

The ruling party wants to trump its political opponent and appear more considerate of people's religious sentiment, said party insiders.

get castrated will be able to meet god," Chauhan's lawyer, Navkiran Singh, told AFP yesterday.

"We will put all the facts of the case to the court and seek compensation for the victims."

He said doctors carried out the castrations over a period from 2000, but for years his client had been too scared to come forward.

The court asked the CBI to undergo an investigation into the alleged castrations. Forty-seven-year-old Rahim could not immediately be contacted for comment.

The Dera Sacha Sauda says it is a social welfare and spiritual organisation with millions of followers in India and abroad.

On its website, the group describes Rahim as a saint as well as an author, inventor, scientist, philosopher, philanthropist, peace activist and "the ultimate humanitarian".

Rahim also stars in an action movie to be released later this month called "MSG: Messenger of God" in which the guru fights criminals, sings songs and is shown dousing himself in water in slow motion after a rugby game.

Natural catastrophe losses lower in 2014: Munich Re

AFP, Frankfurt

Financial and human losses from natural catastrophes were lower in 2014 than in 2013, the world's leading reinsurer Munich Re calculated in its annual review published Wednesday.

"Overall losses from natural catastrophes totalled \$110 billion (92.6 billion euros) in 2014, down from \$140 billion in 2013," Munich Re calculated.

At 7,700, the number of fatalities was also much lower than 21,000 in 2013, and also well below the average figures of the past ten and 30 years.

"The absence of very severe catastrophes and a quiet hurricane season in the North Atlantic meant that losses from natural catastrophes in 2014 were much lower," Munich Re said.

"Though tragic in each individual case, the fact that fewer people were killed in natural catastrophes last year is good news," said board member

Torsten Jeworrek.

"However, the lower losses in 2014 should not give us a false sense of security, because the risk situation overall has not changed. There is no reason to expect a similarly moderate course in 2015. It is, however, impossible to predict what will happen in any individual year," he said.

The most severe natural catastrophe in 2014 was the flooding in India and Pakistan in September, which caused 665 deaths.

The overall favourable development was no "mere coincidence," Jeworrek said.

"In many places, early warning systems functioned better, and the authorities consistently brought people to safety in the face of approaching weather catastrophes, for example before Cyclone Hudhud struck India's east coast and Typhoon Hagupit hit the coast of the Philippines," said Jeworrek.