

TERRORISM CHARGES Maldives arrests opposition leader

AFP, Male

Police in the Maldives yesterday arrested former president Mohamed Nasheed under an anti-terror law for the alleged illegal detention of a judge when he was in power more than three years ago.

Nasheed, the country's first democratically elected president who now leads the main opposition party, was taken into custody in the capital island of Male, police said.

As he was being taken to the nearby Dhoonidhoo prison islet, hundreds of his supporters clashed with police who used pepper spray to keep them at bay.

Nasheed came to power in 2008 and stepped down four years later following a police and military mutiny.

An arrest warrant for Nasheed, seen by AFP, described him as a flight risk.

Last week the state prosecutor dropped charges of abuse of power against Nasheed for allegedly ordering the arrest of the then-criminal court chief judge Abdullah Mohamed in January 2012.

However he was charged again yesterday under tougher anti-terrorism laws with the same allegation -- ordering the arrest and detention of Abdullah Mohamed, who had been accused of corruption.

Nasheed's office accused the government of "re-prosecuting... under trumped-up charges of terrorism".

"There is little hope President Nasheed can be afforded anything approaching a fair trial," it said in a statement.

Nasheed's Maldivian Democratic Party urged the international community to press the government of President Abdulla Yameen to order his release.

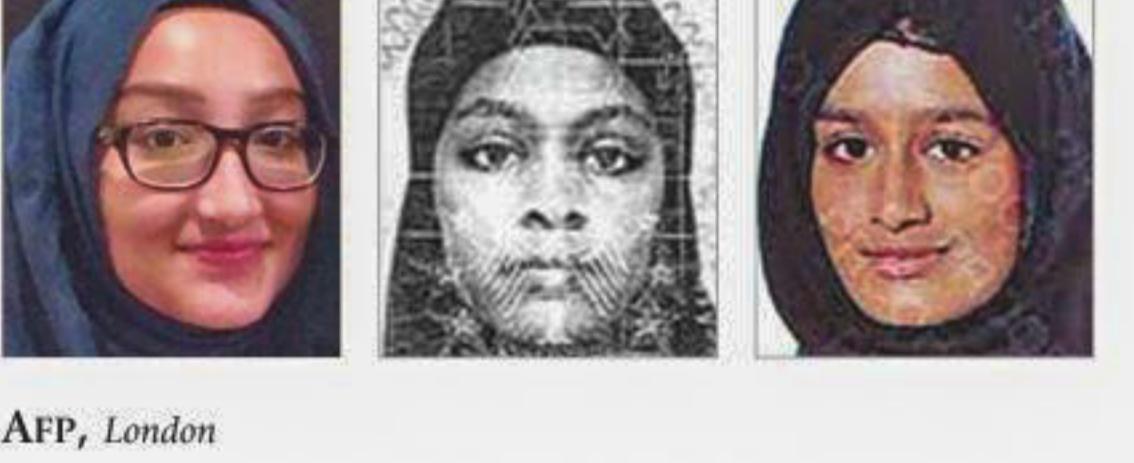
The local Minivan news website said four others -- including the current Defence Minister Moosa Ali Jaleel, who in 2012 was chief of defence forces under Nasheed -- also faced terrorism charges along with the opposition leader.

The case is due to be heard today, Minivan said.

In February 2013 Nasheed took refuge at the Indian High Commission (embassy) in Male to avoid being arrested in connection with the same case.

He lost the controversial November 2013 presidential election to Yameen, the half-brother of former strongman Maumoon Abdul Gayoom who had ruled the Indian Ocean atoll nation of 330,000 Sunni Muslims for three decades.

Please RETURN HOME Families beg Syria-bound UK schoolgirls



AFP, London

The families of three British schoolgirls feared to be travelling to join the Islamic State (ISIS) group in Syria issued emotional appeals for them to come home.

Close friends Kadiza Sultana, 17, and 15-year-olds Shamima Begum and Amira Abase left their east London homes Tuesday and flew to Istanbul.

Police believe the three girls -- all of whom are academic high achievers -- were following the example of a friend who fled to join ISIS jihadists in December.

Abase's family agreed that she could be identified for the first time Saturday in the hope of securing her safe return.

"You are strong, smart, beautiful and we are hoping you will make the right decision," they said in a statement issued by police. "Please return home."

"We understand that you have strong feelings and want to help those you believe are suffering in Syria," Begum's family said. "You can help from home, you don't have to put yourself in danger."

The girls flew to Istanbul on a Turkish Airlines flight from London's Gatwick airport.

Counter-terrorism experts estimate that around 50 women have travelled from Britain to Syria to join the IS group, which has captured swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria.

Does ISIS have seven-foot tall executioners?

Experts doubt ISIS's Libya beheading video

MAIL ONLINE

Parts of a sickening video released by Islamic State militants that shows members of the terror group beheading 21 Coptic Christians have been faked, experts have claimed.

The footage, which lasts five minutes, shows the Egyptian Christians dressed in jumpsuits being marched one by one along a lonely beach, each held by a fighter clad in black.

The captives, their faces uncovered, are made to kneel before being forced to lie down. The masked jihadis then behead them simultaneously.

While experts believe the men were killed by the terrorists, questions have been raised over whether some scenes -- including one where the militants appear to be 7ft tall -- have been manipulated.

There are also doubts as to whether the men were all murdered on the beach and whether they were all killed at the same time. It is thought sections of the footage might have been shot on a 'green screen' in a studio -- a technique used in Hollywood blockbusters -- and that the beach background was added at a later stage.

Vernay Khan, of the Florida-based Terrorism Research and Analysis



Consortium, told Fox News that there are several technical mistakes in the video that show it was manipulated.

She said that in the shot of the terrorists marching their prisoners along the beach, the jihadis appear to be 7ft tall -- towering as much as two feet above their victims.

This observation was supported by Hollywood director Mary Lambert who described it as the shot with the 'really tall Jihadists and the dwarf Christians.'

Meanwhile, Lambert said that the scene that apparently shows the sea turning red with the blood of the beheaded men 'was obviously special effects'.

The experts claimed that only a few jihadis would have been on the beach along with a 'less talented crew' than the ones responsible for some of the group's more high-production videos.



Turkish army vehicles drive in a street of the Syrian town of Kobane during an operation to relieve the garrison guarding the Suleyman Shah mausoleum in northern Syria on Saturday. The operation was jointly conducted by the intelligence organisation and the Turkish army, a few days after reports suggested that the tomb was besieged by jihadis belonging to the Islamic State (ISIS) group.

PHOTO: AFP

Fighting ignites in new frontier

West intensifies warnings as parties wrangle over ceasefire pledges

AFP, Debaltseve

The West sounded more forceful warnings over Ukraine's battered truce yesterday as fighting raged around the port city of Mariupol and the warring sides wrangled over withdrawing heavy weapons.

The volatility was underlined by a bomb blast in the eastern Ukraine city of Kharkiv that killed two people during a pro-government march. Security officials said they had arrested four suspects linked to the "terrorist" attack.

Meanwhile, intensifying fighting around Mariupol, on the Avoz Sea, heightened concerns the pro-Russian rebels might be preparing a new offensive after storming the key

town of Debaltseve in defiance of a week-old ceasefire.

Ukrainian defence spokesman Andriy Lysenko said "two tank attacks" were reported yesterday near Mariupol and fighting was ongoing near the

Kiev claims Russia has dispatched 20 tanks and other vehicles and big guns to the area.

France's European affairs minister Harlem Desir, who was in Kiev for a unity march marking the first anniversary of the overthrow of Ukraine's former pro-Kremlin president, told reporters the ceasefire "must absolutely be respected".

Otherwise, he said, Western sanc-

tions on Russia would be maintained "and could even be strengthened".

EU president Donald Tusk, also in Kiev, said he would "begin consultations on Monday to increase some of the measures in connection with the aggression" in Ukraine, the Interfax

Ukraine news agency reported.

On Saturday, US Secretary of State John Kerry went further, declaring that if the ceasefire continued to be violated, "there will be further consequences including consequences that will place added strains on Russia's already troubled economy".

Although the Ukraine ceasefire has managed to tamp down the

combat along parts of the frontline, both sides in the conflict accuse the other of regular breaches.

The Ukrainian army and the rebels yesterday announced they had agreed to pull back heavy weapons from the frontline -- an important and overdue part of the truce.

But even that part of the deal turned contentious.

The insurgents said the withdrawal would only begin properly tomorrow, after a couple of days of "preparation".

About the only visible sign of compliance with the ceasefire agreement was a late-Saturday prisoner swap of nearly 200 fighters detained by both sides.

I am still the legitimate president of Yemen

Hadi challenges Shia 'coup', resumes duty

REUTERS, Aden

Yemen's president sought to resume his duties as head of state yesterday, holding his first public engagement with state officials since he fled house arrest in Sanaa by the Houthi group that dominates the northern half of the country.

Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi convened governors of several southern provinces and military commanders at the presidential retreat in the economic hub of Aden, in a meeting which was broadcast on the city's local television channel.

Hadi submitted his resignation last month after Shi'ite Muslim Houthi fighters seized the presidential palace and held him under house arrest in the capital Sanaa in a power struggle that followed months of tension over a constitutional dispute.

But the Yemeni parliament had never convened to approve the resignation for it to

go into effect as stipulated by Yemeni laws.

On Saturday Hadi appeared to rescind his resignation after he escaped from Sanaa, saying in a statement he was still president. Aden is firmly outside the control of the Houthis.

Sources at the meeting said Hadi re-affirmed his commitment to a 2011 Gulf-sponsored power transfer deal that allowed his predecessor, veteran Yemeni strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh, to step down following months of Arab Spring protests.

He also slammed the Houthi group, which seized Sanaa in September and completed its takeover of the government last month.

He also called for the release of Prime Minister Khaled Bahah and other government officials, who have also been kept under house arrest, and demanded they be allowed to resume their duties.

The allegations come at a crucial time as Pachauri tries to set the table for a key climate change summit in Paris in December where world leaders are expected to broker a global treaty on tackling global warming.

Delhi police said Pachauri, 74, is accused of sexually harassing a 29-year-old female researcher from his Delhi-based thinktank The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).

"A lady had lodged an FIR (first information report) against him (Pachauri) for sexual harassment... about a week ago and the matter is under investigation now," Delhi police spokesman Rajan Bhagat told AFP yesterday.

The female employee, who cannot be named for legal reasons, has accused Pachauri of repeated inappropriate behaviour, including through emails, text and WhatsApp messages, according to police.

Pachauri, a leading voice on the dangers of climate change, has denied any wrongdoing, saying his emails and mobile phone were hacked.

An economist and industrial engineer by trade, the veteran climate change expert took the helm of the IPCC in 2002 and was elected to a second term in 2008.

CURBING RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM Top Muslim cleric urges edu' reform

AFP, Mecca

The head of Al-Azhar, Sunni Islam's most prestigious seat of learning, yesterday called for education reform in Muslim countries in an effort to contain the spread of religious extremism.

Speaking at counter-terrorism forum in the Saudi holy city of Mecca, Al-Azhar grand imam Ahmed al-Tayib linked extremism to "bad interpretations of the Koran and the sunna", the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed.

"There has been a historical accumulation of excessive trends" that have led some people to embrace a misguided form of Islam, he told the gathering.

"The only hope for the Muslim nation to recover unity is to tackle in our schools and universities this tendency to accuse Muslims of being unbelievers," he said.

Tayib's comments come days after he expressed outrage at the Islamic State group for burning to death a captured Jordanian pilot who took part in US-led air strikes against the jihadis in Syria.

On February 4, after ISIS released a video showing Maaz al-Kassabeh dying in a cage engulfed in flames, Tayib said the jihadis deserved to be killed or crucified.

The three-day conference, organised by the Muslim World League group of non-government organisations, is being attended by senior clerics from across the Muslim world to discuss how Islam can combat extremism.

CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) invites application for the position of Head of Administration and Finance for its Headquarters located in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Interested candidates should visit CIRDAP website: www.cirdap.org for details and forward application with recent CV along with attested copies of educational & work experience certificates and a passport size photograph to the **Advertiser, GPO Box 2883, Dhaka-1000** latest by **15 March 2015**. Female candidates are encouraged to apply. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted. Any persuasion will disqualify the candidature.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Vacancy Announcement

Published on: 23 February 2015

Deadline for application: 08 March 2015

The FAO Representation in Bangladesh is inviting applications of qualified and experienced candidates for the following positions to be filled under (1) GCP/BGD/053/USA "Strengthening the Environment, Forestry and Climate Change Capacities of the Ministry of Environment and Forests and its Agencies", (2) GCP/BGD/058/USA "Strengthening National Forest Inventory and Satellite Land Monitoring System in support of REDD+ in Bangladesh" and (3) FAO Representation. Incumbents will be recruited as National Project Personnel/Consultant:

1. National Consultant - HRD/Training and Research - 1 position (Duty Station: Dhaka)
2. National Communication Consultant - 1 position (Duty Station: Dhaka)
3. National REDD+ Officer - 1 position (Duty Station: Dhaka)
4. National Operations Assistant - 1 position (Duty Station: Dhaka)
5. National Consultant Roster - in different disciplines (UN Salary scale and benefits for similar positions apply)

Interested qualified and experienced candidates will find the post descriptions from FAOBD website <http://www.fao.org/bangladesh/fao-in-bangladesh/employmentprocurement/en/> and in www.bdjobs.com. Interested applicants are requested to send their Personal Profile Form (PPF) and Personal History Form (PHF) as applicable to the following address FAOBD-Vacancies@fao.org by close of business on **8 March 2015**.

NEWS IN brief

Nitish Kumar takes oath as Bihar CM

HINDUSTAN TIMES ONLINE

Nitish Kumar yesterday took oath as chief minister of Bihar -- for the fourth time -- along with 10 ministers in his cabinet. He also pledged to work with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Nitish Kumar's JD(U) had parted ways with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in 2014.

Girl suicide bomber kills five in Nigeria

AFP, KANO, Nigeria

A young girl suicide bomber blew herself up and killed five others yesterday in an attack on a market in the northeastern Nigerian city of Potiskum, witnesses and a hospital source said. Witnesses said she appeared to be as young as seven-years-old and was the latest in a string of child suicide bombers in Nigeria. Previous such attacks have been blamed on Islamist extremist group Boko Haram.

Mamata's aide arrested in Kolkata

NDTV ONLINE

Businessman Shibaji Panja, who accompanied West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on her three-day Bangladesh visit, was arrested yesterday after arriving at the Kolkata airport. The Delhi Police had issued a lookout notice against Mr Panja on February 19 in connection with a case of fraud.

Myanmar aid convoy attacked; 5 hurt

REUTERS, Yangon

Five people, including a Red Cross volunteer, were wounded in an attack on a car near the Chinese border where battles have raged between government soldiers and ethnic insurgents, the second such attack within a week, the Red Cross said yesterday. Myanmar President Thein Sein declared a state of emergency and imposed martial law this month in the region after more than 70 people were killed in fighting between the army and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA), from the Chinese-speaking Kokang region.

Israel to buy 14 F-35 fighters from US

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel is to purchase 14 F-35 stealth fighters from US aerospace giant Lockheed Martin at a cost of around \$110 million each, the defence ministry said yesterday. The \$2.82 billion deal, which includes other technological and training elements, was signed at the weekend after being approved by a ministerial committee in November.