

# Monk's death sparks protest in China

AFP, Beijing

Chinese authorities have suppressed protests over the jailhouse death of a revered Tibetan monk, and briefly detained two of his sisters for not signing his health record, rights groups said Thursday.

Police held the sisters of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche for "around 10 hours" on Wednesday, the US-based International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) cited local sources as saying.

Delek, 65, was 13 years into a life sentence for terrorism and separatism, imposed following a trial observers said was deeply flawed, when authorities announced news of his death at the weekend.

Delek was convicted of separatism and being involved in a bombing in a public square, but his supporters insisted he was innocent.

Authorities have so far refused to release Delek's body to his family or others in the Tibetan community, according to ICT, which said the circumstances of his death remained unclear.

Several protests in his hometown and in the southwestern city of Chengdu, where he was jailed, have taken place since his death was announced, according to ICT and other Tibetan rights groups.

Police opened fire when around 1,000 people gathered near government offices in Nyagchuka county this week to protest the death, injuring about 20 people, the British-based Free Tibet group said.

The US-funded Radio Free Asia also reported that police fired on the protesters, who were angry at a government decision to cremate his remains, rather than give him a traditional Tibetan burial.

ICT said his two sisters were detained after they "refused to sign a document that was described to them as being the health record of their brother".

"The sisters were apparently told that they would not be able to keep a copy, and the information on the document was not clear," it added.

One of the women apparently fainted in prison before the two were allowed to leave, it added.

AFP was unable to independently verify the reports of the protests, or contact authorities in charge of Delek's case.

Access to Tibetan regions is tightly controlled by the Chinese government and local media is barred from reporting issues the government deems sensitive.

China, which has ruled Tibet since 1951, has been accused of trying to wipe out its Buddhist-based culture through political and religious repression and large-scale immigration by Han Chinese, the country's ethnic majority.

China says Tibetans enjoy extensive freedoms and that it has brought economic growth to the region.

Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama fled Tibet after an abortive uprising in 1959 and established his government-in-exile in Dharamsala, India.

Delek became one of China's highest profile Tibetan prisoners when he was sentenced, which the United States and the European Union at the time condemned. Washington said it was "saddened" by his death.

Hollywood star and Tibetan rights activist Richard Gere expressed outrage over Delek's death on Tuesday.

# Pluto has huge

FROM PAGE 20

The young mountains might suggest that Pluto's surface is still active, and changing, now.

The New Horizons' Geology, Geophysics and Imaging Team, led by Jeff Moore, have made the prediction of the age based on the lack of impact craters on the dwarf planet.

Pluto must have been hit by huge amounts of space debris – but the marks of those impacts could well have been removed by the recent geological activity.

"This is one of the youngest surfaces we've ever seen in the solar system," Jeff Moore said in a statement.

The new image was taken about an hour and a half before New Horizons made its closest approach to Pluto, from about 480,000 miles away.

More pictures are expected to be released in coming weeks – building up a "mosaic" of the surface of the planet.

# Dismantle Cuba embargo

## Castro calls on Obama

AFP, Havana

Cuban President Raul Castro asked his US counterpart Barack Obama Wednesday to use his executive powers to "dismantle" the economic embargo placed on his island nation.

Castro called the embargo, in place since 1962, the main stumbling block towards "normalization" between the two nations.

However, only Congress has the authority to lift the measure and its Republican majority has declined Obama's calls to repeal it.

Castro's comments came ahead of the formal reestablishment of diplomatic relations and the opening of embassies between the two countries on Monday.

The move will allow for a higher level of dialogue, but is just the first step in a complex process, with one of the biggest hurdles ahead involving ending the US trade and financial embargo.

"We hope (Obama) will continue to use his executive powers to dismantle aspects of this policy, which is

causing damage and hardships for our people," Castro said at the close of the first of the island nation's twice-yearly meetings of its one-party National Assembly.

His comments were reported by Cuban state news portal Cubadebate as media was not given access to the event.

The reopening of embassies will culminate the historic decision by Obama and Castro on December 17 to begin normalizing relations between.

Monday "will begin a new stage, long and complex, on the way to the normalization of relations, which will require finding solutions to problems that have accumulated over more than five decades and affect the ties between our countries and people."

Castro reiterated, however, that in order to "normalize relations" the blockade would have to be removed.

US conservatives and members of its Cuban exile community have called on Obama to halt the rapprochement with Cuba until Havana carries out political and human rights reforms.

# Major greenhouse gases hit record highs in 2014

AFP, Miami

All the major greenhouse gases that fuel global warming hit record highs last year, while the planet's surface temperature reached its hottest point in 135 years, international researchers said yesterday.

The findings of the 2014 State of the Climate report -- a peer-reviewed study that examines temperature, precipitation and weather events experienced around the world -- were released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

A total of 413 scientists from 58 countries around the world contributed to the report, which is based on data collected by environmental monitoring stations and instruments on land, water, ice and in space.

"Carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide -- the major greenhouse gases released into Earth's atmosphere -- once again all reached record high average atmospheric concentrations for the year," said the study.

Amid worldwide heat records, eastern North America was the only major region of the world to experience below-average annual temperatures.

"Europe observed its warmest year on record by a large margin, with close to two dozen countries breaking their previous national temperature records," said the study.

"Many countries in Asia had annual temperatures among their 10 warmest on record; Africa reported above-average temperatures across most of the continent throughout 2014; Australia saw its third warmest year on record, following record heat there in 2013."

In Latin America, Mexico had its warmest year on record, while Argentina and Uruguay each had their second warmest year on record.

The world's oceans experienced record warmth last year, and sea level was at its highest in modern times, too.

"Owing to both ocean warming and land ice melt contributions, global mean sea level in 2014 was also record high and 67 millimeters (2.6 inches) greater than the 1993 annual mean," when satellite measurements of ocean levels began, said the study.

The full report is published in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society.

# Forkan gets death

FROM PAGE 20

But as her father resisted them, Forkan shot him dead.

They took the woman to a Pakistani army camp where the army men raped her for hours. Forkan and his associates also raped her before returning her two days later.

This woman was one of the victims and eyewitnesses who testified before a special court narrating the brutality Forkan committed 44 years ago.

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday sentenced Forkan to death for the crimes.

"Untold beastly acts of the group of attackers, which was in fact a locally formed criminal enterprise in which the accused Forkan Mallik was an active associate, were the gravest violation of humanitarian law," said the tribunal.

The three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Md Shahinur Islam found Forkan guilty in three out of five charges framed against him.

Of the three charges, he was handed down death penalty for two charges and sentence of imprisonment until death for another charge. He, however, was acquitted from two other charges.

Forkan was given death sentence for the brutal rape and killing of the teenage Hindu girl, and the rape of the Muslim girl and killing of her father and two other civilians.

He was given "sentences of imprisonment for life till death" for raping two Hindu women and forcing them to leave the country.

"Mass rape is graver than murder. What was the goal of committing such mass rape especially on defenceless Hindu women? Its goal was not to ravish the extreme wealth of a woman and to kill her. The goal was to cripple the socio-political order and cultural integrity," said Justice Hassan when he read out the summary of the 99-page judgment.

The nation today pays humble reverence to those women who laid highest sacrifice for the cause of our independence," the judgment read,

# Thwarted Indian couple in Taj Mahal 'suicide pact'

AFP, Agra

An Indian couple forbidden to marry because of their different backgrounds are in hospital after slitting their own throats in an apparent suicide pact at India's famed monument to love, the Taj Mahal.

Police said the pair -- named in the Times of India as Rajveer Singh and Shabnam Ali -- were stable after they were discovered in a pool of blood in the grounds of the Taj Mahal on Wednesday afternoon.

"This couple, one of whom is a Hindu and the other a Muslim, tried to commit suicide at the Taj," said police deputy superintendent Aseem Chaudhary.

"The girl cut her throat first followed by the boy."

Marriage outside caste or religion still attracts strong censure in parts of India and can even lead to so-called honour killings, carried out to protect what is seen as family pride.

"Both Shabnam and I tried hard to convince our parents that they should allow us to get married, but the boundaries of religion remained the biggest hurdle," the Times of India quoted Singh as saying.

"We did this after failing at all possible ways to be together."

The Taj -- India's top tourist attraction -- was built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan as a tomb for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, who died giving birth in 1631.

It has drawn a string of world leaders and royalty including former US president Bill Clinton, while Diana, the late British princess, was famously photographed alone on a marble seat there in 1992.

## CLASH WITH MILITANTS

# Egypt navy boat hit, set ablaze

AFP, Cairo

An Egyptian naval vessel was hit and caught fire in the eastern Mediterranean during a clash with militants in the restive Sinai Peninsula on Thursday, the military said.

The patrol boat had spotted militants on the coast of Rafah and engaged them, the military's spokesman said in a statement. The boat went up in flames during an ensuing firefight.

The military said it suffered no casualties.

An AFP photographer and a witness in the Palestinian Gaza Strip, just across the border, said the boat was struck at least three kilometres (two miles) from shore.

"We were sitting on the beach and suddenly there was an explosion," said Ahmed Nofal.

Other navy boats came to rescue the crew as their vessel spewed a plume of smoke.

Jihadists loyal to the Islamic State (IS) group have killed scores of soldiers and policemen in the peninsula since the army's overthrow of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013.

It was not immediately clear how the boat was hit Thursday, but militants have started to deploy wire-guided missiles against tanks and armoured vehicles.

# Cops beat

FROM PAGE 20

he was not letting them pass the signal. The cop scolded him and an argument followed," said Mofiz, who saw it all unfold before his eyes around 2:00pm.

"A man can't beat another man like this," he said.

In protest, passers-by gathered around the police box and demanded action against the cops.

Like the youth, hundreds of people remained stuck at Green Road Traffic signal as police kept vehicles and rickshaws moving towards Farmgate stranded longer than usual, as the traffic was heavy.

In the face of public protest, police at one stage kept constable Kalam, one of the three who beat the youth, confined in the police box.

But the agitated public kept demanding action against them.

Officer-in-charge of Kalabagan Police Station Mohammad Iqbal reached the spot around 2:15pm.

"All of you leave, except only two," he shouted at the crowd.

But no one listened to him. He responded by picking up a stick and started hitting people indiscriminately. His fellow officers followed him.

Motahar, a cook at Health and Hope Hospital, suffered head injuries in the beating.

Contacted, the OC later denied beating anyone and claimed he went there only to control the situation.

# Limon losing hope

FROM PAGE 20

shot in the left leg by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel in April 2011. Later, the leg had to be amputated and was replaced with a prosthetic leg.

"It hurts when I cannot join others in new attire in the field during the Eid prayer as I cannot bend my leg and sit on the ground. Rather, I have to sit on a chair at a distance and watch them pray," he said, tears welling up in his eyes.

"I try to keep smiling though, hiding all my pains because I believe those who has inflicted such pains on me would be punished one day," said Limon, while talking to reporters at The Daily Star, during his Dhaka trip.

However, Limon and his mother Henoara Begum's lengthy legal battle against six Rab personnel, accused of attempted murder and maiming him, has started to dent his belief.

Henoara had filed the case with Rajapur Police Station on April 10, 2011, after Limon was shot by a Rab team at Shaturia village in Jhalakathi on March 16, 2011.

Rab had mistaken him for a notorious criminal, but instead of admitting their mistake, they filed two cases against him — one for possessing arms and the other for obstructing law enforcers from discharging their duties.

After the incident came to media attention, rights bodies protested the crime vehemently, demanding justice to Limon. Finally on July 11, 2013, the government issued a gazette notification for withdrawing the two cases the elite force had filed against him.

Fifteen months after the notification Limon was cleared of all criminal charges, but justice still remains a far cry as the case his mother has filed continues to face obstruction.

On August 14, 2012, police secretly submitted the final report on the case

to a court saying they found no evidence and witnesses against the Rab personnel.

On August 30, 2012, Limon's mother filed 'no confidence' petition against the final report, which was rejected by a Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court on February 13, 2013.

"Then we appealed to the District and Sessions Judges Court for a revision against the order of the Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court in 2013," said Akkas Sikder, the lawyer, who volunteered to help Limon fight the legal battle, along with the Ain O Salish Kendra's lawyer.

"Almost two years later, toward the beginning of 2015, partial hearing of the case was held and the next hearing date was fixed in August this year," he told The Daily Star.

"Usually in revision cases, hearing dates are fixed within one and a half months but it does not take two years," he said, noting the unusual delay Henoara's case is facing.

In fact, Limon, who used to study business management in a college in Jhalakhati four years ago, shifted to law studies so that he could help poor victims of gross human rights violation, like himself.

Now a second year law college student, he is studying at Somaj Bhattik Medical College and Gonobishwabidyalay in Savar for free, thanks to rights activists.

"Even in 2015 there is no progress of the case filed in 2011," he said, talking about his diminishing faith on the legal system.

"Considering the way it is moving, I may be able to fight my own case, once I complete my studies and start practising as a lawyer," mused the young man, whose leg was maimed but whose mind could not be crippled by Rab's bullet.

# 3 killed in 'gunfights'

FROM PAGE 1

asked the youths about their identity, they started stabbing the members of the crime busters with sharp weapons, he claimed.

Also, they opened fire on the Rab members, prompting the team to retaliate with gunfire that triggered the "gunfight".

Manik and Sumon sustained bullet injuries but their cohorts fled, Atiqur claimed.

They were rushed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) where on-duty doctors declared them dead.

Two Rab members -- Saiful and Imran -- were stabbed and undergoing treatment at RMCH, he said.

Two foreign revolvers, three bullets and two knives were found at the "gunfight" spot.

Police said the bodies were sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

**"GUNFIGHT" IN DHAKA** Although Rab did not confirm the identity of the man killed in the capital, one Anisur Rahman claimed the "gunfight" victim was his brother Yasin Sarkar.

Yasin, 32, was a contractor at Agargaon, he said.

Lt Col SM Masud Rana, commanding officer of Rab-2, said a patrol team found four to five men moving suspiciously in Taltola area around 2:30am.

# Tip trap

FROM PAGE 20

well. In many areas of the capital, residents get letters asking Eid tips for security guards, imams, private tutors, doctors' assistants and hijras and for mosques and orphanages.

"Two persons are conducting Khatam Tarabih in our mosque. To pay their honorarium, we expect your cooperation as in the past," reads a letter sent to all flats at Concord Tower in Katabon.

Cleaners have already visited all the flats there.

"We, 585 hijras, live in Bashundhara Residential Area. You spend a lot of money during Eid. You can give us some," reads a slip that the hijra community sent to all the buildings in the area.

Tuhin, who lives in a tiny flat in the capital's Paribagh area, received a note from his caretaker, asking for Tk 600. "I will ensure you don't need to pay the other guards separately."

With days left before Eid, politicians, businessmen and contractors are avoiding the secretariat, the administrative hub of the government, as they don't want to encounter the lift operators, office assistants and security guards.

"Engineers and contractors regularly visit our ministry but most of them are not coming these days," said an official of the roads and bridges ministry.

Talking to this newspaper, a lawmaker at the secretariat said he now

considers staying abroad during Eid.

"I can save a good amount of money if I celebrate Eid outside the country," he said, adding that he gets tired of meeting demands of various people -- ranging from party men to locals.

An official of the commerce ministry said security guards at the government colony on Bailey Road usually don't salute. "We now get salutes even at midnight!"

At the secretariat, there are some so-called journalists who meet some ministers and top bureaucrats with an expectation of tips. Some even visit homes of political leaders and businessmen for gifts, according to various sources.

Talking to these correspondents, many city dwellers said they faced the same situation if they celebrated Eid at their village homes. They have to meet the demand of local clubs, associations, mosques and madrasas. There are needy people who expect something from townspeople during the festival.

Ziaur Rahman, a senior bank official, said he spent around half of his Eid bonus on tipping people.

"I have already given cash to the security guards at my home and office and bought saris for the house helps. I will also have to tip poor people in my village and pay local madrasas and orphanages."