

More than 800 Boko Haram hostages rescued

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Nigerian troops have freed more than 800 people held hostage by Boko Haram across the country's northeast, the army said.

The "clearance operation" on Tuesday saw 520 people rescued in Kusumma village, three Boko Haram fighters killed and one fighter from the group captured alive, according to spokesman Colonel Sani Kukashka Usman.

In a statement posted to the army's official website on Thursday, he said that 309 others were rescued in 11 villages across the region.

At least 22 "terrorists" were said to have been killed in the operation in which 309 were rescued.

Boko Haram has not commented on the statement.

"The gallant troops cleared the remnants of the Boko Haram terrorists hibernating in Kala Balge general area," Usman said. Kala Balge is a local government area of Borno State.

In a recent interview with Al Jazeera, Nigeria's Information Minister Lai Mohammed said that the army had significantly reduced Boko Haram's ability to carry out big attacks.

Suicide blast

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Sunni-Shiite area south of Baghdad which was once dubbed "the triangle of death" and was badly affected by sectarian violence last decade.

Pushing back IS in this region after the jihadists took over large parts of the country in 2014 was one of the priorities of the government and allied Shiite militias.

That was achieved in a few months and IS has been largely eradicated from the area but violence -- of a sectarian nature and crime-driven -- has remained frequent.

The jihadist group has been losing territory steadily in Iraq for almost a year.

In the most recent operations, Iraqi forces have been gaining ground in the western province of Anbar and have just begun their reconquest of the province of Nineveh.

In the cities the group retains control over, internal tension appears to be on the rise and the lack of supplies is taking its toll.

Observers have warned that, as their self-proclaimed "caliphate" shrinks towards extinction, IS fighters are likely to revert to their old guerilla tactics and ramp up suicide attacks on civilian targets.

Mymensingh

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Ashiqul, police arrested Majid's son Mahub Hossain, 21, brother Md Shahjahan, 35, Suruj Ali, 55, and Mahmudul Islam, 25.

Drives are being conducted to arrest Majid, who is on the run, said police.

Meanwhile, at least three persons, including a Swachhasebak League leader, were injured in a pre-election clash between the supporters of two ruling Awami League-nominated candidates of UP election in Kaharol upazila on Thursday night, our Dinajpur correspondent reports.

They are Subodh Chandra Roy, 30, Asif Reza Rubel, 39, president of Kaharol upazila Swachhasebak League, and Husne Mobarak Ranak, 22, an AL-backed candidate of Ramchandrapur union.

The election will be held on March 31.

Witnesses said supporters of AL-nominated Bablu Rahim were pasting posters in Ishapur village around 11:40pm, leading the supporters of AL rebel candidate Moniram Roy to protest it.

Within a moment, the area turned into a battlefield and both the groups used sharp weapons during the clash, they said.

Subodh was taken to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital while the others to Kaharol Upazila Health Complex.

Meanwhile, Chandpur AL yesterday suspended 10 rebel candidates and Moulvibazar BNP suspended five such candidates of the recent Union Parishad election, say our correspondents.

3 probe

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will submit its report soon.

The police administration committee also visited the spot the same day.

On Tuesday night, at least five people were killed when BGB members opened fire to stop the ballot snatching after voting at the Safa College polling centre. A large group of people swooped on the presiding officer and the BCB members as they were carrying the ballot boxes from the polling centre under Dhanisafa union.

Man who ate toothbrushes

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"It was a rare experience in my 16-year-long surgery career," said Shafiqul, who led a team of doctors to conduct an hour-long operation on Shamimur. Shamimur's family members said he was a drug addict.

Hailing from Digarkanda area in Mymensingh town, Shamimur was admitted to the surgery unit of the MMCH with complaints of abdominal pain in the first week of March, his younger brother Shahinooor Rahman told this correspondent.

After admission, the doctors at the unit had fixed a date for operation, but Shamimur fled the hospital after a few days.

"As he felt severe pain again, we took him to the MMCH but doctors suggested taking him to Dhaka for better treatment," said Shahinooor.

But considering the cost of the treatment and other related expenses, they got him admitted to a private hospital in the town on March 18 and he went through the surgery around 11:00pm that night.

Shahinooor also said his brother used to stay at home. He did not finish his primary education and helped his family in farming.

Shamimur started smoking marijuana around eight years ago and soon became an addict, said his brother.

"We even had to get him admitted to various drug rehabilitation centres over the last few years."

On February 4 this year, he was admitted to a rehabilitation centre and

was released from the centre after a few days, his family members said.

Masud Hasan, anaesthetist of the surgery unit of the MMCH, said, "It seemed that he must have eaten those toothbrushes when he was at the rehabilitation centres." He was one of the members of the team of doctors who performed the surgery.

Hasan said Shamimur might have been in such a state of mind that he could not realise what he was eating.

He had also developed psychological problems due to taking drugs for a long time, said the doctor.

Patients with such psychological problems could take solid objects absent-mindedly, but the retrieval of so many items from his stomach was a rare case in medical science, said Hasan.

After the news spread, curious people from different areas of the town gathered at the hospital to see the patient.

Helal Uddin, manager of the hospital, said he did not find such a case in his 12-year-long service at the hospital. Shamimur was released from the hospital yesterday afternoon, said Dr Shafiq, adding that the patient can now walk.

He may live a normal life if he does not eat inedible objects again, he said.

Contacted, Motiur Rahman Bhuiyan, secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) Mymensingh unit, said the discovery of so many items from Shamimur's stomach had become a talk of the town.

Ctg historic sites left

FROM PAGE 16

Building, Wooden Bungalows of Railway, Old Railway Station, Karnaphuli Railway Bridge (known as Kalurghat Bridge) and Old Circuit House.

Mohsin Government College authorities that own Darul Adalat, the first court building in Chittagong and a structure with both Mughal and colonial architectural traits, decided to knock it down in 2013.

The government stopped the move following media reports. But the building is yet to be declared as a heritage site.

For lack of maintenance, large cracks have developed on its walls and roof with plasters falling off. And the entire building has been taken over by weeds, this correspondent found in a recent visit to Darul Adalat.

Researcher Shamsul said several other historic structures -- Nusrat Shah and Chhuti Khan mosques of the Sultani era, Postar Par and Haji mosques of the Mughal era, and a warehouse of the British colonial period -- were pulled down.

In 1995, the Chittagong Development Authority made a list of 34 old structures in its Detailed Area Plan and suggested that they should be protected as antiquities.

The Chittagong City Corporation later declared risky one of the listed structures, Malum's wooden building.

In 2013, the DoA suggested that two structures in Rangunia and Boalkhali upazilas be declared as protected spots.

They are Chakma Royal Palace, a colonial-era building at Rajanagar of Rangunia, and the mud-building of Kadhurkhal High School, a testimony of Swadeshi movement, in Boalkhali. The former is yet to be announced as a protected site while the latter was declared as a protected antiquity around two months ago, said DoA Assistant Director Lovely Yeasmin.

This correspondent also visited Hammadia Mosque, a Sultani-era structure in Sitakunda, and Wali Begh Khan mosque, a Mughal-era structure, in Chittagong city.

The authorities of Hammadia mosque at Chhoto Kumira have not

taken any initiative to preserve the five-century-old building. Instead, they are constructing a three-storey extension to it, obstructing the view of the beautiful antiquity from three sides.

Abdus Sukur, president of the mosque's governing committee, claimed the new building wouldn't spoil the beauty of the original structure.

He said they decided to build the extension for shortage of space.

This correspondent found that the black-basalt stone inscription at the mosque's entrance was badly damaged. It was painted green and parts of the Arabic inscriptions were not readable. Moreover, motifs were covered with tiles in some parts of the walls inside the old building.

Another site, six-domed Wali Begh Khan mosque, built between 1714 and 1719 during the Mughal era in the port city's Chawkbazar area, has also been left in a poor state, as a three-storey extension is being built around it.

Zafarullah Khan, general secretary of the mosque's governing committee, said they were constructing the extension, keeping enough space around the old building.

Roni Khan, a local resident and student of Chittagong University, said the old mosque could easily be seen from roads even two years ago. But now its view is obstructed by multi-storey buildings.

Researcher Shamsul alleged that government agencies have been insincere in protecting the antiquities of Chittagong.

Asked, DoA Assistant Director Lovely said, "Whenever we get information on any historic site, we visit the spot and send a report to the DoA's Dhaka office, proposing that it should be declared as a protected area if it qualifies according to the Antiquities Act."

The Antiquities Act 1968 (amended in 1976) states that any ancient (minimum 100 years old) product of human civilisation, illustrative of architecture, warfare, politics, or culture, can be called an article of antiquity. The government can declare an antiquity to be a protected site.

The law strictly prohibits damage or modification to any historic site.

Ctg killing fields

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the authorities concerned on March 4, 2014 to acquire the land and preserve the whole 1.75 acre area as a mass killing site.

However, the order is still to be implemented.

Prof Saleh Uddin said, "I have visited the Liberation War affairs ministry and the deputy commissioner's office several times to see development but they are blaming bureaucratic complexities for the delay."

A four-storey under-construction building of USTC still stands in most part of the killing field.

Meanwhile, USTC has filed a case over the ownership of the land, and it is yet to be disposed of.

Registrar of USTC Badrul Amin Bhuiyan told The Daily Star, "The construction work remains halted now because the case is under trial."

He declined to say more.

The Pahartali mass killing site is not the only place lacking preservation, there are many more.

In his book, "Pramanno Dalil: Muktijuddhe Chattagram" (Documentary Evidence: Chittagong during Liberation War), published in 2012, Prof Saleh Uddin enlisted 126 killing fields in Chittagong district that include 74 in the port city, 13 in Fatikchhari, eight in Anwara, five each in Birsarai and Satkania, four each in Boalkhali and Rangunia, three

France minibus crash in Allier kills 12 from Portugal

BBC ONLINE

Twelve people have been killed in a head-on collision between a lorry and a minibus in central France.

The victims were all Portuguese passengers on the minibus, which was travelling from Switzerland to Portugal, officials say.

The driver of the minibus and the two Italian drivers of the lorry survived, they add.

Dhaka sky

FROM PAGE 16

"We saw how the genocide began on this night and then it continued for the next nine months until the war was won," Shyamoli said.

Speakers at the program also called for banning Jamaat-e-Islami.

Several incumbent ministers, including Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, and state ministers also attended the event.

"We need the international community on our side for bringing the 195 Pakistani army officers, accused of being involved in the genocide, to book," said CPB President Mujahidul Islam Selim.

Meanwhile, on this occasion, Grameenphone organised a programme named "Alor Jatra" on Manik Mia Avenue in the city last night. Hundreds of people attended the programme that began around 10:30pm.

Army helping

FROM PAGE 1

Comilla police said that investigators believed Tonu had been killed following an attempted rape.

Her father Yar Hossain, an office assistant of Comilla Cantonment Board, filed a murder case with Comilla Kotwali Model Police Station on Monday, but police have yet to arrest anyone.

Meanwhile, protests continued demanding the immediate arrest of and punishment to the perpetrator(s).

Academicians, politicians, students and activists of different socio-cultural platforms are leading the protest on the streets and in social media.

At a protest rally before the National Museum in the capital, a faction of Gonojagoron Mancha led by Imran H Sarker announced holding a road march from Dhaka to Comilla on March 27 to press home its demand for the arrest of her killer(s).

He called on the government to investigate the case properly.

Lucky Akter, president of Bangladesh Chhtrata Union, alleged in the rally that there was an "evil attempt to hush up the incident as influential people are involved in it".

Later, demonstrators blocked the Shabbagh intersection for around an hour in the afternoon where several hundred people took part.

Students of three government colleges of Comilla blocked a road near Pubali Chattar around 4:30pm, demanding justice, reports our district correspondent.

Zohra Anis, former principal of Comilla Govt Girls College, said the government must ensure justice for the family of Tonu by punishing "the rapists and the killers".

Besides, Nari Sanghati, Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra, Bangladesh Online Activists Forum and some other organisations staged protests in the capital.

'Criminal' killed

FROM PAGE 16

near Tongi Noubandor area to share money they had collected through drug trading and realising extortion, a Rab team went to the spot around 2:45am, said Nazmul Hasan Razib, operation officer of Rab-1.

Sensing the elite force's presence, the gang opened fire on them. The Rab team retaliated with gunshots, triggering the "gunfight".

At one stage, the criminals fled but wounded Delwar was found lying on the spot. He was declared dead after being taken to Tongi General Hospital, the Rab official said.

Rab claimed to have recovered a pistol, two bullets, a magazine, 196 yaba tablets and Tk 10,000 in cash from the scene.

Two Rab men were hurt during the gun battle. They took primary treatment, the Rab official claimed.

Delwar's body was sent to Gazipur Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy. Firoz Talukder, officer-in-charge of Tongi Police Station, said Delwar stood accused in at least 10 cases, including murder, with the police station, reports our Gazipur correspondent.

However, Delwar's wife Mahmuda Khatun told reporters that her husband was a jhut (garment waste) trader. She claimed that she was not aware of her husband's involvement in extortion or yaba trade.

Let there be artificial life

FROM PAGE 16

Dr Craig Venter who led the research team, said: "I think it's the start of a new era."

British scientists described the work as a 'remarkable tour de force' and the journal Science said it was 'honoured' to publish the research. However, the technology opens a Pandora's box of ethical problems.

Critics of such synthetic biology research accuse scientists of playing God. There are also fears the technique could be abused to create the artificial biological weapon.

Six years ago, Dr Venter, a 69-year-old Vietnam War veteran and billionaire entrepreneur, made headlines around the world when he announced he had made artificial life for the first time.

To do this, he read the DNA of Mycoplasma mycoides, a bug that usually infects goats. He then recreated the DNA, stitching it together from fragments of genetic code made from four bottles of chemicals.

This DNA was then loaded into a bacterium from a different species. This bacterium read the DNA and sprang to

life as an artificial bug he named affectionately named Synthia 1.0.

Dr Venter, who was instrumental in the sequencing of the human genome, has now gone a step further. By a process of trial and error, he has worked out which of the 900-odd genes in Synthia 1.0 are essential for life.

This led to the creation of Synthia 3.0, which boasts the 473 genes needed to grow and reproduce.

The human genome, by comparison has 24,000 genes. A normal Mycoplasma mycoides has just over 1,000 genes.

If life is defined as the ability to grow and breed without help, it makes the bug the simplest living thing.

In theory Synthia 3.0, or a similar skeleton bug, could be accessorised with genes that could revolutionise healthcare and fuel production.

Dr Venter, of the J, Craig Venter Institute in California, said some of the possibilities are still out with the realms of human imagination. He also claims it may be ultimately possible to use the technique to recreate any living organism.

Suspect nabbed

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smashed by bullets at his feet. A bomb squad robot approached the wounded man, checking for explosives.

Islamic State suicide bombers hit Brussels airport and a metro train on Tuesday in the worst such attack in Belgian history. Investigators believe those attacks were carried out by the same cell responsible for November's gun and bomb attacks in Paris.

The Belgian federal prosecutor's office said six people were held in Brussels on Thursday, of whom three were released and three were remanded in custody facing possible charges.

Three others were detained on Friday following the arrest in France of Reda Kriket, a 34-year-old Frenchman sentenced to 10 years in Brussels in absentia in July as part of a Islamist recruiting network dubbed the Syrian Connection.

Germany's Der Spiegel magazine said German police had arrested two people, one of whom had received phone messages with the name of the metro station bomber and the word "fin" -- French for "end" -- three minutes before the metro blast. The German interior ministry declined immediate comment.

A person familiar with the investigation in Belgium said one of the people arrested there was believed to be a suspected accomplice caught on security camera footage with the metro station bomber.

"We have strong indications that this is the suspect who was hunted for the last couple of days. The identification is still ongoing," the source said. However he said those arrested before midday on Friday did not include a third suspect seen on video alongside the two who blew themselves up at the airport.

The attacks in Brussels, home to the European Union and Nato, have heightened security concerns around the world and raised questions about EU states' ability to respond in an effective, coordinated way to the Islamist militant threat.

US Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in Brussels on Friday to offer US assistance in security. Two of the Brussels victims were Americans. China and Britain said one each of their nationals were also among the dead.

"Je suis bruxellois. Ik ben Brussel," Kerry said after brief remarks in French

France fines Google over "right to be forgotten"

REUTERS, Brussels

The French data protection authority said it has fined Google 100,000 euros (\$111,720) for not scrubbing web search results widely enough in response to a European privacy ruling.

The only way for Google to uphold the Europeans' right to privacy was by delisting inaccurate results popping up under name searches across all its websites, the Commission Nationale de l'Informatique et des Libertés (CNIL) said in a statement on Thursday.

In May 2014 the European Court of Justice ruled that people could ask search engines, such as Google and Microsoft's Bing, to remove inadequate or irrelevant information from web results appearing under searches for people's names - dubbed the "right to be forgotten".

The US Internet giant has been at odds with European Union data protection authorities over the territorial scope of the ruling.

Google complied, but it only scrubbed results across its European websites such as Google.de in Germany and Google.fr in France on the grounds that to do otherwise would have a chilling effect on the free flow of information.

In May last year the CNIL ordered Google to expand its application of the ruling to all its domains, including

and Dutch, expressing solidarity in its two languages that he too felt a citizen of the Belgian capital.

In Paris on Thursday, authorities arrested Kriket, a French national suspected of belonging to a militant network planning an attack in France. French officials did not directly tie that plot to the Brussels attacks, but Clerfayt, the Schaerbeek mayor, said the man wounded on Friday was linked to both investigations.

Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said in a televised address that Kriket's arrest helped "foil a plot in France that was at an advanced stage".

A police source said investigators found acetone peroxide explosives in an apartment in a Paris suburb after the arrest.

Belgian Prime Minister Michel rejected resignations offered by his interior and justice ministers on Thursday over a failure to track one of the airport bombers, Brahim El Bakraoui, 29, who had been expelled last year by Turkey as a suspected fighter. Bakraoui's brother Khalid, 26, was the bomber who struck Maelbeek metro station.

Prosecutors confirmed the second airport bomber was Najim Laachraoui, a veteran Belgian Islamist fighter in Syria suspected of making explosive belts for November's Paris attacks.

The Brussels attacks came a week after Belgian police killed a militant during a house raid that led them to Salah Abdeslam, the only suspected participant in the Paris attacks to have been captured alive. His lawyer says he has been cooperating with the investigation but did not know about plans to attack Brussels.

Belgian public broadcaster VRT said investigators believed Abdeslam had probably planned to carry out a shooting and suicide bomb attack in Brussels, similar to Paris.

Belgian daily De Morgen said investigators had identified a new suspect they believe played a role in the Brussels bombings, 28-year-old Syrian Naim al-Hamed. The paper said he was on a list circulated to the security services of other European countries after Tuesday's attacks, and was also suspected of involvement in the Paris attacks.

Islamic State posted a video on social media calling the Brussels blasts a victory and featuring the training of Belgian militants suspected in the Paris attacks.

Google.com, because of the ease of switching from a European domain to Google.com.

"Contrary to Google's statements, applying delisting to all of the extensions does not curtail freedom of expression insofar as it does not entail any deletion of content from the Internet," the CNIL said.

A spokesman for Google, now a unit of holding company Alphabet Inc, said the company had worked hard to implement the "right to be forgotten" ruling thoughtfully and comprehensively in Europe.

"But as a matter of principle, we disagree with the CNIL's assertion that it has the authority to control the content that people can access outside France, and we plan to appeal their ruling," Al Verney, Google's spokesman, said.

The company did try to assuage the regulator's concerns in February by delisting search results across all its websites - including Google.com - when accessed from the country where the request came from.

That meant that if a German resident asks Google to de-list a link popping up under searches for his or her name, the link will not be visible on any version of Google's website, including Google.com, when the search engine is accessed from Germany.