

# No waterboarding, even under new president's orders

Says CIA chief

AFP, Washington

CIA Director John Brennan promised that the US spy agency won't use so-called "enhanced interrogation" techniques, including waterboarding, against terror suspects -- not even under a new president's orders to do so.

Brennan's comments may have an impact on this year's White House race, after Republican frontrunner Donald Trump said he would authorize waterboarding -- which President Barack Obama banned shortly after taking office in 2009 -- and techniques that are "a lot worse" if elected to the highest office in the land.

"I will not agree to carry out some of these tactics and techniques I've heard bandied about because this institution needs to endure," Brennan told NBC News in an interview to be aired later yesterday.

"Absolutely, I would not agree to having any CIA officer carrying out waterboarding again," said Brennan.

At the same, a new president could choose to name a new CIA director with the approval of the Senate.

Trump's closest rival conservative Senator Ted Cruz has also said he does not consider the simulated drowning technique to be torture. Although vowing not to use the method in "widespread" fashion, Cruz has said that as president, he would "use whatever enhanced interrogation methods we could to keep this country safe."

# Ukraine looks to new pro-EU govt after PM quits

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine prepared yesterday to usher in a stable new pro-Western government following the resignation of Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk over public anger with his seeming inability to fight government graft.

Yatsenyuk's announcement on Sunday came barely two months after he survived a no-confidence vote in parliament that left the government paralysed and put the release of vital foreign aid on hold.

The former Soviet republic has been roiled by a pro-Russian eastern revolt and an economic collapse that has wiped out people's savings and stirred public resentment toward the government since Yatsenyuk assumed office in February 2014.

"Having done everything to ensure stability and make a smooth transition of power possible, I decided to step down from the post of prime minister of Ukraine," the 41-year-old said in a weekly television address.

President Petro Poroshenko's party has proposed replacing Yatsenyuk with parliament speaker Volodymyr Groysman -- a coalition builder who has gained stature by keeping the notoriously-rowdy chamber in relative peace since his appointment in November 2014.

But some economists fear that the 38-year-old Poroshenko protege may lack the toughness needed to stand up to a handful of tycoons who have dominated Ukraine's fractious politics for years.

Parliament is to decide whether to accept Yatsenyuk's resignation today at what is expected to be a marathon session that might also see a vote on Groysman's candidacy.

Yatsenyuk's party member Anton Gerashchenko wrote on Facebook that there were "more than enough votes" needed to accept the premier's resignation.

Yet what comes next is far less clear.

The parliamentary factions headed by Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk have been trying for weeks to muster the majority necessary to push through a new cabinet leader and form a government that could appease the other dissatisfied parties.

But smaller groups such as the one headed by former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko have pulled out of the pro-EU coalition that formed in wake of the February 2014 ouster of Ukraine's despised Russian-backed president Viktor Yanukovich.

# UK 'satisfied'

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direct flights from Dhaka to the UK until further notice, adding that it was found in the recent security assessment of Dhaka airport that some international security requirements were not being met.

In the wake of the restriction, the Bangladesh government on March 21 signed a deal with British company Redline to ensure international-standard security at Dhaka airport.

The civil aviation and tourism ministry now expects withdrawal of the ban by this month, said sources.

# ISIS 'killed 21 Christians in Syrian town'

BBC ONLINE

Reports are emerging of the killing of Syrian Christians by Islamic State militants in the town of al-Qaryatayn. The town was retaken by Russian-backed Syrian forces and their allies earlier in the week.

Some 21 Christians were murdered when almost 300 Christians remained in the city after IS captured it last August, said the head of the Syrian Orthodox Church. They included three women, Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II told the BBC.

He said some died whilst trying to escape while the others were killed for breaking the terms of their "dhimmi contracts", which require them to submit to the rule of Islam.

Five more Christians are still missing, believed dead. Negotiations and the payment of ransoms have seen the remainder of the group re-join their families.

The patriarch said warnings had come that Islamic State planned to sell Christian girls into slavery. But despite the murders, he said restoring harmony among faiths remained his goal.

"We lived this situation for centuries, we learned how to respect each other, we learned how to live with each other," said the patriarch. "We can live together again, if we are left alone by

others."

The town is now utterly devastated, with street after street and building after building - including a 1,500-year-old Catholic monastery - in ruins.

## IS SETBACKS

Coaches laid on by the Syrian government have been bringing thousands of residents back to al-Qaryatayn and the nearby city of Palmyra.

IS captured al-Qaryatayn in August, and abducted hundreds of residents, including dozens of Christians, many of whom were ransomed by their families.

If the government reasserts its control over al-Qaryatayn, it would be a further boost for President Bashar al-Assad, whose forces - backed by Russian air strikes - have made a string of gains against rebels in recent months.

The jihadists have suffered a series of setbacks in Syria in recent weeks, also losing the ancient city of Palmyra.

Al-Qaryatayn, about 100km (60 miles) west of Palmyra, was taken over by IS fighters in their first major offensive since they seized Palmyra last May.

There has been a dramatic drop in fighting in Syria since a partial ceasefire came into effect last month, though IS and the al-Qaeda-linked Nusra Front were excluded and are still

# Tiger numbers

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tiger population with some 2,226 tigers roaming its reserves across 18 states, according to the last count in 2014.

Russia, Bhutan and Nepal also saw higher tiger numbers in their latest surveys.

However, experts cautioned that the numbers may be partly down to improved data gathering, with the inclusion of new sample areas and upgraded survey techniques as well as enhanced protection efforts.

Bangladesh registered a severe decline from 440 tigers in 2010 to 106 in 2015, though conservationists say this may have been due to an over-estimation of the population six years ago.

There has been a rapid fall in Indonesia because of heavy forest destruction to meet a growing global demand for palm oil, pulp and paper.

Cambodia is mulling the idea of reintroducing tigers after declaring them functionally extinct last week following no evidence of the big cats since 2007.

Deforestation, encroachment of habitat and poaching have devastated tiger numbers across Asia.

Poachers often sell tiger body parts to the lucrative traditional Chinese medicine market, as well as other man-made problems such as habitat loss.

In 2010 the 13 countries with tiger populations -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam -- launched a plan to double their numbers by 2022.

Yesterday's global census was released a day before a three-day meeting of ministers from these countries in New Delhi to discuss conservation efforts.

# No load shedding

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due to a lack of gas supply. And yet we are able to supply the full demand."

From last week, the temperature has shot up by six degrees Celsius across the country. For example, the hottest day on April 5 marked 34.2 degree Celsius, while it shot up to 40.3 degrees in Chuadanga on Sunday.

The temperature in Dhaka also jumped up to 36 degrees on Sunday from 31.2 degrees on April 5.

That means people are using more electricity to keep themselves cool.

On Sunday, the PDB supplied 8,343MW power.

The recent launching of Summit's Bibiyana 335MW power plant and addition of some new power plants last year have made it easy for the PDB to produce enough power. Plus, the country is now importing 600MW power from India. Last year this import was 500MW.

"The demand for extra power due to irrigation is around 1,800MW. This demand begins from March and it will drop from late April, ending in mid-May," the power board official noted.

According to the Met Office, severe heat wave has been sweeping over Kushtia region while a mild to moderate heat wave is sweeping over Rajshahi and a part of Khulna divisions and the regions of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Saidpur, Dhaka, Tangail and Faridpur.

Met Office says that heat wave may continue for a few more days. According to AccuWeather.com, temperature may soar up to 42 degree Celsius in Dhaka on Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year. But the weather website adds that Dhaka is likely to see heavy thunderstorm and rainfall from April 15 for the next 10 days.

But from the power generation side, the PDB's forecasts remain favourable.

This year the power board will add a new 450MW gas-fired combined cycle plant in Ashuganj South. The construction of this plant, built by Ineleetra Sweden and TSK of Spain, has been completed. Besides, a couple of new power plants are expected to begin partial operation within this year.

The power board expresses hope that six new gas-based power plants, totalling 2,100MW, will begin full operation from next year. These are being built in Siddhirganj, Ashuganj, Bheramara, Shahjibazar, Shikalbaha and Bibiyana South. A couple of similar projects are in limbo.

Considering that power demands shoot up by 10 percent every year, it is expected that 2017 will also be a load-shedding free year.

Meanwhile, several districts have been witnessing power outages lately. This is happening due to problems in local power distribution systems, said officials.

# Father saw head injury

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issued by CMH, she was brought in dead.

Around 2:00am on March 21, SI Saiful prepared the inquest report at the emergency unit of CMH before sending the body to Comilla Medical College morgue for autopsy.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the inquest report, which bears signatures of six witnesses, including victim's father, mother Anwara Begum and brother Anwar Hossain.

The sub-inspector prepared the report at will, Yaar Hossain told this correspondent yesterday.

He also alleged that SI Saiful took their signatures before writing anything on that paper.

"I was asked to sign the paper. But as I said I would not sign it, he [the police official] told me that I have to do it for filing a diary."

Yaar Hossain was still not convinced. But he and other family members had to sign the paper as the cop insisted that the signatures were necessary for filing a case.

SI Saiful Islam denied this allegation. "Many can bring many allegations but I don't mind," he told The Daily Star yesterday, claiming that he wrote whatever he saw and then took signatures of the family members.

The report reads that Tonu, 19, a college student, was in a black-red-yellow printed kameez, a black salwar and a lilac-colour scarf. Most of her two-foot hair was cut. Her mouth and eyes were shut.

There was a minor cut and blood spot on the upper part of her left ear. Minor portion of skin on the left of the face and above the right knee were bruised. Her genitalia and rectum were normal.

There were sands in different parts of the clothes and body.

The kameez was torn off to some extent, the report says without specifying the area.

SI Saiful prepared the inquest report in the presence of gynaecologist Lt Col Selina Begum and ayah Rozina Begum.

Doctors could not find out the cause of her death, says the report.

# Proceedings

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Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, Barrister Abbas Uddin and Barrister Margub Kabir appeared for the Star editor, while Assistant Attorney General Arobindu Kumar Roy represented the state.

Earlier, Anam got bail in 74 cases from another HC bench and lower courts after he surrendered before those.

On April 3, the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Amir Hossain granted the Star editor anticipatory bail in 66 cases.

A total of 83 lawsuits were filed against Anam in 56 districts. And of those, 17 involve petitions that sought to sue Anam for sedition. A Sylhet court dismissed one of the cases on March 14.

The case spree against the Star editor began days after he made an introspective comment at a TV talk show on February 3 about a lapse in his editorial judgment in publishing some reports, based on information given by the Taskforce Interrogation Cell during the 2007-08 caretaker government rule, without being able to verify those independently.

The cases against Anam have drawn condemnation from local and foreign journalists and their unions as well as human rights bodies.

# 14 govt officials

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submit a report to it on whether the ship breaking yards were operating in compliance with its directives, conditions of environmental certificate and related laws.

As the committee is yet to be formed, accidents at ship breaking yards have been causing deaths. Ninety-three workers have died and the Department of Environment (DoE) has fined seven ship breaking yards for not complying with the conditions of environmental certificate since the HC delivered the directives in 2009, the press release said.

Environment and Forest Secretary Kamal Uddin Ahmed, Industries Secretary Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, Labour and Employment Secretary Mikail Shipar, Shipping Secretary Shafique Alam Mehedi, Director General of the Department of Shipping Commodore M Zakiur Rahman Bhuiyan and DoE Director General Raisul Alam Mondal are among the government officials who have been made respondents to the contempt rule.

Fida M Kamal, Syeda Rizwana Hassan and M Shafiu Alam appeared for Bela.

# Rajuk director

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Mustafa Kamal said they picked up Shafiqur on charges of misappropriating the money.

Meanwhile, another ACC team yesterday arrested Abu Ashraf Siddiqui, assistant director of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), from Ekuria of Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital on charges of misappropriating money.

ACC sources said Ashraf in league with others forged documents on car imports and dodged import duties worth Tk 4.23 lakh in 2011 when he was serving in the BRTA's Cox's Bazar office.

Five cases were filed against the official in 2012 on charges of misappropriating money. The anti-graft watchdog yesterday showed him arrested in one of the cases.

Both the arrestees were kept in custody of Ramna police.

# Hong Kong pro-democracy protester stands trial

AFP, Hong Kong

A Hong Kong pro-democracy protester who was allegedly beaten by police in an attack captured by television cameras and beamed around the world stood trial yesterday over allegations he assaulted officers.

Political activist Ken Tsang stands accused of splashing liquid on police officers during mass street rallies in 2014 -- the same night as he was beaten in an attack.

The incidents took place at the height of the protests seeking free leadership elections in Hong Kong, rocking the reputation of the city's police force.

The police who allegedly beat him, who are not the same officers Tsang is accused of assaulting, are to stand trial separately.

The pro-democracy Civic Party member has pleaded not guilty to five charges -- two of assaulting a police officer and three of resisting a police officer.

On the opening day of the five-day trial, a courtroom packed with reporters and members of the public was shown video footage of officers pointing to a masked man who poured liquid onto the city's Lung Wo Road, close to government buildings.

# Jute sector gets

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jute mills, added the state minister. Minister for Textiles and Jute Emaz Uddin Pramanik also spoke.

Meanwhile, jute mill workers who have been demonstrating in Khulna for the last few days yesterday said they would continue with their agitation until they received the arrear salaries and wages.

## CHANGES TO HAJJ POLICY APPROVED

The cabinet approved a proposal for amending the National Hajj and Umrah Policy-2016 and Hajj Package-2016 following the Saudi government's decision to cut the number of hajj pilgrims this year.

As per the Saudi government's decision, the total number of hajj pilgrims from Bangladesh will be 1,01,758, Cabinet Secretary M Shafiu Alam told reporters after the meeting. Earlier, the number was fixed at 1,13,868.

Under the revised policy and package, the number of hajj pilgrims under

government management would be 10,000, up from 5,000. Besides, a total of 91,758 pilgrims would perform hajj under private management.

Shafiu said every hajj pilgrim will have to make all their payments electronically (e-payment) while the payment for Qurbani will have to be made through the online system of the Islamic Development Bank.

Each of the pilgrims will have to collect a token for Qurbani and none will be allowed to perform the ritual on his own this year, he added.

A hajj agency will have to carry at least 150 pilgrims instead of 50. There will be three muallems in a hajj flight for 419 pilgrims, said the cabinet secretary.

Each pilgrim will have to pay 150 Saudi riyals as water cooling charge which would be adjusted from their additional service charges of 1,000 riyals.

# Festive look in the hills

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community to meet each other," said Singyoung Mro, member of Bandarban Hill District Council.

"An interesting feature of this fair is that boys and men on this day have to buy whatever a woman or girl asks for, even if she is a stranger."

For the Chakmas, the three-day celebration starts with *Fulbiju* or the flower-floating programme today.

People get up early, clean their houses and decorate them with flowers, and float flowers in rivers, canals and springs to seek blessings of God for peace and prosperity. In the evening, they go to Kyangs (Buddhist temples) and light candles.

The second day is called *Mulbiju* and an indigenous specialty called *Pachon* is cooked and enjoyed by the community members. The last day, known as *Goiija Pojija Din*, is spent by taking rest.

While different sorts of competitions of indigenous games are held at the Rangamati Town Stadium, Raicha Shatkamol Para in Bandarban is a village where the Thanchangya community arrange Ghila Khela programme every year.

The Marma community in Bandarban will start Sangrai with a colourful procession called *Mongol Shobhajatra* today. Tomorrow, Buddhist devotees will deliver *Chhoaing* (special preparation of food) to venerable monks.

In the afternoon, they would bring out a procession and bathe a statue of Lord Buddha in the Sangu or the Shankho river, kicking off the traditional water fight.

People throw water at each other to symbolically cleanse everything that was old and weary.

On April 15 and 16, a cultural programme featuring *Maitree Pani Barshan*, in which people will shower each other in a gesture of friendship, will be held at Puraton Razar Math at 4:00pm in the Bandarban Sadar town.

The Chakma, Marma and Tripura communities also organise *Elderly Pouja* in which they show respect to the community elders by giving them showers and new clothes.

The Tripuras will start Boishu celebration tomorrow with *Harboishu*, the first day of New Year, through programmes to show respect to nature and the birds, animals and insects of the universe to please their mythical god Goraiya.

Tripura young girls scatter rice on their yard to feed birds and domestic animals. Their houses are decorated with flowers to welcome guests. They also go to rivers to float flowers.

The Boishabi festival coincides with the Bengali New Year, connecting the people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in their joys and celebrations.

# A hospital for poor

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clinics of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) of the health ministry.

Ministries of home and the railways have such hospitals for treating members of police, BGB and the railways, while the army personnel have Combined Military Hospital, he added.

"On my ministry's behalf, I promise to assist with any move, concerning setting up of such hospitals for our garment and expatriate workers, to the best of our abilities," said Shamiul Islam.

"I will share the idea with my bosses in the ministry," he added.

Sharing her firsthand experience at the hospital, its superintendent Sadia Sajmin Siddiqua said urban work patterns and lifestyle were found to have largely determined the diseases the government employees suffer from.

She said her hospital was on the process of introducing new departments like neuro-medicine, physical medicine and urology, as long hours of desk jobs increased the cases of back pain, cardiac arrest and diabetes among government employees.

Numerous obstacles -- manpower shortage, inadequate logistics and infrastructure supports, and financial constraints -- may become excuses for not undertaking the challenging task of building similar hospitals, but there is always a way if there is a will, said Sadia.

According to her, there were 86 patients admitted to the hospital on March 13 while 500 to 800 patients visit the hospital's outdoor department a month.

The hospital's budget for 2015-2016

fiscal year was about Tk 10 crore, while it sought Tk 15 crore for 2016-2017.

"If we can manage the hospital being entirely dependent on the public exchequer, it should be many times easier for the authorities concerned to operate hospitals for garment and expatriate workers," said Sadia.

An estimated 4.4 million workers are employed in the \$25.6 billion garment industry while 9 million expatriates remit \$16 billion a year.

B a n g l a d e s h G a r m e n t Manufacturers and Exporters Association President Siddiqur Rahman claimed to have 10 health centres in and around the capital and a 50-bed hospital in Chittagong in operation for garment workers.

According to him, another hospital was under construction in Dhaka.

"But, I think we can serve our workers' better if we receive government's assistance," said Siddiqur.

State Minister for Labour and Employment Mujibur Haque could not be reached for his thoughts on the matter.

But, Expatriates' Welfare & Overseas Employment Minister Nurul Islam found the idea "considerable".

"I will keep your suggestion in my mind," said Nurul.

The privileges stemming from offering the workers' health services are many, according to the Sarkari Karmachari Hospital's urologist Amirul Islam.

"When a worker, either employed at home or abroad, has the certainty of receiving treatment for him and his family, he is relieved of a major concern in life," said Amirul.

"Now he will concentrate more on work."

# AL council

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highest decision-making body of the party, in January decided to extend the tenure of the committee by six months. It again extended the tenure by three more months at a meeting on March 20.

That meeting decided to hold the council in July this year.

On September 11 last year, the ALCWC decided to hold the council in December but failed. The date was again deferred to March 28 at a meeting held on January 9.

The party has already formed a 67-member council preparation committee headed by party chief Sheikh Hasina and with Syed Ashrafal Islam

as the member secretary. Besides, the party has constituted 11 sub-committees with senior leaders as conveners to make the council a success.

Syed Ashraf termed the council a "big issue" and said it creates leadership. "The Awami League's council is always historic. The decisions of the country's independence and also movement for language in 1952 were made at Awami League councils," he said.

Historical decisions might be made in the next council like before, said Ashraf, also minister for public administration.