

Assange agrees to extradition if US releases Manning

AFP, London

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange will agree to be extradited to the United States if President Barack Obama grants clemency to the former US soldier Chelsea Manning, jailed for leaking documents, the company said on Thursday.

"If Obama grants Manning clemency Assange will agree to US extradition despite clear unconstitutionality of DoJ (US Department of Justice) case," WikiLeaks wrote on Twitter.

Assange has been living in the Ecuadoran embassy in London since June 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden to face sexual assault allegations.

The Australian former computer hacker said he fears Stockholm will in turn extradite him to the US, where he angered Washington over WikiLeaks' publication of thousands of US military and diplomatic documents leaked by former US soldier Manning.

Manning is currently serving a 35-year sentence in solitary confinement for handing over the 700,000 sensitive documents from the US State Department.

Turkey arrests five soldiers for 'helping terror group'

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey has arrested five soldiers in connection with a deadly suicide attack on the military claimed by a Kurdish radical group in the central city of Kayseri, state media said yesterday.

A bus -- carrying low-ranking privates and non-commissioned officers -- was attacked after leaving the command headquarters in the city to take the off-duty soldiers on a shopping trip on December 17.

The soldiers, who were based at the same headquarters, are accused of "helping a terrorist organisation" and "leaking military information", including the time the bus would leave, state-run Anadolu Agency said.

Fourteen soldiers died in the explosion and dozens were wounded. The attack in Kayseri, an industrial hub in the heartland of Anatolia, was one of many in Turkey in a bloody 2016.

Chinese cops

FROM PAGE 16

complaints about police officers' bad attitudes. On January 5, a television programme highlighted the bad attitudes of police officers in Xi'an.

It showed the experiences of locals who came to the station to handle various issues. The following day, the Chang'an branch of Xi'an's police department unveiled a plan promising that it would improve police officers' service over the course of three months beginning with the first lot of hospitality style training on January 8.

Li Huxian, chief of the Chang'an branch of Xi'an's Public Security Bureau, told reporters: "Our officers cannot necessarily meet the standards of a five-star service provider in their daily work, but a smile from the bottom of one's heart reflects the details of our daily service."

"It will make people feel welcome." Training in how to smile is a current occurrence in some professions in China.

Many flight attendants are given the task of smiling while holding a chopstick in their mouth to achieve the perfect smile.

Many people have commented on the story on Chinese social media site Weibo.

One user commented: "That's great. Many police are so impolite." While another said: "This is the first joke I heard in 2017."

And one user wrote: "Maybe they should stay at a Japanese hotel. Chinese hotel staff don't smile at all."

'JMB man' held

FROM PAGE 1

Cops claimed to have recovered four pistols, six magazines, 17 bullets, six knives, six straight razors and some bomb-making materials from the house.

At least 50 bombs could have been made with those materials, said police.

Acting on a tip-off, a special team of Bogra police raided the house around 9:00pm, arrested Fazlur and recovered the arms and bomb-making materials, said M Khurshid Hossain, deputy inspector general (Rajshahi range) of police.

The house was under surveillance since yesterday morning. Sensing the presence of police, the arrestee tried to flee, but in vain, he added.

Kushtia OC withdrawn over violence after AL leader's murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station in the city was withdrawn on Thursday night following violence in the area over the murder of an Awami League activist the day before.

Kazi Jalal Uddin, the OC, was withdrawn for "negligence", Kushtia Superintendent of Police Proloy Chisim told The Daily Star.

On Wednesday, AL activist and village doctor Lutfar Rahman Sabu, 45, from Ambaria village, was shot dead allegedly by activists of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) in Mirpur upazila of the district.

Soon after the killing, angry AL activists attacked and vandalized the Mirpur upazila office of JSD and the house of Moshir Rahman Milon, vice president of the upazila unit of JSD, as they believe he masterminded the killing.

The upazila AL demanded the immediate withdrawal of the OC and called a general strike for Saturday in

the upazila to press home their demand.

The OC was withdrawn as he failed to tackle the situation, the Kushtia SP said.

According to local and police sources, Sabu died on the spot after a group of JSD activists waylaid him near Ambaria graveyard around 1:30pm and shot him.

Ambaria Union Parishad Chairman Atahar Hossain, also organising secretary of Mirpur upazila AL, said Sabu recently joined the ruling party from BNP.

Local JSD activists had been threatening Sabu of dire consequences soon after he joined the AL politics, Atahar said.

Different party sources said AL and JSD had been fighting for establishing supremacy in Mirpur and Bheramara upazilas for long.

At least 20 clashes took place between activists of the two parties that left two people from both sides dead since 2012.

Venezuela tension rises as govt arrests rivals

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan authorities Thursday said they arrested four opponents of President Nicolas Maduro for plotting an armed revolt, while the opposition accused him of using intimidation to cling to power.

The arrests raised tension in the volatile South American country after Maduro launched an "anti-coup commando squad" led by his new headline vice president, Tarek El Aissami.

That was a response to opposition lawmakers' latest efforts to remove Maduro over an economic crisis that has caused food shortages and deadly riots.

The son of Raul Baduel, a retired general-turned-critic of Maduro, said on Twitter that authorities had revoked the parole of his father who served six years in jail for corruption.

Authorities also arrested opposition lawmaker Gilber Caro and two opposition councillors, Jorge Luis Gonzalez and Rosmer Rubio.

Interior Minister Nestor Reverol said the four were suspected of links to

"a terrorist plan of destabilization."

He alleged that Caro, Gonzalez and Rubio were found in possession of firearms and explosives and that Baduel had held meetings about the plot.

Reverol also alleged the involvement of Lilian Tintori, a high-profile critic of Maduro who is the wife of jailed opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez.

Tintori earlier branded Caro's detention an "abduction."

During a Thursday news conference, she called the government's accusations of a coup "false," stating that "we want a way out of this disaster in a constitutional, peaceful and electoral way."

Maduro said last week he had appointed El Aissami to crack down on "right-wing terrorists" -- his name for political opponents who he says are mounting a "coup" against him.

"The only tool the government has against the people is to use fear and terror," opposition congressional speaker Julio Borges told reporters after the latest arrests.

Delhi in talks

FROM PAGE 16

Rejuvenation

Sushri Uma Bharti has said the centre is discussing the issue of bringing water into concurrent list with states," an official statement quoted Bharti as saying at an event in New Delhi called "Jal Manthan-III".

As per the Indian constitution, the issue of water resources is totally in the domain of respective states, which means the federal government has to have the consent of a particular state before taking any decision on the issue affecting that state.

Bharti's remarks assume significance as bringing the water issue on the concurrent list of the constitution will give the federal government a key say in the matter.

The question is: what implications it would have for the stalled deal between India and Bangladesh on sharing the waters of Teesta river, a deal that has been steadfastly opposed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee since September 2011 when she opted out of a trip with the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Dhaka to sign the agreement.

Since then, the federal Indian government has maintained that it is trying to work out a consensus with the

West Bengal administration on the proposed deal which Mamata has consistently vetoed so far.

Recently, India's State Minister for External Affairs MJ Akbar had told the media in New Delhi that efforts were on to evolve a consensus with the West Bengal government on the Teesta water-sharing issue.

Mamata had in the past maintained that sharing of Teesta water with Bangladesh would have grave implications for irrigation and power in the northern part of West Bengal.

It remains to be seen how the federal government addresses her concerns and help overcome the resistance to the Teesta deal.

Bharti also said the Manas-Sankosh-Teesta-Ganga-Mahanadi-Godawari rivers link was "Mother link" of India's ambitious inter-linking of rivers in the country, saying it would help solve water woes of states like West Bengal, Odisha and Bihar.

She said a section of the people in a particular state are opposed to this link and termed it a political issue.

She said the successful completion of this link would be able to solve the drought and flood problems of West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha to a great extent.

PM leaves for Davos

FROM PAGE 1

Ahead of the PM's visit, the foreign ministry will hold a press conference at its office this morning.

As per the programme schedule, the PM would return on January 21.

Chinese President Xi Jinping will become the first Chinese head of state to attend the WEF in Davos where he is expected to take the centre stage with China presenting itself as a champion of globalisation.

The United States will be represented by Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State John Kerry and "someone from the transition team representing the new (Trump) administration".

Some global leaders, including the WEF regular participant German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, will not be in Davos this year.

Official sources said the 47th annual meeting of the WEF would focus on five critical leadership challenges in 2017: strengthening global collaboration, restoring a sense of shared identity, revitalising economic

growth, reforming capitalism and preparing for the "Fourth Industrial Revolution".

Ahead of the meet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein yesterday called upon business leaders gathering at the WEF annual meeting to use their considerable influence to stand up for human rights and prevent rights violations in countries where they operate.

"We begin the year full of anxiety about the state of the world: the deeply disturbing increase in divisive behaviour and policies, and outright hatred; the attacks against fundamental human rights, particularly of those already vulnerable; and the continued widespread failure to ensure fair access to resources, prosperity and economic security for all," Zeid said.

Zeid also welcomed the increasing participation by large multinational corporations in the annual UN Forum on Business and Human Rights and the growing implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

UN rights

FROM PAGE 16

ANP's vice-president Khine Pyi Soe told AFP.

Villages in northern Rakhine have been under military control since October as the army stages "clearance operations" to find Rohingya insurgents allegedly behind deadly raids on police border posts.

The crisis has drawn a storm of international criticism for the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, which took power in March.

Lee has slammed the lockdown as "unacceptable" and called for an international investigation into claims troops have raped, murdered and tortured civilians from the Muslim minority.

Ahead of her trip, she said violence in Rakhine had contributed to "disquiet regarding the direction that the new government is taking in its first year".

Muslim-majority Malaysia has lashed out at Nobel laureate Suu Kyi for not stopping the violence, and next week will host foreign ministers from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation for talks on the crisis.

Bangladesh has urged Myanmar's government to take back the thousands of refugees that have entered already overcrowded camps along the border.

"Bangladesh has demanded (the) quick restoration of (a) normal situation in Rakhine state so that Myanmar nationals... can quickly go back home," Foreign Minister A H Mahmood Ali said after meeting Myanmar's special envoy in Dhaka this week.

Myanmar's foreign ministry said the two sides had "agreed to commence consultations for verification and repatriation" of those who had fled the lockdown.

Acid thrown

FROM PAGE 16

Locals rushed the victim to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Doctors at the hospital said the patient was fighting for life.

Neighbours, including the building's owner, said Kuddus was a yaba addict, in the habit of gambling, and was arrested twice by police in the last six months. He used to beat up Aklima and sometimes assault people who would attempt to intervene.

Victim's family members said Kuddus and one his cousins recently exchanged blows over money. Since then, he has been planning to "punish" his cousin.

Kuddus, a supplier of garment workers, had been pressing her wife to frame his cousin for rape, alleged the family members.

"He [Kuddus] didn't pay the apartment rent regularly. Sometimes I didn't dare to ask for the money due to his violent nature. I have been asking him to vacate the apartment for months, but in vain," building's owner Saleha Begum told this correspondent.

Married for 17 years, the couple has four children. Kuddus worked in Malaysia for about one and a half years and returned home seven months ago, said his eldest child.

The daughter, aged about 15, said after returning home from abroad, her father often accused her mother of having an affair with another man. He married the girl off soon after returning from Malaysia.

Aklima's brother Ramjan said he lent Kuddus Tk 2 lakh about a couple of months ago and he was demanding more.

"He borrowed money from many of our family members and kept asking for more without paying the debt," added Ramjan.

Abdur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Industrial Police Station, said police were hunting for Kuddus.

Fest of fish

FROM PAGE 2

Kushiara river. Marking the end of the Bangla month, Poush, the fair ends on the first day of another Bangla month, Magh.

Fish lovers yesterday thronged the three-day fair which began on Thursday. The fair saw a good sale as people bought a huge amount of fish ahead of the Poush Sangkranti.

According to the fish fair organising committee, over 1,000 fish traders came to the fair from different districts with various local varieties of sweetwater fish like boal, aair, chital, ruhi, katla, koi and magur.

Trader Abdul Hamid took a baghaair weighing 45 kgs to the fair. He demanded Tk 50,000 for his giant fish.

Moin Uddin, a retired government official who went to the fair from Habiganj town yesterday with his son, said it was a great attraction for fair-goers, especially children and youngsters, who never saw such fish. Zamindar of Sadhubati in Moulvibazar Sadar upazila had introduced this fair at the beginning of the last century.

The fair used to be held at Monumukh, where the river Monu meets the Kushiara. As that place was eroded by the Monu, the fair has been held in Sherpur since the 1970s, locals said.

Walior Rahman, convener of the fish fair organising committee, said dishes of different species of local fish are available at restaurants in Sherpur area. Fair-goers can take the taste of local fish if they wish.

Biswa Ijtema

FROM PAGE 1

Around 7,000 foreigners from 87 countries including Iran, Iraq and Egypt and five lakh local devotees from 17 districts took part in the first phase, said Maulana Engr Giasuddin, a senior member of the Ijtema organising committee.

Six devotees have meanwhile died at the congregation ground in the last two days.

Of them, Babul Mia, 60, of Machhimpur in Feni died on Friday morning. The others are Hossain Ali, 65, of Cox's Bazar, Fazlul Haque, 56, of Nandail in Mymensingh, Abdus Sattar, 60, of Khejurdanga in Satkhira, Janu Fakir, 70, of Dhanbari in Tangail and Saheb Ali of Manikganj.

Resident doctor of Tongi Govt Hospital Dr Parvez said all of them died due to cardiac arrest or old age complexity.

Maulana Faruk Hossain led the Juma prayers at the Ijtema venue with lines of worshippers pouring onto the 160-acre ground, around 20km off the capital.

During the prayers, vehicular movement on Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway came to a halt for a few hours that created a long queue of vehicles. Many offered Juma prayers putting sacks and newspapers on the adjacent roads, the roof of vehicles and rooftop of nearby buildings.

Adnan Mamun, who hailed from

Sreepur in Gazipur, said the Ijtema premises turned into a human sea by 12:00noon.

People from 33 districts are taking part in the first two phases this year, while those from the remaining districts will take part in two more phases next year.

Devotees from the 16 districts will attend the second phase of Ijtema on next Friday.

The three-day congregation includes delivery of sermons on fundamental issues of Tablighi Jamaat, prayers for spiritual adulation, exaltation and welfare of the Muslim Ummah and recitation from the holy Quran and Hadith.

Dowry free marriage ceremony would be held today.

A good number of uniformed and plainclothes police and members of Rab and intelligence agencies were in place at the Ijtema ground to ward off any untoward trouble.

Temporary health camps have been set up near the Tongi Fire Station to provide immediate medical assistance to the ailing devotees.

Md Rayhanul Islam, additional district magistrate of Gazipur, said 20 mobile courts have been working to keep roads and footpaths free from blocking, ensure quality food and hygienic atmosphere of different restaurants and shops in the area.

Accused bullying

FROM PAGE 16

Quoting the case statements, Adar alleged that Lutfar had taken some money from them. Later, he sent his son abroad and filed the false (abduction) case so that he does not have to pay it back.

Talking to The Daily Star, Lutfar said, "At first, they took away my son from me. And now they are continuously intimidating and harassing my family through false cases."

Contacted, Nure Alam Siddique, officer-in-charge of Bangshal Police Station, said police were preparing the final reports in the cases as they did not find any evidence against Lutfar.

Asked, he said they recorded the cases as they were unaware of the issue.

Adar claimed that he was innocent. "I am being victimised as I took Imran to that councillor's office that day," he said.

Two weeks after the incident, Adar said, he submitted a letter to superintendent of police in Narayanganj, seeking legal steps to find out Imran.

"Around 4:00pm [on the day of the incident], councillor Alamgir Hossain called me over the phone and told me to visit him at his office in Baburail," Adar said, quoting the letter.

As soon as he along with two of his friends, including Imran, went there, the then commissioner and his men started beating them, he said.

Editors' panel

FROM PAGE 1

contents. But I knew nothing about the changes. As far as I know, none of us was told about this," said Mahbulul, a former teacher at Chittagong University.

The other panel members are Dr Syed Azizul Haque, Shafiqul Alam and Nurjahan Begum. All of them have long been involved with the NCTB for developing textbooks.

Azizul Haque, professor of Bangla department at Dhaka University, said, "The books contain our names as writers, but they [the authorities concerned] didn't seek our opinion before making the changes in the books."

He said the NCTB should have informed them before making the changes.

The Daily Star yesterday called three of the five government officials who modified the textbook contents, but none of them responded.

NCTB Chairman Prof Narayan Chandra Saha also didn't pick up his mobile phone.

However, NCTB Member (primary curriculum) Dr Mohammad Abdul Mannan said the textbook editors and writers are not usually informed when small corrections are made in those.

"But whenever we make major changes, we inform them."

He said a procedure is followed for making corrections and changes in textbooks.

The NCTB seeks opinion from teachers and students through a try-out at the school level, and then holds workshops with the experts on this.

The final decision is made at the meeting of the National Curriculum Co-ordination Committee, he added.

Azizul Haque said the persons who modified the contents made mistakes instead of making those better.

The famous rhyme "Adarsha Chhele" in the Bangla textbook for class-III is a glaring example of such mistakes, he noted.

In the textbook, the rhyme written by Kusumkumari Das has lost its original order.

It begins inaccurately. The first line reads "amader deshe sei chhele kobe hobe" instead of "amader deshe hobe sei chhele kobe" (when our country will have such a boy).

On the mention of "orna" (scarf) in the alphabet chapter of the class-I Bangla textbook, Mahbulul said they found this word most common in identifying the Bangla letter "3" (O), as many children see this piece of

All but Imran managed to flee and he has been traceless since then, he added.

The councillor, who was also arrested in the abduction case, is now on bail.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) which is currently looking into the case arrested five other people, suspecting their involvement in the "abduction".

The five -- Monowar Hossain, Safa Rafsan, Shuvo Poddar, Reazul Islam Pritom and Md Limon -- are in jail.

The CID collected DNA samples from Imran's parents on December 18 last year to match them with the sample taken from a body recovered from the Buriganga river days after Imran went missing. The body was later buried as an unclaimed one.

Rezaul Hyder, special superintendent of the CID, told The Daily Star that they did not find any evidence that Imran went abroad.

"Currently, we are waiting for the DNA report which is being prepared at the lab," he said, adding that the probe would progress once they got the report.

Asked about the possible motive, he said they were investigating the case keeping many points, including rivalry and money issues, in mind. "We can't say it clearly right now for the sake of investigation."

clothing in their houses.

"We used only a picture of a scarf in the textbook. But now the book contains a picture of a girl wearing a scarf," he said.

The use of the word "orna" for identifying the letter "3" (O) has drawn huge flak as, many argued, the word is gender-bias: It's a piece of garment worn by adult girls and women. And it's not something that boys and girls as old as five or six would like to learn from their textbook.

Earlier this month, noted educationist Rasheda K Choudhury said writers and editors should be given adequate time and honorarium. "At the same time, their accountability must be ensured."

Those involved with formulating textbooks must consider whether the contents are appropriate for children, noted Rasheda, former primary education adviser to a caretaker government.

The volume of textbooks is increasing every year, and therefore time has come to rethink about the NCTB's role, she added.

In recent times, there has been a volley of criticism on the social media and other forums over some embarrassing blunders in school textbooks.

The education ministry has already made NCTB Chief Editor Pritish Kumar Sarkar and its Senior Expert Lana Humayra Khan officers on special duty (OSD) over the blunders.

Two committees have also been formed to find out the mistakes in the books and also those responsible.

Power upgrade spacewalk begins for astronauts

AFP, Miami

French astronaut Thomas Pesquet floated into space on his first-ever spacewalk yesterday, on a mission to help upgrade the power system outside the International Space Station with new, refrigerator-sized lithium-ion batteries.

Wearing a white spacesuit with the French flag emblazoned on one shoulder, Pesquet and American astronaut Shane Kimbrough switched on their spacesuits' internal battery power to mark the official start of the spacewalk at 6:22 am (11:22 GMT), more than a half hour earlier than scheduled.