

# Turkey probes pro-Kurdish MP over ‘Iraq visit’

AFP, Ankara

Turkish prosecutors yesterday launched a probe into a pro-Kurdish MP suspected of having travelled to a Kurdish-controlled region of Iraq where 13 Turkish hostages were killed in a failed rescue.

Lawmaker Dirayet Dilan Tasdemir “is under investigation for belonging to a terrorist organisation,” Ankara prosecutors said, hours after the interior minister accused her in a TV interview.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soyly said that Tasdemir, who belongs to the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), had been in Gara in northern Iraq, where Turkish troops launched the rescue operation against the PKK group designated as “terrorists” by Ankara and its Western allies.

Turkey said last week that the PKK had executed 13 of its citizens who it had held prisoner, most of them belonging to the security forces.

The PKK acknowledged that a group of prisoners had died, but said they were killed in a bombardment rather than executed.

Their deaths have stepped up pressure on pro-Kurdish political groups in Turkey, especially the HDP.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accuses the party of being the “political shop window” of the PKK, and dozens of its office holders and party officials have been arrested since 2016.

“The HDP is the party of the terrorist organisation. (Its elected officials) have no political personality. They are hostages of the PKK,” Soyly alleged Saturday.

# Trump to give first post-White House speech at conservative summit

AFP, Washington

Former US president Donald Trump will give a speech later this month to a gathering of political conservatives in Orlando, Florida, a source familiar with the plans said Saturday, his first extended public address since leaving the White House on January 20.

The appearance was scheduled for Sunday, February 28 at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), one of the country’s largest annual gatherings of political conservatives.

Trump will be “talking about the future of the Republican Party and the conservative movement,” the source told AFP.

He is also expected to challenge the “disastrous amnesty and border policies” of his successor, President Joe Biden, the source added.

Trump, who was impeached for an unprecedented second time for his role in fomenting the January 6 assault on the US Capitol, nevertheless remains a potent force in US politics.

Three-quarters of Republicans want Trump to play a prominent role in the party, according to a poll from Quinnipiac University this week.

Since reluctantly departing the White House on January 20 and ceding to Biden -- despite his constant but unsubstantiated claims that the election had been stolen -- Trump has largely relied to himself at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

Stripped of his Twitter megaphone, he called into friendly cable TV news programs this week after the death of conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh, musing on far-right channel Newsmax about the possibility of a future political run.

“I won’t say yet but we have tremendous support. And I’m looking at poll numbers that are through the roof.”

“Let’s say somebody gets impeached, typically your numbers would go down, they would go down like a dead balloon. But the numbers are very good, they’re very high,” he said.

And in perhaps a preview of what might come at CPAC, Trump issued a statement Tuesday ripping into top Republican Senator Mitch McConnell, who had delivered a scathing rebuke of the former president despite voting to acquit him of inciting an insurrection.

“The Republican Party can never again be respected or strong with political ‘leaders’ like Sen. Mitch McConnell at its helm,” Trump said in the statement.

“Mitch is a dour, sullen, and unsmiling political hack, and if Republican Senators are going to stay with him, they will not win again.”

Biden, who is trying to steer the United States through the Covid-19 pandemic and an economic crisis, has tried to avoid discussing Trump, at one point calling him “the former guy.”



Men transport from a cart onto a vehicle sacks of flour received as humanitarian aid provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) at a distribution centre in the Shati camp for Palestinian refugees in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# UN condemns Myanmar junta’s actions

FROM PAGE 12

its standards “prohibiting incitement of violence and coordinating harm” and Western countries that condemned the coup decried the violence.

US State Department spokesman Ned Price said the United States was “deeply concerned”.

Security forces in the country’s second-largest city had attempted to raid a shipyard and detain port staff on strike to protest against the army takeover.

Medical rescue workers said troops used live rounds and rubber bullets against a crowd of people who had started flinging rocks in an effort to stop the arrests.

“Two people were killed,” said Hlaing Min Oo, the chief of a Mandalay-based volunteer emergency rescue team.

Another 30 were wounded, with half of the injuries from live rounds, he added.

A graphic video circulated on Facebook showing a teenaged victim

played on the ground and bleeding from his head as a bystander placed a hand on his chest to feel for a heartbeat.

State media made no mention of the deaths but blamed demonstrators for the affray and said protest leaders had been detained.

“Some” protesters had been injured by security forces, the Global New Light of Myanmar reported, along with three soldiers and eight police officers.

In a separate incident on Saturday, a 30-year-old man was killed in Yangon while patrolling the neighbourhood as part of an initiative to guard against night-time arrests of activists.

Tin Htut Hein’s sister-in-law said he had been shot dead by police.

“His wife is now heartbroken,” she said. “They have a four-year-old son.”

Police claimed 20 people attacked a vehicle while officers tried to bring an injured man to hospital, the state-run broadcaster said, and reportedly fired warning shots to disperse the group.

Large crowds had returned to

the streets of Mandalay yesterday, undeterred by the previous day’s violence, with rallies also staged further south in Yangon.

In the capital Naypyidaw, a funeral service was held for a young protester who died Friday after being shot in the head at a rally, reports AFP.

Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing, who turned 20 almost two weeks ago as she lay unconscious in a hospital bed, has since become a potent symbol of the campaign against military rule.

A large motorbike guard of honour accompanied her funeral procession, alongside vehicles adorned with floral wreaths and large photos of the grocery store worker.

NATIONAL UPROAR

Much of Myanmar has been in uproar since troops detained Suu Kyi on February 1, with massive street demonstrations in major cities and isolated villages across the country.

The United States, Britain and Canada have all responded with sanctions targeting Myanmar’s top generals.

European Union foreign ministers will meet today to discuss their own measures against the regime.

Nearly 570 people have been detained since the army takeover, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group.

Among those targeted have been railway workers, civil servants and bank staff, who have walked off their jobs as part of the anti-coup campaign.

Popular actor Lu Min became the latest high-profile celebrity taken into custody for denouncing the regime.

“Many police trucks came and arrested (him),” said his wife Khin Sabel Oo, in a video she broadcast live on Facebook as her husband was taken away overnight.

Suu Kyi has not been seen since she was detained in a dawn raid but has been hit with two charges by the junta, one of them for possessing unregistered walkie-talkies.

Her hearing is expected on March 1.

# ‘We’re working to ensure no language gets extinct’

FROM PAGE 1

languages currently existing in the world alongside those who have already faced extinction have been preserved in the museum.

The premier stressed the need for collecting history of the languages as the people who want to study or conduct research on those can easily do it.

She added that the International Mother Language Institute has brought good rapport for us as it has done great works internationally.

The prime minister also thanked UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) for its recognition to International Mother Language Institute as a second-grade organisation.

About the preservation of the languages of small ethnic minority groups in Bangladesh, she said, “We have given special attention to preserve the languages of ethnic minority groups or to make sure they can study in their native languages.”

In this connection, she said her government has been publishing the textbooks of the ethnic minority groups in their native languages and distributing those free of cost as they can learn and speak in their languages.

Education Minister Dipu Moni, MP, Secretary of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) Mahbub Hossain, and

UNESCO Representative to Bangladesh Beatrice Kaldun virtually spoke at the function from the IMLI and UNESCO office, Dhaka, respectively.

Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, MP, National Professor Rafiqul Islam, Chief Coordinator of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Birth Centenary Celebration National Implementation Committee, Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury and Director General of the International Mother Language Institute Professor Jinnat Imtiaz Ali were present on the dais.

Director-General of the Bangla Academy Poet Habibullah Sirajee read out an article titled “Bangabandhu in Language Movement” on the occasion.

Six children from separate ethnic minority groups through recorded video clips thanked the prime minister for publishing textbooks in their native languages.

National Professor Rafiqul Islam and Mothura Bikash Tripura have been conferred with the International Mother Language National Award, 2021 while Uzbekistani researcher Islaimov Gulom Mirzaevich and The Activismo Languan, a Bolivia-based organisation with the International Mother language Award, 2021, for their contributions to flourishing language.

On behalf of the prime minister, the education minister handed over the awards.

One minute silence was observed as a mark of respect to the memories of the Language Heroes while the immortal song on Amar Ekushey “Amar Bhaiyer Rakte Rangano Ekushey February” was also played at the outset of the function.

Mentioning that the country’s independence had resulted from the path of the Language Movement and Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman led the movements, Sheikh Hasina said that many knowledgeable persons and intellectuals have opposed that Bangabandhu had started the language movement.

The prime minister said the intellectuals in their arguments said that how Bangabandhu did wage for the Language Movement as he was in jail at that time.

She questioned the noted personalities why Bangabandhu was in jail at that time saying that the Father of the Nation had been arrested time and again as he had started the Language Movement and conducted a huge campaign for it.

The prime minister went on saying that one can now easily know the real history of the Language Movement by reading the Pakistani intelligence branch reports from 1948 to 1971 which was made against

Bangabandhu.

Referring to the report, she said, “Truth can never be suppressed.”

The premier said many have criticized her when she first said Bangabandhu had initiated or led the Language Movement based on the intelligence branch reports.

She said after assuming office in 1996, she has collected the reports and is now publishing those as everyone can know the real history of the Language Movement and the Liberation War, adding, “Many truths of the history are coming out from the intelligence report.”

The prime minister said that she had given speeches many times about the contribution of Bangabandhu in the Language Movement as people were denying his contribution.

“Now I think, I do not need to talk about this. All people can now know it more from the intelligence branch reports,” she opined.

Sheikh Hasina also thanked Poet Habibullah Sirajee for presenting a rich and informative article titled “Bangabandhu in Language Movement” from which she said the people can know the history of the Language Movement.

At the end of her speech, the prime minister reiterated her commitment to establishing a developed and prosperous “Sonar Bangladesh” free from hunger and poverty as envisioned by the Father of the Nation.

# Serum urges nations to be patient

FROM PAGE 12

The vaccines are produced by AstraZeneca-SKBio (Republic of Korea) and the Serum Institute of India, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Bangladesh purchased three crore doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from SII. The first consignment of 50 lakh arrived on January 25, with 50 lakh doses supposed to arrive each month.

Bangladesh also received 20 lakh doses of the Oxford vaccine produced in SII as gift from the Indian government on January 21.

NEW INDIAN STRAINS

Herd immunity for coronavirus is a “myth” in India because at least 80 percent people need to have antibodies for the whole of the population to be protected, Indian AIIMS chief Randeep Guleria told NDTV on Saturday.

This, he said, would be difficult if one

takes into account the new Indian strains found in Maharashtra -- which could be highly transmissible and dangerous. The new variant, he said, can even cause re-infections in people who have developed antibodies to the virus.

At least 240 new strains of the virus have surfaced across India, which are behind the fresh surge of infections the state has been witnessing since last week, Dr Shahshank Joshi, member of Maharashtra’s Covid Task Force has told NDTV.

Besides Maharashtra, four more states -- Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Punjab -- have been witnessing a spike in numbers.

The government’s vaccination plan depends on creating herd immunity by immunising a critical mass of people. In the first phase of vaccination, the government plans to immunise 3 crore health workers and frontline workers.

After that it will be the turn of 27

crore people who are above the age of 50 years or have co-morbidities.

Explaining why herd immunity is not achievable, Dr Guleria said mutations or variants in the virus have “immune escape mechanism”. They can threaten the immunity achieved by a person through vaccinations or the disease and cause reinfection.

Under the circumstances, he said it is imperative to maintain “Covid-appropriate behaviour”.

“India needs to go back to aggressive measures of testing, contact tracing and isolating infections,” he added.

Asked if the Covid-19 vaccines in India be effective against the new strain, Dr Guleria said the vaccines will be effective, but their efficacy might be less. For example, people might not be able to avoid getting the disease, but they will have a mild version of it.

He, however, underscored that getting the vaccine is a must.

# Border killings

FROM PAGE 12

then can fix the agenda,” a Bangladesh official said.

This is a follow-up of the last home secretary-level meeting held in Delhi, he added.

According to foreign ministry officials, in the run-up to the summit between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, at least three secretary-level and one minister-level meetings will be held.

Those include water, home and commerce secretary-level meetings.

Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will also be visiting Dhaka to meet his Bangladesh counterpart AK Abdul Momen on March 4 for preparation of the PM-level summit on March 27.

The two countries have taken up a number of initiatives to celebrate the 50th year of anniversary of Bangladesh’s independence and also the diplomatic relations between the two countries this year.

# JU sues 250

FROM PAGE 12

Vice-Chancellor Professor Farzana Islam.

Meanwhile the protesting students yesterday gave a 24-hour ultimatum in a press briefing to the authorities to file the case and demanded reopening of the campus and dormitories.

Samia Hasan, one of the protesting students, placed a six-point demand including ensuring security of all students who are now staying in Gerua area and providing compensation to all injured students.

Contacted, Professor Motaher Hossain, president of JU provost committee, said, “We haven’t received any directions regarding reopening of dormitories. We won’t take any initiative without the permission of government.”

A number of male students are staying in the halls from Saturday night but the female halls have remained locked up by the authorities.

At least 30 students were injured in clashes between JU students and villagers in Savar’s Gerua Bazar on Friday evening over a cricket match.

# Would

FROM PAGE 12

pay respect to the language heroes, he said.

The SC authorities unveiled the “Amar Vasha” software on February 18, which uses artificial intelligence to translate orders and judgments of the apex court from English to Bangla.

The software was developed with EkStep Foundation of India, based on the original “Anuvaad” software used in India similarly to translate from English to Indian languages including Bangla, according to a statement of the Indian High Commission in Bangladesh.

Anuvaad was deployed by the Supreme Court of India as SUVAS ie ‘Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software’ from November 26, 2019.

# Five held

FROM PAGE 12

recovered four bullets and 200 yaba pills under a couch in the shop,” added the DC.

“During primary investigation, police became suspicious and started checking the CCTV footage of the shop and found that a young man placed the items under the couch while sitting on it,” said the DB official.

“Scrutinising the footage, police held Faisal first and then, based on his confession, four others were arrested,” he added.

Shah Md Abdur Rauf, additional deputy commissioner (ADC) of North Zone Shah, said, “The owner of the shop told police that he was in a business rivalry. Police will interrogate the arrestees in remand and look into it.”

# 7 more die

FROM PAGE 12

The mortality rate remained steady at 1.54 percent since Saturday, the DGHS handout said.

So far, 491,367 patients (90.43 percent) have recovered from Covid-19.

The authorities have tested 3,947,673 samples until yesterday -- 14,036 in the past 24 hours.

# Ingenuity

FROM PAGE 12

journey across the surface.

Now, the mission team has heard directly from the helicopter for the first time -- and it’s good news.

Ingenuity is currently tucked up beneath the rover and attached to Perseverance’s belly. The rover is about the size of an SUV, while the helicopter only weighs about 4 pounds.

The helicopter was able to phone home via the rover by sending data back through Nasa’s Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, which acts as a communications relay between Mars and Earth and has been orbiting the red planet since 2006.

Ingenuity is comfortable where it is and isn’t letting go of the rover anytime soon for a test flight. The helicopter will remain snug with the rover for 30 to 60 days.

“Ingenuity, the Mars Helicopter I carry, is working as expected. I’m currently charging it, but once I set it down, it’ll rely solely on its solar panels. If it survives the brutally cold Martian nights, the team will attempt flight,” read a tweet from the Perseverance Twitter account.

“There are two big-ticket items we are looking for in the data: the state of charge of Ingenuity’s batteries as well as confirmation the base station is operating as designed, commanding heaters to turn off and on to keep the helicopter’s electronics within an expected range,” said Tim Canham, Ingenuity Mars Helicopter operations lead at Nasa’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, in a statement.

“Both appear to be working great. With this positive report, we will move forward with (Saturday’s) charge of the helicopter’s batteries.”

Ingenuity needs to power up and store energy so it can keep itself warm and maintain other vital functions during the cold Martian nights once the rover deposits the helicopter on the red planet’s surface. Then, Ingenuity will be on its own.