

Maldives govt moves to calm outrage over scholarship cap

Government on Tuesday moved quickly to calm outrage over the decision to limit the number of president's scholarships awarded to A-Level examinations' National Top 10 with a top official saying that president Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom gave eminence to provide education opportunities to youth.

The constraint awards the scholarship to only 15 students of the A-Level National Top 10 toppers, whereas previously it was awarded to all first placers.

The decision sparked outrage by some students on social media.

In response to a question from Haveeru over the decision, government spokesperson Ibrahim Muaz Ali insisted that the president's responsibility was to come up with a policy which would be implemented by the line ministry.

According to the policy released by the education ministry two months prior, the fifteen recipients will be chosen based on the number of points all the applicants receive.

The point system awards 12 points to each "A" grade and 15 points to each "A+" grade.

The ministry's notice added that scholarship applicants will be interviewed by a special panel of judges.

However, shortly after the news broke on mainstream media, the announcement has since been removed.

When asked if the increasing cost had prompted the decision, Muaz deflected the question to the education ministry.

The new policy has also changed the previous principle of allowing all the scholarship recipients to pursue any field in any country of their choice.

The current change grants the choice of pursuing education in any country only to the top five students of the chosen fifteen. The remaining ten students are offered choices of developing or slightly developed countries.

However, choices are not offered to any slightly developed country should its education expenses equal that of a developed country.

In 2014, 23 students had topped the A-Level National Top 10.

French teacher attacked by man claiming IS link

A hooded man claiming to be acting for Islamic State attacked a nursery school teacher with a knife-like weapon as he prepared for classes in a school north of Paris, French officials said on Monday.

The male teacher was taken to hospital after the attack by a man wielding a knife or box-cutter who fled the scene after the attack at about 0630 GMT, said the official, adding that anti-terrorism officials were investigating.

According to one judiciary official, the assailant slashed at the teacher's neck and said the act was a signal from the Islamic State group, also referred to in France by the name Daesh.

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French police and firefighters are seen in front of the nursery school where a hooded man claiming to be acting for Islamic State attacked a teacher with a knife in Aubervilliers, near Paris, France, December

This is Daesh, it's a warning," the attacker told his victim, the official said, adding the victim's life was apparently not in danger.

France's education minister and a local government prefect visited the premises of the school in Aubervilliers, in the Saint-Denis region just north of the capital. Classes at the school were cancelled.

The prefect, who was not introduced by name, told reporters it was too early to draw conclusions about the character of the attack, noting that the assailant, wearing a balaclava, had apparently found the weapon at the school premises.

The incident came a month after gunmen and suicide bombers killed 130 people in Paris an attack claimed by Islamic State, the militant Islamist group which controls swathes of Syria and Iraq and has vowed to attack France, a member of the coalition of countries conducting air strikes against it.

It also came days after a knifing in London's underground urban rail network which police are treating as a terrorist attack

Pakistan diplomat's links with terror groups revealed

Police have found evidence of the terror links of a Pakistani diplomat, according to documents available with bdnews24.com.

Some Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) activists recently arrested in Dhaka have blown the lid off these clandestine links during their interrogations, the documents relating to police investigation show.

At least one JMB radical has testified to these links in a judicial confession.



Farina Arshad

Pakistan High Commission's Second Secretary (political) Farina Arshad is said to be involved with the Islamist radicals.

Earlier in January this year, Mazhar Khan, a Pakistani official working in the Dhaka mission, had been expelled after Bangladesh intelligence accused him of funding Islamist radicals and peddling fake currency.

Two of the four JMB radicals, including Idris Sheikh, arrested at Uttara and Khilgaon in Dhaka on Nov 29, were found to be carrying Pakistani passports, said Detective Branch's Joint

Commissioner Monirul Islam at a press briefing at the time.

Both these radicals had been travelling frequently between Bangladesh and Pakistan, he said.

Monirul Islam said Idris was in possession of a 'spy mobile', which he was using to communicate regularly with a foreign intelligence agent outside the country.

"He was regularly sharing information with that agent and was also in touch with a female diplomat based in Dhaka." The police officer did not disclose the diplomat's identity at that time.

In his judicial confession before Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Abdullah Al Masud under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), Idris named Second Secretary Farina Arshad as the diplomat he was in contact with.

The Pakistan High Commission did not respond to bdnews24.com's attempts to cross-check details.

Senior intelligence sources say another junior diplomat of same origin working in a European mission in Dhaka is alleged to have been involved in anti-Bangladesh propaganda.

Idris details

DB's Monirul Islam told journalists in November that Idris had visited Pakistan via India in 1985.

He married a Pakistani school teacher, Shahnaz Begum, in 1990 and settled in that country. A son, Mohammed Adil, was born.

In 2002, Idris contested national elections from Pakistan Muslim Alliance but lost. In 2007, he returned to Bangladesh and joined the JMB.

Monirul Islam said Idris, 49, had been to Pakistan 48 times in the past two years.

Idris told the magistrate that he had hailed from Chitolmari, Bagerhat and that his father, Kausar Sheikh, was no longer alive.

About his links with Pakistani diplomat Farina Arshad, Idris said on return to Bangladesh in 2007, he had first tried his hand in garment business, but five years later, he switched over to air ticketing and visa processing.

That is when he first met Babul and then Kamal, who introduced himself as someone working for Pakistan intelligence.

Idris said in the judicial confession that he had run up a huge debt to Babul who had frequently booked tickets for him. Babul, he said, left for Pakistan at one stage and gave him Farina's contact number.

Idris said in his confession that Babul later told him that a man arrested for peddling counterfeit Indian currency in Dhaka airport was closely linked to Farina.

On return from Pakistan, Idris married again – this time Manowara Begum from a neighbouring village. He has two daughters and a son with Manowara.

Government sources said when Idris was arrested at Uttara, he introduced himself as a relative of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

One government source said Idris had earlier been arrested on May 1, 2011 from the house of a top radical.

At that time, he was found carrying 47 passports and a case was filed with the Airport Police.

Idris said in his judicial confession that he got a ride from Farina in her car from Baitul Mukarram to Fakirapool and received Tk 30,000 from her.

An intelligence official told bdnews24.com that Idris had saved a foreign number in his mobile phone as his own.

That number actually belongs to a Pakistani intelligence official called Captain Asim, who is performing a crucial under-cover assignment based in an airport in Pakistan.

The phone Idris carried had the capability to record conversations of other people using malware.

Barcelona face Arsenal, Chelsea play PSG again in Champions League last 16

Holder Barcelona will play Arsenal in the last 16 of the Champions League, 10 years after the sides faced each other in the final, following Monday's draw for the first knockout stage.

Chelsea and Paris St Germain will play each other again after the French champions knocked out Jose Mourinho's team at the same stage last season.

Another clash between big guns will feature former winners Juventus and Bayern Munich, while 10-times champions Real Madrid were drawn against AS Roma.

PSV Eindhoven will take on Atletico Madrid, Dynamo Kiev will play Manchester City and Benfica will be against Zenit St Petersburg.

Gent, in their first participation in the competition, will take on Germany's Wolfsburg.

Real coach Benitez bemoans lack of precision after defeat

Real Madrid coach Rafa Benitez criticised his players for a poor first-half performance and a lack of accuracy in front of goal in the second after they suffered a surprise 1-0 defeat at Villarreal in La Liga on Sunday.

The loss at the Madrigal, after an early goal by former Real forward Roberto Soldado, leaves the visitors third, five points adrift of pacesetters Barcelona and Atletico Madrid after 15 matches and heaps more pressure on the unpopular Benitez.

Already reeling after they were hammered 4-0 at home by Barca in last month's La Liga 'Clasico', Real's defeat by Villarreal comes hard on the heels of their expulsion from the

King's Cup for fielding an ineligible player.

Benitez, who took over from Carlo Ancelotti after the Italian was sacked at the end of last season, has been blamed by the fans for Real's woes and was roundly whistled before Tuesday's Champions League game at home to Malmo.

Some players also seem unimpressed with Benitez, dressing room heavyweights Cristiano Ronaldo and Toni Kroos saying in interviews published this week how much they miss Ancelotti.

Benitez had little to offer in the way of explanations after Sunday's defeat.

"These are things that sometimes happen," the former Valencia, Liverpool, Chelsea, Inter Milan and Napoli manager told a news conference.

"We were not good in the first half and in the second we lacked precision," he added.

"To fight for the league title you have to win a lot of matches and one like today's is where we have to be strong."

Benitez has struggled to shed a reputation as a defensive coach since returning to Real, where he cut his coaching teeth in the youth academy, and it was noted at his post-match news conference that the team has scored 23 fewer goals in La Liga after 15 matches than at the same stage last term. "The team is the one that has the most shots," he told reporters. "The explanation has to do with efficiency and that's something we have to work on."

Following their expulsion from the Cup and barring a last-minute reprieve, Real have a week off before they host city rivals Rayo Vallecano in La Liga next Sunday.

Their final match of 2015 is at home to Real Sociedad, also in the domestic league.

Real off the pace after defeat at Villareal

Real Madrid slipped off the pace in La Liga with a 1-0 loss at Villarreal on Sunday.

Atletico Madrid had earlier turned up the heat on champions Barcelona when they fought back to secure a 2-1 win at home to Athletic Bilbao.

Atletico's battling victory put them level at the top on 35 points with Barca, who surrendered a 2-0 advantage and were held 2-2 at home by Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday, their second consecutive draw after last weekend's 1-1 stalemate at Valencia.

Barca are ahead on goal difference, while Real are five points adrift in third after Roberto Soldado scored against his former club to give Villarreal, who are a point off fourth spot with 27, the spoils at the Madrigal.

Real fielded their famous attacking trident of Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema but could not make a host of chances count and the defeat heaps more pressure on under-fire coach Rafa Benitez.

At Villarreal, midfielder Jonathan Dos Santos had already hit a post before Soldado, a graduate of Real's youth academy, struck to put the home side ahead in the eighth minute.

Real laid siege to the Villarreal goal in the second half but despite a string of efforts they only managed one on target and slipped to a third league defeat of the season.

They were a shadow of the side that demolished Malmo 8-0 in the Champions League on Tuesday,

with Ronaldo and Benzema particularly wayward.

“We were not switched on at the start,” Real centre back Pepe told Spanish television.

“We are still in the fight but it’s true that we have to start games differently and better,” added the Portugal international.

Former England defender Gary Neville is still without a win in two games since taking over as Valencia coach after his new club had a man sent off and needed an Eibar own goal to rescue a 1-1 draw at the modest Basque side.

Valencia, Eibar and Bilbao each have 21 points in eighth, ninth and 10th respectively.

US hobbyists 'must register drones' from 21 December

Drones in the US, and the people who fly them, must be registered on a government database starting from 21 December.

Any drones purchased from that date onwards must be logged before the first outdoor flight, the country’s Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has said.

Existing drone owners have until 19 February 2016 to register their drones, but a \$5 (£3.30) fee will be waived to encourage registration within the first 30 days.

FAA spokesman Les Dorr told the BBC that it would seek to educate, rather than punish, those found to have no registered their drones.

But he added: “For people who simply refuse to register, we do have enforcement tools available.”

Those punishments could be civil penalties of up to \$27,500, but in severe cases, criminal prosecutions could result in a \$250,000 fine and a maximum of three years in prison.

The rule affects drones weighing in at half a pound to 55lb (228g to 22.7kg). Users older than 13 must register themselves, but parents can register on behalf of younger children.

Each drone will be given a unique identification number to be displayed on the device.

‘Great responsibility’

On Monday, [the FAA promised](#) the process would be “streamlined and user-friendly”.

“Make no mistake: unmanned aircraft enthusiast are aviators and with that title comes a great deal of responsibility,” US transportation secretary Anthony Foxx said in a statement.

“Registration gives us an opportunity to work with these users to operate their unmanned aircraft safely.

“I’m excited to welcome these new aviators into the culture of safety and responsibility that defines American innovation.”

In depth: Drone discipline

Hobby drones. Unmanned aerial vehicles. Remote-controlled copters.

Call them what you will, they’re becoming a nuisance.

A minority of irresponsible users has been flying them too close to aeroplanes and helicopters, wandering into restricted military airspace, spying on neighbours; disrupting sporting events and even injuring people.

It was only a matter of time before some trigger-happy vigilante [shot one of the pesky privacy invaders out of the sky.](#)

Regulators and law enforcers are struggling to cope with the growth in their popularity, increasing the likelihood that heavy-handed legislation could stifle innovation in a sector that has great commercial potential for businesses large and small.

[Read more: Can technology keep our skies safe from nuisance drones?](#)

Regulators had [been under pressure](#) to clamp down on what many people, particularly those in the emergency services, consider to be a growing menace – hobbyist drone users flying in unwanted places.

Firefighters in California said drones had disrupted efforts to contain wildfires.

‘Stupidity’

However, some believe the drone database will be ineffective.

“The fact is that for the most part, when there are sightings, they don’t actually get to recover the drone itself,” Mickey Osterreicher, from the National Press Photographers’ Association, told BBC News when consultations began in October.

Image copyright US Forest Service

Image caption Warnings about flying drones near fires were issued by the US Forest Service

“So, what would registering the drone accomplish?”

He added that further rules would not prevent bad drone use, drawing comparisons to people who drive cars without a licence or insurance, saying: “You really can’t legislate against stupidity.”

But other bodies, including the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI), have backed the idea and taken an active role in consultations.

The regulations [fall some way short of calls to make it legal for emergency services to forcibly disable drones by using electronic jamming.](#)

The computer virus that blackmails you

Out of media player. Press enter to return or tab to continue.

Media captionWhat is ransomware?

Ransomware is the fastest growing form of computer malware, experts warn.

It's a malicious virus that locks the user out of their computer and demands a fee to return their files.

A report published by the Australian government claims 72% of businesses surveyed experienced ransomware incidents in 2015.

The figure was just 17% in 2013 .

It's also a growing threat for mobile devices as it can be hidden in an app, says Gert-Jan Schenk, vice-president at internet security company Lookout.

"For the most part, we've seen ransomware delivered through drive-by downloads – it pretends to be a popular app, increasing the chances that you'll click on it," he explains.

"To avoid these threats, users should be very careful about what apps they install, and where they come from – read the reviews on Google Play, and avoid side-loading from untrusted sources."

How does it work?

Like most computer viruses, ransomware often arrives in the form of a phishing email, or spam, or a fake software update – and the recipient clicks a link or opens an attachment.

The virus then sets to work encrypting the user's files.

Once the computer is effectively locked down, it demands a fee – often in bitcoins because it is less easy to trace – for the return of the files.

The fee is generally one or two bitcoins – the equivalent of about \$500 (£330).

It is less common now, but in the earlier days of the malware – about five years ago – the ransom note could take the form of a law enforcement notice.

The user was directed to a web page that appeared to be from, for example, the FBI, falsely claiming illegal images of children had been found on the machine and a fine was payable.

There is generally a time limit to comply, after which the ransom increases.

Is there any way to get round it?

Sometimes it is just a threat, but mostly the virus really does encrypt files.

The only way to retrieve your files without paying the ransom is to go to a backed-up version.

Neil Douglas, from Edinburgh-based IT company Network Roi, has just helped a small business client whose server was hit by ransomware.

“We had to recover everything from back-up. We’d had a back-up two minutes before the infection, so the timing couldn’t have been any better – but it did result in quite a bit of downtime,” he says.

“You could risk paying them – but it’s a bit like paying a blackmailer. We would only recommend it as a last resort.

“You don’t know whether they’ll come back for more, you don’t know that they’ll clear the infection.”

Cybersecurity expert Prof Alan Woodward says paying also leaves you vulnerable to further cybercrime.

“As soon as you pay up, you get on a suckers’ list and you’ll probably get contacted again,” he says.

“It’s low-hanging fruit for the criminals.”

Do many people pay?

While all the expert advice is, of course, not to pay, plenty of people do – even those you would least expect to.

Tewksbury Police, in the US, admitted they had paid up when their main server had been attacked and locked down at the end of last year.

“Nobody wants to negotiate with terrorists. Nobody wants to pay terrorists,” Police Chief Timothy Sheehan [told the town’s local paper](#).

“We did everything we possibly could.

“It was an eye-opening experience, I can tell you right now. It made you feel that you lost control of everything.

“Paying the bitcoin ransom was the last resort.”

Ransomware is lucrative for criminals because so many victims pay rather than face the shame of false accusations – or like the police department, they just desperately need their files.

“Some companies have set up bitcoin accounts in case it happens to them,” says Prof Woodward.

“I would recommend that nobody ever pays up.

“The only way to deal with it is to be sure you have a virus checker and back up.”

Who is behind it?

“It tends to be organised crime,” says Prof Woodward.

“They do make millions out of it. It’s opportunistic... they just try it on everybody. You keep third parties out of it – the bank isn’t involved.”

Recent research by Palo Alto Networks and industry partners suggested one family of ransomware known as Crypto Wall had generated about \$325m (£215m) for the gang behind it.

“In the volume cybercrime space, ransomware is one of the most prolific problems we face,” Greg Day, chief security officer for Europe at Palo Alto Networks, told the BBC last month.

“Credit card theft is getting to the point where the value of each card is very low. As a result, ransomware has stepped into that gap and gives a higher value for each victim.”

[News Source](#)

Moonfruit takes websites offline after cyber-attack threat

Thousands of business and personal websites have been taken offline by web host Moonfruit, after it was threatened with a cyber-attack.

The Moonfruit service lets customers easily build templated websites.

But the company said it had been threatened with a cyber-attack and had decided to make its customers’ websites unavailable for “up to 12 hours” to make infrastructure changes.

One business owner told the BBC it was “very bad timing”.

On Thursday, 10 December, the company said it had been hit by a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack.

Attackers bombarded the company’s computers to overwhelm them with traffic, so they could not serve its legitimate users.

The company consequently told customers it had decided to take websites offline for “up to 12 hours” starting at 10:00 GMT on Monday.

Film-maker Reece de Ville said: “They have been slow to communicate via their website what is going on.

“I’m going to have hundreds of people finding my site today but not being able to access it.

“I could be losing out on a lot of money from potential clients, and they may not come back if they think the company has gone.

“It’s incredibly bad timing, especially for businesses selling Christmas cards and gifts on their website.”

Short notice

In an email to its customers, the company apologised for giving them “short notice” that their websites would be offline.

“We have been working with law enforcement agencies regarding this matter and have spared no time or expense in ensuring we complete the work as quickly as possible,” the company’s director, Matt Casey, said in a statement.

The BBC has invited Moonfruit to comment.

[News Source](#)

Lakhs Of Jabalpur Residents In Danger

Thousands of unexploded and rejected bombs from 1999 Kargil war lie buried in the premises of Ordnance Factory Khamaria (OFK), located in a densely populated area in Jabalpur town in Madhya Pradesh, posing a huge security risk for the town which also happens to be quake-prone.



Representational image of unexploded bombs from Hamas. Image: Reuters

The danger to OFK can be huge given reports of sporadic explosions on the premises in the last few years: The latest incident occurred as recent as Friday night when two employees were injured in a minor explosion.

Insiders claim over a lakh of 84mm mortars, L70 and BMP2 shells are stockpiled underground at OFK.

Their detonators have corroded to the point where it is dangerous to defuse them, sources said.

Besides, there are chances of spontaneous combustion due to rapid deterioration of the duds.

Magazine F12, where the Kargil explosives are stored, is out of bounds for employees as it was recently sealed by OFK authorities. Among the explosives that are stored in F12 are bombs, mortars, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), artillery shells, rockets, torpedoes and grenades.

“We have raised the issue with authorities several times, but nobody is willing to take the risk. The dump at OFK has enough ammunition to go to war with any country,” said Arun Dubey, member, joint consultation machinery (JCM) at Khamaria, which is under the Ministry of Defence.

More fear about RDX

What’s also ringing alarm bells at OFK is the stock of 4000-kg RDX supplied by Russian state arms export agency M/s Rosoboronexport in 2003. “Russian RDX worth crores had failed quality check and could not be used. There were several communications between OFK and the Russian agency on the issue. In 2014, the agency replaced the stock without taking back the inferior RDX,” claimed an OFK employee.

Besides Kargil explosives, a stockpile of rejected bombs is also awaiting disposal at the ordnance factory, which was hastily set up by the British in 1942 at the peak of World War II to feed Allied forces in Africa and Eastern Europe.

There was a series of communications between OFK and higher authorities in the ministry of defence over transportation and disposal of these explosives, but nothing moved, sources said.

No one knows exact amount of explosives stored



An African child and his dog play on top of an unexploded bomb. Image: Twitter

“Nobody knows the exact quantum of explosives stored. General managers are posted and transferred. The bosses concentrate on their production targets, not disposal,” said Dubey. However, he added that OKF ensures safety protocols to avert accidents.

There are several bomb storage magazines across 7000-acre ordnance factory, most of them being

from the British era. The magazines also contain raw material for assembly of L77, VMP 2, 551, SSAPDS 125mm, 36mm GHASA, 23mm Silka and Adan bombs.

While OFK general manager Sanjeev Gupta is on tour, assistant GM AK Thakur refused to comment. "I have recently joined and let me settle down," he said.

General secretary of Intuc unit of OFK K B S Chouhan said there is no policy to dispose of these explosives. "Disposal should be planned to avert accidents. Earlier, OFK was a forested area but is now an urban cluster. High-intensity bombs cannot be defused here," he said.

[News Source](#)
