

Abduction of businessman Attachment of partner's property ordered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate's court yesterday ordered attachment of movable and immovable property of Idris Mia, accused in businessmen Monir Ahmed abduction case.

Kotwali police said they are preparing to execute the order as soon as it reaches them.

Monir was abducted at about midnight on April 24. Monir's family filed a case with Kotwali thana on the following day, accusing his business partner Idris Mia for the abduction.

Meanwhile businessmen in Khatunonj, Chaktai and adjoining areas observed a two-hour strike yesterday protesting the abduction and demanding Monir's immediate rescue.

During the shutdown, they also held a rally on the premises of Amir Market, marched up to the Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) headquarter at Laldighi and submitted a memorandum to CMP Commissioner Shahidullah Khan demanding immediate rescue of Monir.

The rally resolved to go for a three-day programme if Monir is not rescued within 24 hours.

The programme includes a sit-in in front of Chittagong Press Club on Monday, formation of a human

chain in front of Agrabad Chamber House on Tuesday and a three-hour strike from 9 am on Wednesday.

The rally was addressed by, among others, Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Farid Ahmed Chowdhury, Hyder Chowdhury, Sagir Ahmed, Mahbulul Alam, Muzibul Haq, Sirajul Islam and Abdul Mannan. They demanded security to businessmen.

Police arrested one Muhit, driver of Shamsul Alam Master, chairman of Patiya Pourashava, from Sadarghat area in the city on suspicion of his involvement in the abduction.

Police also raided the residence of one Zahangir, a close friend of notorious Shibir cadre Nasir, yesterday.

Police arrested Idris Mia's son Ibrahim Hasan, a student of Chittagong University of Science and Technology, on the night of April 25. Idris Mia is absconding.

Idris Mia's wife Waliunnesa at a press conference at the press club yesterday alleged that the 'abduction drama' was arranged by Monir to escape payment of his debts to many businessmen.

Filing of the case against her husband is part of a conspiracy to harass him she said and demanded release of her son.

Court rejects prayer to get back Shahriar's video cassettes

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday rejected the petition, seeking return of video cassettes, seized from Shahriar Kabir by special branch (SB) of police, in connection with the sedition case.

Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa passed the order upon a revision petition submitted by defence lawyers Advocate Khondaker Abdul Mannan and Zead-Al-Mahem.

They submitted the petition to Judge's Court following rejection order of the CMM's court, Dhaka.

The prosecution side opposed the petition.

After hearing both sides the court rejected the petition.

The CMM's court on April 15 rejected the petition, seeking return of video cassettes.

Meanwhile, the fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka will pass an order on the petition for screening of the video cassettes on April 29.

Shahriar Kabir was arrested from Zia on November 22 last year on his return from Kolkata police also seized his passport and some video cassettes.

The sedition case against Shahriar Kabir was filed with the CMM's court Dhaka on December 8 last year.

Monk murder

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expected to join the funeral.

A delegation of Bangladesh Sammilito Samajik Andolan led by its general secretary Hayat Mahmud visited the temple cum orphanage yesterday.

During the visit the delegation demanded judicial investigation into the murder.

Jamaat

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wards 1 and 6, and by a notorious terrorist in ward 36.

Commenting on their party's poll debacle, Jamaat leaders in Khulna ascribed their dismal performance to the internal feud within the four-party alliance, saying that their total defeat in the KCC polls was caused by the fact that Jamaat did not get the expected support from BNP.

Jamaat leaders in Rajshahi have accepted the election results, as the polls they said were free and fair.

Many Jamaat leaders have however alleged that local units of BNP did not support their candidates, and that in most cases Jamaat's defeat were caused by BNP's 'rebel' candidates contesting the polls.

They claimed that Jamaat worked sincerely for the victory of BNP candidates running for mayor and ward commissioner, but they did not see BNP's seriousness towards Jamaat nominees.

BNP, however, denied the allegations saying that Jamaat, like in the October 1 general elections, bargained with the BNP leadership for getting Jamaat men nominated as four-party candidates.

BNP leaders said Jamaat's demand was unrealistic and it was clear before the election that most Jamaat nominees would suffer defeat.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a senior BNP leader said election to local bodies is quite a different ball game, and unlike the general election a lot of factors come into play in the local polls.

"Jamaat without considering such factors fielded candidates in as many as 23 wards under the three city corporations that have caused its debacle," he said. "Jamaat should realise that alliance or any such unity in fact does not work in small local units like wards or union parishads."

Meanwhile, the central working committee of Jamaat will sit tomorrow to review the city corporation polls and discuss its election debacle, sources said.

Afghan forces

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other parts of the city," a witness said.

Padsha Khan, an ethnic Pashtun warlord, tried to storm Gardez in January after interim Afghan cabinet leader Hamid Karzai appointed him governor of Paktia to replace the former Taliban rulers.

But Saif Ullah, the leader of the local shura, or council, routed Khan's forces in fierce fighting which left some 50 people dead, including 20 civilians.

Karzai blamed the fighting on Khan and appointed Wardak, from northern Badakshan province, as the new governor but Khan has never accepted the decision and has been mustering his forces ever since.

AIP on Friday quoted residents of Khost, a provincial capital 75 kilometres southeast of Gardez, as saying troops and tanks loyal to Padsha Khan were taking up strategic positions in the area.

It said the flow of traffic into Khost had been halted and rival groups had taken control of all routes.

"People are fleeing the city and shopkeepers have moved their items out of the city," a resident told AIP.

Khaleda accuses AL of resorting to violence

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has blamed Awami League for trying to hinder development process by resorting to violence instead of cooperating with the government.

"Massive programmes have been taken up to make the country self-sufficient in food and alleviate poverty," Khaleda said amidst applause from the audience at a public meeting at Shahid Ziaur Rahman Coastal College ground yesterday afternoon.

She sought cooperation of all to implement the development programmes and carry out welfare activities.

Earlier, the Prime Minister inaugurated the newly created Pecua upazila by unveiling the plaque. The upazila consists of five unions -- Rajkhaili, Barobakia, Toitong, Moghna and Pecua -- having population of more than two lakh in 139 square kilometer area.

With Pecua, the number of country's upazilas stands at 467. The Prime Minister announced two new upazilas in six months of her government. Earlier on April 21 Zianagar (Indurkani) in Pirojpur was made upazila.

People from all walks of life in a festive mood assembled to celebrate the occasion. Some 150 cattle were slaughtered to feed (Mejban) people.

Khaleda said Awami League enforced four hartals in six months without any issue with an intention to create chaos and destroy public property.

"Being isolated from the people they (Awami League) have chosen the path of destructive act, she told the rally.

During its rule Awami League did nothing for the welfare of people. Instead of development they have misappropriated public money and made their own fortunes, she

added. "So people were waiting to give reply through ballot and they rejected them in October 1 election. People removed Awami League from power for its corruption and terrorism. Now Awami League is ashamed of joining parliament with small number of MPs, she said.

The Prime Minister said Awami League has been isolated from the people for its corruption, destructive activities and grabbing public property in its five-year rule.

DU student

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family members said Rozina had gone up on the roof of their five-storey apartment building at the Paribag WAPDA Officers' Quarter at about 8:45am to study for her final exam scheduled to be held yesterday.

Rozina was apparently sitting on the wall of the roof when she accidentally fell at about 9am, they said.

She was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared her dead.

Yesterday was the last day of her honours final examination.

Rozina was the second of three children of Azir Uddin Ahmed, Chief Engineer of Power Development Board (PDB), Dhaka.

zir Uddin Ahmed was at his office during the incident while Rozina's mother was away in Chittagong.

Rozina was buried at the Mirpur graveyard in the city after her namaz-e-janaza at Paribag WAPDA Officers' Quarter.

Besides study and journalism, Rozina was engaged in various extracurricular activities. She was awarded a gold medal for English poetry recitation competition during the National Education Week this year.

Violence

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26. He later died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital at about 8 pm.

The clash took place at an arbitration meeting, held on the premises of Namu Bhadra Primary School.

The arbitration was arranged to settle a dispute between AL and BNP workers following a clash on Friday.

At least 10 persons were injured in the clash.

Dudu's death sparked fresh tension in the area, resulting in clashes.

Constable Ferdous was injured when police from Talaimari outpost went to the spot to quell the violence. He was admitted to RMCH with critical injury, hospital sources said.

Extra police force from Boalia brought the situation under control at around 9:15 pm, police said.

At about 10 pm last night, some BNP workers attacked the residence of defeated commissioner candidate and AL leader Mokhlesur Rahman Khalil, AL activists said.

In two other incidents, two housewives were beaten and their houses looted in Boalia and Mofhar areas yesterday.

Sources said defeated commissioner candidate in ward 19, Nur Mohammad and his supporters entered the house of one Alauddin at Shirail Colony in Boalia and beat his daughter Fouzia Shahin as she resisted them.

She filed a case with Boalia thana, accusing 25 people for the attack. Police later arrested three persons. Alauddin had supported Moniruzzaman, who was re-elected ward commissioner.

In another incident, housewife Reekha Begum was injured when beaten allegedly by supporters of Mizanur Rahman Minu. They attacked the house as her husband supported FD Bahsha who lost the mayoral polls in Rajshahi.

Meantime, a young man was shot dead at East Sheurapara under kafrul thana in the city yesterday following a feud over the just held Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) election.

The dead was identified as Shahid, 22, a nephew of Abdul Kader who was elected commissioner from ward-14. Kader defeated four-party nominee Shahjahan Saju.

Barge-mounted deals

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plant-- have however been termed as contractual landmarks since these favour the PDB in terms of price.

The three barge-mounted power plants capable of supplying 300 MW oil-fired power were pursued with an aim to provide power on an urgent basis. The government agreed on a power purchase rate of 4.5 cents per unit. Moreover, the PDB had agreed to subsidise the raw material, imported oil, for these power plants.

It was however agreed that when gas supply would be ensured these plants would switch to gas-fired power generation and sell power at a lower rate outlined in the original contract. Of the three plants, gas has been supplied to only New England Power Company (NEPC). However, the NEPC did not reduce its power tariff in line with the contract.

The RPC charges a very high tariff of Tk 2.15 per kilowatt hour of power under a controversial contract. The PDB buys this power and sells the same to the RPC's parent company, the Rural Electrification Board (REB), at a subsidised rate of Tk 1.84.

Besides, the RPC advisor is charging PDB nearly US\$ 10 million for maintenance though it is capable of generating only 140 MW power. In contrast, the maintenance of 360 MW Haripur plant costs nearly half that rate. The RPC also gets gas at a subsidised price.

Both Meghnaghat and Haripur plants have offered power prices much lower than the PDB's own tariff rate. Meghnaghat would sell power at 2.79 cents per kilowatt hour, while Haripur at 2.72 cents. Meghnaghat is also committed to providing free electricity worth US\$ 34 million to the PDB initially. This tariff structure has been termed as 'the world's lowest' by both PDB and industry insiders.

Moreover, the gas purchase tariff for Meghnaghat and Haripur plants has been set at \$2.4 a unit, more than double the gas bulk rate of \$1.12 a unit.

"Power purchase from the barge-mounted plants and the RPC have been disastrous for the PDB," said a source. "When barge-mount plants charge Tk 45 crore a month for 300 MW power the 360 MW

Haripur AES plant charges around Tk 23 crore."

Dogged by a never-ending bill collection problem, different organisations owe the PDB over Tk 5500 crore in arrears. Power pilferage by a section of metre readers and bill collectors and total mismanagement at DESA have worsened the PDB's health over the years. Donors have many a time forced the PDB to unbundle, but so far they never focussed on reforming the sales points.

Spl trial courts HC rule on posting of magistrates

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday issued the asking the government to show cause why the posting of Magistrates to constitute the speedy trial courts should not be declared illegal.

The rule is returnable for eight weeks.

A division bench comprising Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Morninur Rahman and Justice Mohammad Arayesuddin passed the order upon a writ petition filed with the court.

Advocate Idrisur Rahman filed the petition challenging the legality of posting Magistrates to constitute speedy trial courts.

The Ministry of Home Affairs by a Gazette Notification dated April 16, 2002, established speedy trial courts with four Metropolitan Magistrates in Dhaka Metropolitan Magistracy without consulting the Supreme Court as mandated by the Constitution.

Law and Order Disruption Offences (Speedy Trial) Act, 2002 was passed in the second session of the eighth Jatiya Sangsad. Magistrates were posted under section 8(1) of the Act.

Barrister Rukan Uddin Mahmud along with Dr Shahdeen Malik, Advocate Idrisur Rahman, Advocate Abdul Mannan Khan and Advocate Ruhul Kuddus Babu moved the petition on behalf of the petitioner while Assistant Attorney General Mokhlesur Rahman stood for the state.

Gas committee

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issues, the two national committees were formed in January and they were initially scheduled to submit their reports within a month.

The utilisation committee headed by former energy secretary Azim Uddin Ahmed consists of two Petrobangla directors, economists, academicians and energy experts.

The reserve assessment committee headed by BUET Vice Chancellor Dr Nuruddin consists of members from Petrobangla, BUET and different energy related bodies. The committee however did not meet regularly.

The utilisation committee is looking into a number of issues including how the government should deal with Unocal's Bibiyana gas field which has a proven reserve of 2.4 TCF.

Arguing that Bangladesh's gas market is not expanding and therefore Bibiyana gas field cannot be developed soon, Unocal had submitted a proposal to the government to export gas to India through a pipeline.

Padma

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Delhi between prime ministers of the two countries, there has been no review so far.

The experts suggested that 'quality' of the Ganges water, besides the quantum and its sharing, should also be taken up at the review and included in the treaty for 'observation'.

The Ganges is known as the Padma after entering Bangladesh in Chapainawabganj district and it flows into the Bay of Bengal jointly with the Brahmaputra and the Meghna.

Sources said since the quality of Padma water was monitored for years only at the Mawa point, which is far away from the river's entry point in Bangladesh, experts suspect that the water is highly polluted at the upstream. It is now being monitored also at the Hardinge Bridge point at Bheramara, Kushtia, to find out the extent of pollution. But data from the Hardinge Bridge point was not available.

The WDB is also monitoring the rivers in and around the capital.

In the Buriganga and Shitalakhya rivers, presence of chromium and other heavy metals like sodium chromite, copper, iron and sulphate has been detected.

Experts attributed presence of chromium in the rivers to tanneries which use it for processing hides. The Buriganga is getting polluted with chromium from the tanneries at Hazaribagh in the city. It is dumped in the river untreated as the tanneries are not equipped with waste treatment plants.

In the Ganges also, presence of chromium suggests that wastes are dumped in the river at the industrial states upstream in India, experts pointed out.

Nor'wester kills 12

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The nor'wester that mainly swept the two upazilas was also reported to have damaged over 5,000 thatched houses, educational institutions and shops as well as crops in the district. Many shops and establishments were damaged in haats and bazaars.

From Mymensingh, the UNB correspondent reported the storm swept the entire district Friday night, leaving two old women dead and 50 injured.

Standing crops on about 5,000 hectares, many thatched houses and 20 educational institutions were damaged and a large number of trees and electric poles uprooted.

Safar Zan Nesa, 60, of Pachua village was buried under the fallen earthen wall of her house. Hasna Banu, 65, of Uthuri village of Gafargaon upazila caught fire from lamp and was burnt to death during storm.

At least 40 people were injured in Gafargaon upazila alone while 10 people in Bhaluka upazila. Four were admitted to Gafargaon health complex and two to Bhaluka health complex.

Traffic remained suspended for about four hours since 8pm as fallen trees at Bharaduba in Bhaluka blocked the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway. Transport movement resumed after police with the help of local people removed the fallen trees.

UNB Brahmanbaria correspondent reports: At least two people were killed and 30 injured as nor'wester lashed Chupta and Kalikachcha unions in Sarail upazila Friday night.

Besides, 800 thatched houses were damaged.

Parvin Begum, 5, died when her house at village Rasulpur in Chupta union collapsed due to the

nor'wester. Taiyab Ali of Kalikachcha was killed when a tree fell on him.

Of the injured, Amena Begum, 32, was admitted to Sarail hospital. The rest were given first aid.

Local sources said some 300 people with their houses badly damaged were now living under the open sky.

World Cup

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reserved the biggest cheer for the Cup. The 'big bowl' roared as the Cup entered the arena at around 3.30pm. There was a sense of nostalgia in watching a packed audience, which is almost a thing of the past as the popularity of football has dwindled over the last decade.

The World Cup mood was quite evident in the stands when some fans waved the Brazilian and the Argentine national flags. The two South American superpowers boast the largest fan following in Bangladesh.

A friendly football match between the former stars of the two most popular local giants -- Mohammedan Sporting Club and Abahani Krira Chakra -- arranged on this unique occasion, also enthralled the crowd.

With the conclusion of the match it was time for the Cup to bid the BNS bye. On a special carrier, the Cup made a lap of honour before being escorted off the ground by security personnel.

The World Cup will head back to Kolkata tomorrow.

Gillette, one of the major sponsors of the 2002 World Cup and Japan, has arranged the trip of the Cup in Bangladesh.

CEC on low turnout

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press said. "Although turnout was low in Dhaka, voter participation was comparatively higher in Rajshahi and Khulna. But I hoped turnout would increase by afternoon."

He then asked journalists, "I did not go out in the afternoon. So, tell me how was it in then?" When journalists said it was still a very poor show, he did not push any further.

The CEC noted that the EC would investigate the allegations of rigging in the polls including that raised by 11-party Rajshahi mayor candidate Fazle Hossain Badshah.

Meantime, some press reports suggest that the relationship between Syed and the ruling BNP has recently rolled into a cold phase over some 'serious disagreements'.

The CEC's negative comments on the law and order situation justify a day before the elections have reportedly infuriated some influential policymakers of the government.

Prior to the city polls, the CEC wrote two letters to the prime minister, seeking steps to improve the law and order condition. He however got no response to any of the letters.

Later, a BNP leader close to the prime minister talked to the EC secretary and let him know about the government's grievances and anger against the CEC. The CEC has been asked not to talk on the law and order any further, sources said. Consequently, the CEC became perturbed and stayed away from office, they added.

When reporters yesterday asked him whether he intends to resign now since both the opposition and the government are already at odds with him, an irate CEC replied, "The people would judge my past

records."

Meanwhile, the returning officer of Dhaka officially announced the city corporation election results at an empty EC Secretariat. The result may be gazetted today.

IPP deals

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tion adding roughly 800 MW to the national grid.

With the change of power, allegation of inconsistencies in the agreements, especially in the areas of implementation and power purchase, started surfacing, prompting the new government to form a committee late last year to investigate.

The committee pointed out that the agreements compel PDB to buy electricity from IPPs at much higher rates than its own generation cost. On the other hand, the IPPs enjoy the subsidised gas price at the cost of Petrobangla.

While recommending amendments to the existing power purchase agreements, the Committee called for thorough analysis of tariff structure and other aspects before reaching any future deals with IPPs.

It felt that the two alternative venues for dispute settlements -- England and Singapore -- would be expensive and inconvenient for Bangladesh's agencies. It also suggested that the existing law of the land, instead of English laws, should be the guiding principles for settling disputes, as agreed upon in the contacts.

The recommendations of the committee earlier submitted to the Energy Ministry would now be placed to the Cabinet for consideration, an official of the ministry said.