

Six CPM men shot dead in West Bengal

AFP, Kolkata

An indefinite curfew was imposed on a town in West Bengal yesterday after militants shot dead six members of the ruling Communist Party, police said.

West Bengal Police Inspector General Chayan Mukherjee said six militants, armed with sophisticated weapons, raided the party's committee office in Dhupguri town, 550 km from the state capital, Kolkata, on Saturday evening.

Mukherjee told AFP the militants, who arrived on three motorbikes, sprayed the cadres with bullets, killing four on the spot, while two more died in hospital on Sunday.

"The militants carried AK-47 and AK-56 rifles, and they threw a number of high-powered hand grenades to cover their escape," he said.

Another 15 people were injured

Titas

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ensuring strict measures so that none has to face any harassment in getting connection and also regarding bills.

About pending cases relating to realising arrears bills, the minister asked the Titas Gas officials to settle the cases through bilateral negotiations.

"If necessary, we must resolve the cases through a third party," he said cautioning that appointment of lawyers would have to be freed from all political interference.

The meeting decided to empower the regional offices of doing all pre-connection activities, including disbursement of budget for new connections.

The regional officers will also be given the power to award punishment to those found guilty of meter tampering, bypassing line setup and other kinds of gas stealing.

Energy Secretary Khairuzaman Chowdhury, Petrobangla chairman Syed Sajedul Karim, Titas Gas managing director Anwaruzzaman and other senior officials were present at the meeting.

Hasina's street cry

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culpits to justice, thereby ensuring safety of people's lives and properties.

About the July 24 police raid on the Shamsunnahar Hall, Hasina said police could never enter a hall of residence for female students without the prime minister's approval. "She is responsible for the attack in which police did everything short of rape."

She also blamed the then Dhaka University vice-chancellor for the incident.

Hasina also asked the government to execute the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman without further delay.

The AL chief accused the government of protecting the killers and warned they would not be spared either. "The killers must be hanged on the soil of the country."

Hasina demanded that tariffs of electricity, gas, oil and essential commodities be lowered.

The former prime minister said that police or criminals could not protect the throne of her successor, Khaleda Zia.

Hasina blamed BNP activists for the killing of four at a Malbagh

Boeing-777s

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Petroleum Corporation (BPC) more than Tk 500 crore in fuel prices, the sources said.

Biman has stopped taking fuel from the BPC in credits, and now makes regular payments, the state minister said. He hopes Tk 65 crore more would be paid in six months.

Nasir Uddin said the BPC's fuel price is the second highest in the world.

About cost-cutting measures, Biman has rescheduled some routes and will close down some foreign stations, reducing the staff by at least 25 per cent.

The state minister ruled out the possibility of privatisation of Biman in the near future.

He said more than US\$1.6 million went down the drain during the period of the previous government only for finding a strategic partner for privatisation of the national carrier.

"We found nothing other than vouchers of two million dollars for privatisation." The Bureau of Anti-Corruption will look into the allegation of corruption, the minister added.

Seventeen Biman officials and employees were removed from their services, and departmental action

in the attack.

Mukherjee said an indefinite curfew has been imposed in Dhupguri and surrounding areas as a precautionary measure.

The communist party has called a general strike in Jalpaiguri district today (Monday) to protest the killings, West Bengal Forest Minister Jogesh Burman said.

Mukherjee said the killers were suspected to be members of the Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation (KLO).

The KLO has several training camps in the forests of Bhutan bordering India and is fighting for a separate state for Kamtapuri, the indigenous people.

Two killed

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into an altercation with a trader called Hossain, 40 at 3:30p.m.

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Mirpur police confirmed the incident but could not give details.

Cabinet

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As Shamsul Hossain came under attack while returning to his business firm from a bank. A senior minister on condition of anonymity told the Daily Star that most ministries shy away from taking new projects or proposals fearing outright rejection of fund from the Finance Minister.

He said the recent remarks of the Finance Minister about performance and utility of various ministries and departments have also frustrated the ministers and officials to take up fresh programmes.

Separation of judiciary Govt to form body to constitute judicial service commission

BSS, Dhaka

The government has decided to form a secretary level committee to constitute judicial service commission.

Led by cabinet secretary, establishment, law and industries secretaries will be the members of the committee.

The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting on separation of judiciary held at the cabinet division with LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in the chair.

The meeting also decided to form a judicial pay commission.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed, Industries Minister M K Anwar and officials of the ministries concerned were present at the meeting.

After the meeting, Industries Minister M K Anwar said there is no lack of sincerity of the government regarding separation of judiciary from the executive. It is not possible to change the decades old rules overnight as it needs time, he added.

The minister said though there is a provision of separation of judiciary in the Indian constitution, the government of India has been able to implement the provision in only two Indian states.

But, in Pakistan the government did not do the job so far though the Pakistan constitution provides for separation of judiciary.

The minister said the government, apart from the constitution and the directives of the Supreme Court, will try its best to fulfil its commitment regarding separation of judiciary by the current tenure of the present government.

Businessman stabbed by muggers in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Muggers stabbed a businessman in the city yesterday morning.

Witnesses said a gang of four muggers intercepted businessman Shamsul Hossain at Kapashgola road near Chawkbazar at around 10.30 am and asked him to give money.

As Shamsul refused to oblige, the gang stabbed him twice and fled the scene exploding cocktails. Shamsul was rushed to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Police said Shamsul Hossain came under attack while returning to his business firm from a bank.

Meanwhile, Shishir Kumar Saha, a computer programmer, was mugged in front of Gani Bakery in Jamaal Khan area at around 9.30 pm on Saturday.

Ferry master

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Plaintiff Kazi Abdul Haq, 'master' of Bhabha Shaheed Barkat run by BIWTC, also alleged that the AL leaders and some other party men damaged portraits of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and late president Ziaur Rahman inside a staff room while travelling by the ferry along with opposition leader and AL chief Sheikh Hasina on their way to Gopalganj on Friday.

He also noted in the case file that it took him some time to file the case as he was busy driving the ferry on August 16 and 17 and an BIWTC official (of DGM rank) was discussing the matter with higher authorities.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury termed the whole story "concocted".

He told The Daily Star last night that there was no incident of forced entry into the staff room of the ferry and damaging any portrait.

Issuing a statement yesterday, Saber said 15 journalists representing different national dailies were also covering Hasina's tour to Tungipara. "Had there been any such incident, it would have been published in the press on the following day."

The government is framing up allegations against AL leaders to harass them, he said.

Release of news relating to the incident through BSS and UNB news agencies was a prelude to a deep-rooted conspiracy by the government, Saber said in the statement.

BUET statement

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The BUET authorities punished none of the students who demanded trial of the killers; only the students who ransacked the university properties and set fire to residential halls were punished along with the alleged killers, the statement mentioned.

The BUET has acted 'peacefully' on the existing ordinance over the last 40 years; and reformation and amendment to the ordinance depend on the government, it added.

The construction of a memorial plaque for Sony has already begun, the statement concluded.



Members of Democracywatch stand in a human chain at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday, demanding security to women and children.

Titas union out to grab

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association, yesterday.

The union leader and his men then contacted every member of the 17-strong body, except the president who has recently been transferred, and warned them that unless they resigned by Tuesday they would not be allowed to come to the office. One official, who was on leave, was contacted over phone and made to come to the office by the union leaders.

On May 16 this year, a meeting between the energy minister, the president of the Jatiyatabadi Samik Dal and other union leader decided that all Titas-based union activities would remain suspended for three months.

The decision followed after systems loss of the state-run gas transmission and distribution entity had reached an alarming level. Besides, the meeting also took into

account the sudden rise in illegal activities by some union leaders. However, the decision never came into effect and the union leaders continued with their activities.

Since the first week of this month, they have started threatening the officers' association members over telephone and in person. The union leaders enjoy the tacit support of a section of Titas gas officials, the sources said.

Meanwhile, the executive committee of the officers' association had convened a meeting on August 15 that eventually fell through due to quorum crisis, enraging the union leaders, who had plans to force the members into an en masse resignation at the meeting.

Yesterday, the union leaders forced the officials into agreeing that they would attend an executive committee meeting on tomorrow.

Although all the members want to continue till their two-year term expires next July the union leaders look likely to force them into resignation, the sources said.

"If we are to keep our jobs here, we have to listen to whatever they demand," a frustrated high official told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

Other officials, meanwhile, refused to talk to the media in fear of serious repercussions.

The executive committee was elected last July with 93 per cent of some 700 Titas officials voting in their favour.

The ruling party-backed leaders have already seized control of the trade union office of Titas last October, ousting members of three other union activists. Earlier this year, they also took over control of the Titas Club.

Murders at Tejgaon

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Nizamuddin Bhuiyan, an industrialist, Dinesh Chandra Sen, an assistant sub-inspector of police and Abdul Khandakar Harun, a small-time trader, on Saturday afternoon.

Alauddin and his younger brother Mohammad Raqib had a gunfight with the police. Later, they were caught from a waterbody and beaten to death by a mob at Khilgaon in the evening.

Police carried a manhunt in different parts of Tejgaon and arrested Shadat Hossain, a local youth, and Fazilatunnesa, a local resident, on Saturday night for their alleged involvement in the killings. Police recovered a bloodstained shirt of Alauddin from the residence of Fazilatunnesa. Police also picked up Minu Begum, the criminal's first wife, and his mother Samosta Banu for interrogation.

Alauddin's younger sisters — Parveen and Yasmeen — admitted to newsmen that their brothers were engaged in extortion and other criminals activities. His father, Tara Miah, is a former employee of the

Tejgaon Polytechnic Institute. Local people claimed that the Tejgaon police were not sincere enough to check criminal activities since they received huge amount of money from the underworld.

Although several people were killed in the last few years, police did not take any initiative to improve the law and order situation.

Locals said Alauddin and his brother would have gone scot-free this time again had a police officer not been killed. Witnesses said plainclothes men beat up Alauddin and Raqib to death at Khilgaon.

Locals said Alauddin used to pay protection money to the Teagoan police. The criminal and his gang used to collect illegal tolls from the industrial units at Tejgaon. Local people also said some landlords had to pay 30 per cent of their house rent to Alauddin.

He was accused in more than a dozen cases including those for murders with the Tejgaon Police Station. The top criminal also participated in the Dhaka City Corporation elections as a ward

commission hopeful in April. He even openly campaigned for votes, which was reported by the press. But the police did not arrest him since "they could not trace the criminal".

Sources said Abdul Khandakar Harun, a Jubo Dal leader, was a close associate of Alauddin. Alauddin introduced Harun to different garment factories to do business in waste fabrics. But at one stage, a rift developed between them as Harun stopped paying money to Alauddin.

Sources said Harun was killed as he showed police Alauddin and his men fleeing.

The namaz-e-janaza of Nizamuddin was held after Asr prayer at the Rahim Metal Jame Mosque yesterday.

The Bangladesh tubewell and pipe manufacturers' association and the Bangladesh PVC pipe manufacturers' association mourned the death of the industrialist. The leaders of the associations demanded exemplary punishment to the killers.

Left high and dry

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in-charge of civil aviation and tourism ministry Shaiful Islam also confirmed the irregularities.

"You can say that none of the local growers could supply their wheat to the granaries during the last ten days of July...But it would be improper to say that it happened during the whole period of procurement", Islam told this correspondent at Pabna circuit house after his two-day visit to government granaries in Bogra and Pabna.

He said July is not the proper time to procure homegrown wheat as growers usually complete their sale within May.

Asked whether there was any irregularity at the higher level of the ministry concerned, Islam said, "The fresh allocation for July did not come automatically. Perhaps there was pressure from certain quarters behind the allocation".

The growers this correspondent talked to expressed their surprise at the procurement programme in late July and the price fixed by the government.

"Do you think us mad? Why should we go to the government godown when the market price is higher?" Faruk Ahmed, a grower at Muladuli Hat said.

Local wheat was sold at between Tk 9250 and Tk 9300 per ton at markets in northern districts during May-June, it was learnt.

Ahsan Habib, an affluent farmer in Pabna Sadar said, "I cultivated wheat in about 100 acres of land this year, but I could not supply any wheat to the government warehouse".

"There were political cadres struggling among themselves for the chance of supply wheat...Besides, wheat was then selling at higher prices at local markets", Habib said.

granaries, but did not advance considering the extra expenditure for bribes to officials.

At a Pabna club, this correspondent met a wheat trader who supplied 2000 tons of wheat to Muladuli granary, some in his name and some using others' names.

"I bought about 10,000 tons of wheat from importers in Pabna, Ishwardi and Kushtia...But some local BNP leaders and workers forcibly bought 8000 tons from me. I suffered a loss in the deal", he said seeking anonymity.

When the fresh allocation for July came, local leaders and workers of ruling BNP and its partner Jamat-e-Islami in Pabna and Bogra started running after the 'profit earning' business.

They clamoured for 'permits' and later shared the total allocation, it was learnt.

In Muladuli silo, 24 WQSCs (weight, quality, stock certificate) were issued against 19 persons during the last ten days of July. Most of the 19 persons belong to the ruling party while others are close to local BNP leaders. About 11,996 tonnes of wheat were procured in the silo during the period.

WQSC is a certificate issued against the supplier when his wheat is stocked in the warehouse after properly testing the weight and quality. This certificate allows the supplier to draw the money from the bank.

This correspondent obtained the list of the 19 persons. They are Shirajul Islam (president of Muladuli union BNP), Darpon (a nephew of Shirajul Islam), Qamrul Ahsan Mintu (organising secretary of the district BNP), Mahub (close to Ishwardi upazila JCD vice-president Shahin), Tara (younger brother of Pabna town BNP joint secretary Anisul Haq Babu), Kamona (businessman), Mustak Ahmed Kiron (businessman), Mobin, Milon (nephew of Kamona),

Rezaul, Zahid, Nishan, Babu, Mustafa, Anwar, Akhtaruzzaman Akhtar, Mollah Tuhi, Idris Biswas and Sujan.

Although the top level BNP leaders in the districts did not directly supply wheat, they were involved in it, it was alleged.

At Ishwardi upazila LSD, 15 suppliers got 21 WQSCs and at least 3496.135 tonnes of wheat were procured between July 24 and July 31.

Four of the 15 suppliers are Mokhlesur Rahman (Ishwardi upazila BNP president), party workers Rezaul Karim, Golam Mustafa and Jamaat worker Israil. The rest are Shahidul Islam, Shamsul Alam, Zahidur Rahman, Shahiduzzaman, Giridhari, Ahsanul Habib, Ekbal Ahmed, Shariful, Rashed Mollik, Samiuddin and Shahabuddin Mollik, who are close to local BNP and Jamaat leaders.

In Sherpur and Mirjapur warehouses in Sherpur upazila in Bogra district, about 1087 tonnes were purchased during the last week of July and WQSCs were issued against 54 people.

None of the 54 people who supplied wheat to the government granaries could be traced. Some of the names were intriguing.

In the 'godown lasher' (GL) at Bogra Sadra upazila LSD, a name reads 'Mama'.

Local people claimed that this 'Mama' is Khalilur Rahman, maternal uncle of Helaluzzaman Talukhdar MP. The name was however corrected in the 'central lasher' (CL) and the WQSC was issued against the name of Khalilur Rahman.

In the Sadar LSD, about 5161 tonnes of wheat were procured between July 25 and July 31 and WQSCs were issued against 85 people. At least 20 names came more than once.

Indian govt to seek SC opinion on Gujarat polls

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's Hindu nationalist-led government, stung by a ruling rejecting a plan for early elections in riot-torn Gujarat state, said yesterday it would seek guidance on the issue from India's top court.

Information Minister Sushma Swaraj said the government would ask President APJ Kalam to approach the Supreme Court on its behalf after the election commission ruled that the state had not yet sufficiently recovered from Hindu-Muslim riots in February.

"We have decided to make a presidential reference ... because there can be far reaching consequences of the election commission's order, there are questions that deserve clarification," Swaraj said after an emergency cabinet meeting.

The view of the court would be in the form of a non-binding legal opinion.

The election commission ruled on Friday against a proposal by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to hold Gujarat elections ahead of schedule. The BJP heads the coalition government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee as well as the Gujarat state government.

Officials say more than 1,000 people mostly Muslims, died in the country's worst religious bloodletting in a decade in Gujarat in February and March. Human rights activists put the death toll at around 2,500. Hundreds of survivors are still in camps and mosques, too scared return home.

Kalam, a highly decorated Muslim rocket scientist who took office last month, has the power to request an urgent opinion from the court on any issue of public importance.

The BJP, which dissolved the Gujarat assembly last month, says the state is peaceful now and the state government has a right to seek a new electoral mandate.

The election commission said the "wounds had not yet healed" in Gujarat and it warned that an election could re-ignite passions. It also said those behind the killings must be arrested and it sought faster rehabilitation of the survivors.

A riot survivor camped out sine March in a mosque in Gujarat's main city, Ahmedabad, told a domestic television channel that she was still waiting for a house.

"We had told the administration, the election commission, give us homes first, then hold elections," Reshma Sayyad said.

The BJP says, under the Indian constitution, elections must be held by October, six months after the state assembly last met.

7 AL leaders get anticipatory bail in 3 cases

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail for three months to seven Awami League (AL) leaders in three separate cases.

AL leaders Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Obaidul Hoque, Oshim Kumar Ukil and Shafi Ahmed were granted anticipatory bail in an arms case.

Four persons, arrested recently with an M-16 rifle from city's Uttara area, reportedly told a magistrate that the AL leaders were involved in the arms deal.

Former MP Major General (Retd) Shafiqullah and Emdadul Hoque Bhuiyan were granted anticipatory bail in a case in connection with the attack on a long march near Kanchpur bridge in Narayanganj on June 9, 1998.

The long march towards Chittagong was brought out from Dhaka under the leadership of the then opposition leader Khaleda Zia to protest the signing of an agreement on Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The court issued rule returnable in three weeks in the two cases.

Besides, former minister Engineer Mosharrif Hossain secured anticipatory bail from the court in a corruption case.

The court also issued rule asking the government to show cause within three weeks why Mosharrif should not be granted permanent bail in the case.

The Bureau of Anti-corruption filed the case with Motijheel police station on August 1 alleging that former environment minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury in collaboration with former works minister Mosharrif obtained a Rajuk plot at Banani.

Sajeda Chowdhury got anticipatory bail on August 10.

Submits report

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days after the August 14 deadline. Although the committee had sought a ten-day, the ministry asked for immediate submission of the report.

The committee was formed on August 3 to probe into allegations that feed-grade imported wheat had been procured instead of homegrown food-grade wheat during the last few days of the government's 135-day drive.

The four-member committee held a closed-door meeting throughout yesterday to finalise the report. Starting from morning, the meeting ended at eight last night. All the members of the committee were present at the meeting. The food secretary was at his office then, waiting to receive the report.

The committee, which visited 28 food godowns in Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra and Satkhira, collected 160 wheat samples and got those chemically tested at the food directorate's lab in the city to ascertain their quality.

Throughout the day no members of the committee agreed to meet any journalist. The food secretary also declined to make

any comment. It was told from his office that he was busy taking preparation for today's (Monday) meeting of the Food Planning and Monitoring Committee.

In another development, the one-man secretarial probe committee formed on August 10 at the prime ministerial directive, is also working hard to get hold of all facts and figures relating to this year's procurement drive. After visiting silos in Pabna, Bogra and Satkhira, the head of the committee, Civil Aviation Secretary Shafiqul Islam is now planning a visit to Mymensingh within a day or two.

Meanwhile, representatives from the agriculture, finance, food and relief and disaster management ministries are expected at today's inter-ministerial committee meeting, to be chaired by Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman, at the Ministry of Food.

In an earlier meeting in late May, the committee recommended an upward revision of this year's wheat procurement target by one lakh metric tonne (MT) to four lakh MT although countrywide production went down by two lakh MT from last year's 18 lakh meeting

UZ system

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ommendations and demanded an immediate upazila election and further restructuring and modernising of the local bodies.