

BSF kidnaps 27 fishermen

BDR demands their immediate release

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) kidnapped at least 27 Bangladeshi fishermen from the river Padma at Sonaikandi on the outskirts of Rajshahi city Tuesday morning.

The BSF men suddenly swooped on the fishermen as they were catching fishes at around 8.30am in the mid-Padma inside Bangladesh territory, about three kilometres southeast of the Sonaikandi border outpost (BOP) in Paba Upazila, sources in the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) in Rajshahi said.

The kidnapped were identified as Makhon, 20, Khokon, 12, Shahabur, 12, Dilip, 15, Nitai, 30, Badshah, 30, Kalam, 40, Jahangir, 25, Shafi, 25, Sentu, 18, Abdus Shukur, 16, Al Amin, 12, Kawsar, 30, Krishna, 20, Abul, 45, Bhupen, 15, Royel, 17, Shamsul, 30, Kabir, 12, Rocky, 14, Shariful, 25, Illias, 45, Atahar, 35, Manik, 18, Tony, 20, Mohor, 30, and

Mukta, 20.

After the incident, companions of the abducted fishermen informed the Sonaikandi BOP of the incident.

In a letter to the Indian 62 Company BSF, the 35 Battalion BDR protested the incident and demanded that the Bangladeshi fishermen be sent back immediately.

"We have identified two offences committed by the BSF; the first for illegally entering our territory and the second for kidnapping our men. These offences have been included in our protest letter to the BSF," Commander in charge for the 35 Battalion BDR Major Abdur Rashid said.

He told journalists that they were yet to receive any reply from the BSF. The issue will be raised during a flag meeting to be convened once they get a reply of the protest letter, he said.

Meanwhile, panic gripped the fishermen of Sonaikandi area who

have stopped fishing in the Padma following the incident. The families of the kidnapped fishermen are in great anxiety about the wellbeing of their dear ones.

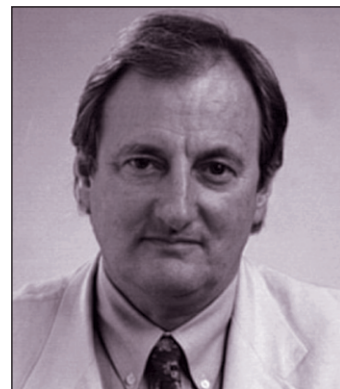
A source in Rajshahi BDR said the 62 Company BSF did not receive their first protest letter sent through a Bangladeshi messenger on Tuesday noon.

Immediately afterwards, the 35 Battalion BDR sent another letter to the BSF accusing it of kidnapping the 27 fishermen. This time, the BSF received the letter and sent a reply but refuted the charges.

The BDR then sent another letter -- a reply of which is yet to reach it -- saying that they had information that the 27 fishermen were kept at Harubhanga BSF camp under the 62 Company BSF. It also sought 'cooperation' from its Indian counterpart in this regard for maintaining good neighbourly relations, according to Major Abdur Rashid.



City of nightmare...a long queue of buses crawl at a snail's pace through the road between Joy Ma Kali temple and Gulistan yesterday as the road digging by the Titas gas authorities to lay pipelines has caused a havoc to traffic movement.



Simon Dring

Dring asked to quit country in a week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Managing Director of the now-closed Ekushey Television (ETV) Simon Dring has been asked to leave the country in seven days.

Dring was summoned to the immigration and passport office at Agargaon and issued with the government order yesterday.

Although a valid visa holder, Dring was asked to leave the country upon expiry of his work permit issued by the Board of Investment.

"His work permit expired in January and he has no reason to stay in the country anymore," said a high

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7 Christians gunned down in Karachi

AFP, Karachi

Seven Pakistani Christians were killed and another person wounded by unknown gunmen who entered their office and shot each in the head with a single bullet yesterday in the volatile southern city of Karachi, police said.

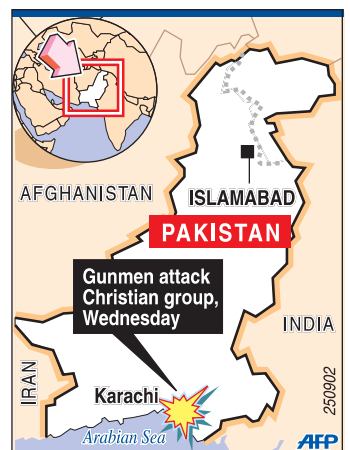
The attack is the latest in a series of deadly strikes on Christian targets since Pakistan signed up a year ago to help the United States crush Afghanistan's Islamic fundamentalist Taliban regime and the al-Qaida network.

Police say two assailants armed with pistols entered the office of the Institute for Peace and Justice, a 30-year-old Christian charity, at around 9:00am (0300 GMT) and tied up and gagged staff members.

They shot eight in the head at close range, and fled. Six died instantly, a seventh died later in hospital.

The carnage on the third floor of the 12-storey Rimpa Plaza office block was discovered by an employee when he arrived for work around an hour later.

"I saw five of my colleagues lying



dead," Rahim Bux Azad, the charity's labour co-ordinator, told AFP.

"All of the five had been tied with ropes to chairs around the library's centre table. Another person was sitting in the same position on a chair in the washroom.

"I saw two others still breathing with abrupt gasps."

Sindh provincial police chief Syed Kamal Shah told reporters at the scene the attack "seems to be

an act of terrorism", as inquiries got under way.

"All of them had been shot once and the bullets were fired from point blank range," Shah said. He refused to speculate on suspects.

Karachi police chief Tariq Jamil said gunmen, described as in their 20s, had covered the victims' mouths with tape as well as tying their hands with ropes.

All the victims were Christians, police said. Muslims also worked for the charity.

A senior police official described the attack as "meticulously executed".

"They knew how many people were inside and they knew the layout of the office," he told AFP, asking not to be named.

The charity operated on donations from Christians and private individuals to fight for the oppressed in this teeming port city of 14 million people.

The Catholic Archbishop of the eastern city of Lahore, Lawrence Saldanha, a former chairman of the Institute, said it defied poor, women and labourers, "irrespective

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Commandos slay Gujarat temple killers

Troops deployed amidst fear of fresh riots

AFP, Gandhinagar

Indian commandos yesterday stormed a Hindu temple in the riot-torn western state of Gujarat and killed two gunmen, ending a bloody siege which left 31 people dead and raised new fears of sectarian violence and tension with Pakistan.

Police said two of the elite "Black Cat" commandos were also killed after the force entered the sprawling Akshardham temple in the Gujarati capital Gandhinagar to flush out the holed-up militants.

The army meanwhile said it was sending 3,000 soldiers into the tense western state amid growing fears the temple bloodbath could spark fresh Hindu-Muslim riots.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee termed the attack part of a "well-designed plot".

"Terrorists once again have shown their ugly face," Vajpayee said during a visit to the site of the carnage. "This shows terrorists will not stop at carrying out any kind of violence.

Police, meanwhile, stepped up security throughout Gujarat, espe

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Reshuffle rumble makes ministers panicky

Rife speculations put Secretariat to virtual standstill

REZAUL KARIM

The rumble of a cabinet reshuffle can once again be heard and tension and speculations are rife among the ministers, affecting normal administrative activities.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia collected resignation letters from four cabinet ministers, 11 state ministers and one deputy minister about a month ago for their unsatisfactory performance and different allegations.

These members of the council of ministers are already nervous about losing their portfolio. Besides, some

junior ministers are also keeping their fingers crossed.

Among those who submitted their resignation letters are two cabinet ministers and a state minister from Chittagong, one cabinet minister each from greater Comilla and Manikganj, one technocrat state minister each from greater Comilla and Noakhali, an aged state minister from the western region, one state minister from Barisal and one state minister and a deputy minister from greater Mymensingh.

Sources at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said that at least two more state ministers might also be

asked to submit resignation letters to the PM because of their reported involvement in various scandals.

A few new faces may be included in the council of ministers in case of the reshuffle. On the sideline, the chiefs of the alliance partners, Nazim Rahman Manjur, chairman of the Bangladesh Jatiya Party, and Azizul Haq, chairman of the Islami Oikya Jote, are likely to be appointed advisors to the prime minister with the rank and status of cabinet minister.

Sources said the prime minister had gathered information from her

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Overnight raids reek of political harassment

REAZ AHMAD

Frequent overnight raids by law enforcement agencies on residences of different leaders and activists of the main opposition Awami League (AL) smack of political vendetta and harassment.

Such actions now appear aimed at keeping the opposition busy averting arrest and detention rather than organising anti-government movement.

To avoid unnecessary harassment, many opposition leaders and activists do not stay home at night.

And the raids at the dead of the night without any arrest warrant are unlawful, a former police inspector general has explained to The Daily Star.

During such unauthorised raids, law enforcement agencies also vandalised assets and misbehaved with the family members of the politicians. The victims are more often than not ignored by police stations when they want to lodge complaints against such unlawful raids. So, many of them go to court to seek justice.

But the law does not permit any overnight raids on any private property without warrant or order

from the magistrate.

The AL has claimed that the law enforcement agencies could not show any warrant in any of the raids. But it is the right of the person whose house is raided to see the official warrant. Ironically, similar raids on members of the then opposition, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), were rampant.

When approached by this correspondent, former inspector general of police (IGP) M Enamul Haq explained the legal steps for carrying out house raids.

Police can raid a residence at night only if they have a warrant, he said.

"In case they do not have a warrant, they can keep the house under siege throughout the night if they fear that a person, who is involved, or a suspect, in an offence, or against whom a complaint has been made, might escape. In such a case, they can raid the house only after the break of dawn."

Even if police have a warrant, they should take at least two persons from the neighbourhood with them as witnesses during the raid, he added.

He further clarified that in case a

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DB mum about interrogation of 7 Arabs for terror links

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch (DB) of Police keeps mum about the seven Arab nationals who were being interrogated for their alleged link with an international terrorist organisation on the first day of their five-day remand yesterday.

Seven Arab nationals who were arrested from different parts of Uttara model town on Monday night were placed on a five-day remand on Tuesday.

They are Abu Nujaid of Libya, Sadek Al Nasami; Abu Sallam, Abu Umaiya and Abul Abbas of Yemen; Abu Ashem of Algeria; and Hasan Adam of Sudan were quizzed at the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC).

According to sources, the investigators questioned them till last night. Though the arrestees speak in English but the investigators had to face trouble due to their Arabic accent.

Along with the seven Arabs, police also arrested a Bangladeshi named Anisur Rahman from the Al Hermann Islamic Institute. Anis is fluent in Arabic as well as in Sudanese, Yemeni and Algerian languages. He is being used as an interpreter during the questioning, sources said.

Algerian Abu Ashem is the director, Sudanese Hasan Adam is the founding director and Yemeni Abu

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