

Death threat given to CPA magistrate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Unknown miscreants, in a letter, have threatened to kill the magistrate of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA).

In a two-page handwritten letter dated February 18, intimidators on behalf of 'repressed people of Chittagong' gave Magistrate Munir Chowdhury one-month ultimatum to leave Chittagong Port or face dire consequences for his role (against illegal land grabbers and vested quarters).

The letter sent through Chittagong General Post Office said, "You (Munir) have evicted many land grabbers bothering little about pending cases and ignoring court injunctions or stay orders. So killing you will not be a crime or sin."

Attack on Dr Kamal

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At a press conference in Dhaka yesterday, Kamal Hossain said the home minister's statement in parliament on the attack on him was 'a blatant lie' and urged the prime minister to ask him (home minister) to resign for failure to discharge his duties.

Our Rangamati correspondent reported that during the daylong hartal vehicles kept of roads and shops and business establishments remained closed.

Hundreds of PCJSS workers brought out processions in different areas of the district town and held a rally at the Shilpakala Academy.

Gano Forum presidium member Pankaj Bhattacharya filed the case under the Speedy Trial Act with Kaukhali Police Station at 10:45pm on Monday. Mohammad Nurul Absar, assistant general secretary of Chittagong District Bar Association, submitted the FIR (first information report) on behalf of the complainant.

In the FIR, Pankaj said, "Lawmaker from Khagrachhari Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan instigated his terrorists to launch the premeditated attack out of mere political vengeance."

The FIR went on, "A gang of 80 to 100 terrorists equipped with iron rods, tree-trunks, stones and knives carried out the attack with an ill motive to kill Dr Kamal Hossain. But fortunately, it was the presence of mind of driver Jamal Uddin that saved the lives of Dr Kamal and others in his motorcade."

"The terrorist gang would have killed Dr Kamal and us had the driver not risen to the occasion," the FIR further stated.

The motorcade of eminent jurist Kamal Hossain came under attack in Goddar Rubber Garden area under Kaukhali upazila, about 3 kilometres off Raazan upazila headquarters in Chittagong. The attackers damaged two microbuses including the one in which Kamal was travelling.

The deputy commissioner (DC) of Rangamati and top police officials of the district said the place of occurrence is not under their jurisdiction, creating uncertainty about the case.

Additional Superintendent of Police Khairul Alam said it will be necessary to shift the case. "We'll seek cooperation from the police station concerned for proper investigation into the case and arrest of the criminals till the case is shifted," he added.

Earlier, Kamal alleged the attack was made as the local administration did not ensure their security despite previous assurance.

About this, the DC Dr Jafar Ahmed Khan said he had no contact with Dr Kamal or any other members of his team. "Even then sufficient police, magistrates and army personnel were deployed near Rangamati border following appeal from the organiser of the public meeting (Kamal) was scheduled to address," he said.

The DC and police officials also said they were yet to receive any directive from the prime minister or the home minister to arrest the attacker.

Kamal Hossain at his press conference yesterday expressed

It also said a killing squad was engaged to 'take care' of him.

"A few high-ups at Chittagong Port and some syndicated groups had vehemently opposed my appointment at the CPA for a second term and they want to kill me now," Munir told The Daily Star last night.

Munir recovered huge land properties of the CPA worth about Tk 350 crore from land grabbers during his three-year posting there, which ended in 2003, sources said.

CPA Chairman ANM Shahadat Hossain lodged a GD (general diary) with Bandar Police Station yesterday afternoon.

Chittagong Metropolitan Police posted a police patrol team around the magistrate's residence for his security, sources said.

JS body to probe hajj irregularities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary standing committee yesterday formed a probe body to investigate into the mismanagement in the government sponsored hajj services this year.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Religious Affairs at a meeting at Jatiya Sangsads (JS) Bhaban formed the three-member sub-committee headed by Mufti Mohammad Wakkas MP and asked it to submit its report within 15 days.

Shah Mohammad Ruhul Kuddus and Mohammad Shahiduzzaman are the other members of the committee.

Committee members expressed their dissatisfaction at the government's failure in providing appropriate services to Bangladeshi hajj pilgrims. The meeting also reviewed press reports on hajj mismanagement.

The meeting decided to create five posts of deputy director at Islamic Foundation. It also discussed about beautification of Baitul Mukarram Mosque.

Delwar Hossain Saidye MP, chairman of the committee, chaired the meeting while State Minister for Religion Moshtarak Hossain Shahjahan, committee members and officials concerned, were present at the meeting.

3 JCD men injured in intra-party clash at DU hall

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least three leaders and activists of Jatiyatabdil Chhatra Dal (JCD) of Jasimuddin Hall of Dhaka University were injured in a clash between two rival factions of the organisation on Monday night.

Md. Kaimul Hossain, a fourth-year student of Persian literature and hall unit office secretary of the JCD, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with serious head injuries.

The hall unit JCD leaders later ousted Abdul Halim, joint convenor of the Science Annex JCD, from the hall on his involvement in the clash.

Sources said the clash erupted over the control of TV remote at the TV room of the hall.

Additional police were deployed to avoid further untoward incidents.

Meanwhile, DU unit JCD President Amirul Islam Khan Alim and General Secretary Hasan Mamun have expelled nine party leaders and activists of Sir Af Rahman Hall unit for their alleged involvement in anti-organisational activities.

They are Razib, David, Asad, Kabir, Shahin, Mohim, Anwar and Jiwel.

At an emergency meeting on Monday night, the DU unit JCD leaders also withdrew expulsion order of its Senior Vice-President Golam Hafiz Nahin who was expelled few months ago.

The JCD leaders also expelled four leaders and activists Kamal, Nazim, Shohel and Tuhin of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall unit for their involvement in a clash at the hall last week.

A tense situation has been prevailing among the three conflicting factions of the JCD at different residential halls following three internal clashes at three halls.

8 guns seized in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

The joint forces recovered eight local guns from Kalashi Para under Naikhongchhari upazila yesterday evening.

A team led by Lt Mohashin, camp-in-charge of Lembuchhari of Naikhongchhari zone, raided the area under direction of Bandarban Region Headquarters and recovered the guns.

The joint forces have recovered seven M-79 and three M-16 rifles with 45-round bullets and other weapons in last 4 days so far from the same area.

Hasina

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He was rushed to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital with a broken hand and wounded head. The attack foiled a pre-scheduled meeting of Hasina there.

In Agailhara, the BNP cadres drove out ex-UP chairman and AL leader Aiyub Ali from the roadside meeting venue.

Ruling four-party alliance had a human chain formed by relatives of the murdered, oppressed, and maimed by the AL cadres during their previous regime in front of Barisal Aswini Kumar Hall on Tuesday morning, just hours before Hasina drove through the city.

The ruling BNP also convened a public meeting on Wednesday morning in front of Aswini Kumar Hall to what it said prevent the return of terrorism and terrorists of AL.

Police, Armed Police Battalion and paramilitary BDR were deployed on the route Hasina took for her security.

Bandarban hotelier

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security ring.

"We did not pay the abductors any money, but I cannot confirm whether some others have paid them or not," Milan told The Daily Star last night.

Well-placed sources however said the gang released him only after pocketing Tk 15 lakh in two instalments from the family members who brokered the deal through different sources.

The family had contacted the gang on several occasions and paid Tk 9 lakh in the first instalment. They paid Tk 6 lakh hours before Bablu's release, the sources added.

The abductors first demanded Tk 2 crore in ransom.

After his release, Bablu walked to Tarasa point where a boat was already waiting. It dropped him at Shankha bridge ghat near the Bandarban town at around midnight.

Bablu was taken to Bandarban Cantonment. The hotelier later drove in a white private car for his residence.

"They took me hostage brandishing AK-47s and crossed the Shankha river before taking me to the jungle," Bablu said in Dhaka last night. Two to three people joined them and the group later camped at an open, abandoned house, he said.

The abductors moved to a hill the following morning where they stayed till February 9. They moved to another place and stayed there for two days, Bablu said. Afterwards, they were always on the move.

Bablu wrote his brother on February 19 that the abductors had demanded Tk 30 lakh for his release. However, he asked his brother not to get the army engaged in the rescue drive, citing the abductors' threat to kill him in such an event.

Altaf's statement

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Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Agreement "so-called", sparking off resentment and chagrin among policymakers and ministers, highly placed sources said.

Although most policymakers and ministers declined to make any official statement over Altaf's remarks, they did say that the home minister had continued making comments that made the government embarrassed time and again.

"I don't know why and how the home minister is still holding his portfolio despite making such blundering remarks one after another," said a senior cabinet minister on condition of anonymity.

He also wondered how he [the home minister] could make such a statement in parliament when the prime minister herself ordered to arrest the attackers on Dr Kamal.

He also wondered how he [the home minister] could make such a statement in parliament when the prime minister herself ordered to arrest the attackers on Dr Kamal.

Several ministers said it was not wise on the part of the home minister to call the CHT peace accord a "so-called" agreement when the alliance government after assuming power formed a high-powered cabinet committee to implement the accord.

The committee headed by BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan so far had six meetings with the CHT Regional Council and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and took several decisions towards implementation of the deal.

In such a context, BNP policymakers and ministers said the home minister's 'blundering remarks' made the entire government embarrassed.

A senior minister on condition of anonymity said although the government was apparently going slow with implementation of the CHT peace agreement, it did take a number of decisions in the meantime that were now under implementation.

After the sixth meeting of the cabinet committee on December 24 last, its Chairman Mannan Bhuiyan told reporters, "It's a large agreement comprised of many articles and clauses. So it's not possible to implement the entire deal in a day or two. But, so far, we've made remarkable progress. We hope to implement the agreement in phases."

The BNP in its election manifesto did not say it would cancel the

HC asks BPC chairman to show up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The High Court yesterday asked the chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) to appear before the court on March 9 following a writ petition.

A Division bench comprising Justices Abdul Matin and Rifat Ahmed directed BPC Chairman Dr Md Mahabubur Rahman to show up for the BPC's alleged irregularities in leasing out the corporation's Sylhet Motel.

The bench also asked all concerned to suspend their activities involving the motel till disposal of the writ petition.

Earlier, following the BPC's invitation of bid for the lease, Messrs Samson Private Ltd offered Tk 47 lakh and Sylhet Shishu Park Ltd Tk 42 lakh, but the BPC entertained the latter and asked it to raise its proposal to Tk 47 lakh.

Following the writ petition by Samson Ltd, the High Court issued a stay order on leasing out the motel.

But the BPC violating the stay order signed a contract with Sylhet Shishu Park Ltd for lease of the motel at Tk 47 lakh Monday.

Road blockade observed in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Samo Adhikar Andolok (SAA), an organisation representing Bangalee settlers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), enforced a road blockade programme in Bandarban yesterday without any untoward incident.

Pickets obstructed movement of vehicles at various points of the town during the day-long programme.

The SAA observed the strike demanding cancellation of CHT peace accord and removal of Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, chief of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity, from CHT Regional Council chairman post.

The SAA also held a rally at Bandarban Press Club premises in the evening to voice their demands.

4 shot in city

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fire at them and walked away.

At Mirpur, 30-year-old Mohammad Rafiq was working at an under-construction building at Section 10 when about five extortionists came over there to collect toll from the owner of the building.

Failing to find the owner, they shot at Rafiq and left the spot.

Rafiq is undergoing treatment at the DMCH with a wound in his right leg.

Traffic deptt

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said Rashed Talukder, owner and driver of a truck.

When asked how he justifies damaging the roads by overloading the vehicles, about half a dozen drivers present there said they overload to "meet the rise in fuel cost and extortion by police and criminals".

"Stop extortion and we'll stop overloading," said Talukder.

Bus drivers said they maintain a high-speed journey to avoid penalties for running late. "On the highways there's a mass of rickshaws, vans, buffalo carts and hundreds of pedestrians who don't know how to use the roads where large vehicles pass by," said Omar Sheikh, a bus driver at Panthapath.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) officials seemed helpless about the chaotic situation on the highways. A BRTA official said although the BRTA maintains 22 offices throughout the country, their activities are controlled by the deputy commissioners (DCs) outside Dhaka.

If an assistant director of the BRTA wants to launch an inspection, he has to write to the DC for permission and police help. He cannot act on his own to clamp down on irregularities, the official said.

"We have the same manpower as in 1995 when there were only 300,000 registered vehicles in the country that has raised over 700,000 this year."

"Unless a single authority with proper resources is engaged to combat the irregularities, the road transport sector will keep on inflicting losses to the society," the BRTA official said.

Blue-chip stocks plunged by between three to five percent, the Interfax news agency said.

In contrast to the turbulent Yeltin years, when the erratic Russian leader sacked prime ministers at will, Putin has presided over an unprecedented period of political stability in the post-Soviet era.

Kremlin-linked political analyst Sergei Markov said Putin had acted to get rid of Kasyanov, who came from a now largely sidelined clan close to Yeltsin known as the "Family," and had been expected to go after the March presidential elections.

"This is above all about the sacking of Kasyanov. We had been waiting for this dismissal for a long time. For Putin, sacking the entire government was the only way to get rid of Kasyanov," he said.

The independent commission investigating the attacks has received information on the 1999 Shehhi tip and is actively investigating the issue, Philip Zelikow, executive director of the commission, told The Times.

Al-Qaeda is widely seen as bent on radicalising Muslims worldwide and encouraging them to rise up against the West in what some

AL submits memo

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the Speedy Trial Act. The speaker will also be reminded of the government's indifference to the three-point demand that AL