

JMB threatens to blow up Rupsha thana

Islamist outfit plans to retaliate arrest of its leader, says SP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Khulna Police Superintendent Moinul Hossain Friday night admitted that Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in a letter threatened to blow up Rupsha police station in Khulna.

The Officer-in-Charge of Rupsha thana received a letter on Thursday that threatened to blow up the police station.

Though the sender did not identify himself, the letter threatening to blow up Rupsha thana was sent by JMB to retaliate arrest of trained JMB activist Shahidullah alias Lokman, the SP told newsmen Friday night.

Shahidullah, a student of Bamondanga Madrasa in Khulna, was arrested in Dhaka on September 8 in the case filed in connection with bomb blasts on Khulna court compound earlier.

Security has been tightened in and

around all police stations in Khulna after the threat.

The Rupsha thana OC had earlier said that the letter might have been sent by an Islamist militant organisation.

The letter said Rupsha police station was on the list of police stations across the country that will be targeted for attack to avenge the arrest of Islamist militants.

It said JMB activists are being arrested across the country. Shahidullah has been arrested in Khulna. If he is not released, JMB will blow up Rupsha thana as part of a plan to attack "all police stations and key installations" in the country, it said.

Shahidullah was brought to Khulna for interrogation and is now in Khulna jail. He may be produced before court today for further remand, police sources told this correspondent

yesterday.

They said that during interrogation Shahidullah said he was trained in making and using bombs and grenades and use of firearms.

He also told interrogators that JMB chief Abdur Rahman used to visit Bamondanga Madrasa every three months to know about training of Islamist militants in the institution.

OC Mizanur Rahman said the sender did not mention his organisational affiliation in the letter.

Earlier on Tuesday, a man identifying himself as Siddiqul Islam Bangla Bhai of outlawed Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), demanded toll from the Commissioner of Benapole land customs over cell phone.

Customs Commissioner Hussein Ahmed confirmed the incident on Thursday night and said the unidentified

caller demanded a big amount of money from him for treatment of many militants who were injured in different incidents.

The caller threatened the customs commissioner with "dire consequences" if he does not send the money.

"I was asked by the caller to call a cell phone (no 0175-362132) for giving information on whether the money was sent," the commissioner said.

"Bangla Bhai does not go to any one for money, rather you are to go to him with money to save your life," the caller said when the customs commissioner asked him to come to his Benapole office to talk about the matter.

Security measures have been tightened at Benapole land customs office following the incident.



Onion coming in bulk from India

ABU BAKR SIDDIQUE, *Jessore*

About 1000 onion loaded trucks are waiting at Petrapole on the Indian side to enter Bangladesh, customs officials said.

The commissioner of Petrapole customs in a fax message has requested the customs commissioner of Benapole to take delivery of onion even on Saturday, weekly holiday in Bangladesh, to avert traffic congestion at Petrapole.

As per records, at least 495 tonnes of onion were imported on October 23, 390 tonnes on October 24 and 570 tonnes on October 25 through Benapole land port. Many onion trucks are at Benapole for unloading, sources at Benapole land port said yesterday.

Importers' syndicates in Dhaka and Chittagong are controlling onion price in the country. They are importing onion from India at around Tk 13.25 per kilogram as per earlier Letter

of Credit (LC) and selling those at Tk 42 to Tk 48 to wholesalers.

Sources at Benapole customs said that as per previous LC, importers are importing one metric ton of onion at \$180 or Tk 11520. Six percent customs duty, four per cent infrastructure development tax and three per cent income tax are added to the price. So the total import price including all taxes stands at Tk 13.25 per kg, they said.

The importers have formed a syndicate and are selling onion to wholesalers at Tk 40 to Tk 48 per kg, they said.

The sources added that huge quantities of onion are being imported from India every day as per earlier LCs. Onion is not imported on new LC as its price has also increased in India in recent days.

Sources said onion is produced in large quantities in Indian states of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and West Bengal. But heavy rain this year damaged onion.

March for food in Gaibandha

Steps to save monga affected people demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

Over 1000 monga-affected people from Fulchari upazila marched to Gaibandha town from Sayedpur ghat yesterday demanding food.

They carried banners and chanted various slogans during the 10 kilometre march, organised by Workers Party.

The march began after a brief rally at Sayedpur flood control embankment in Fulchari, addressed by Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon. The procession ended terminated at Gaibandha Shaheed Miner.

Addressing the rally, Menon called upon the government to declare Gaibandha a monga affected area and supply food to the poor.

The alliance government did not take any effective measure to contain the monga though thousands of affected people are virtually starving and are being attacked with diarrhoea and other intestinal diseases after eating uneatable things due to food crisis, he said.

Monga is an annual phenomenon in the area but no government took any step either to supply adequate food to create employment for the poor day labourers who do not have any work during the pre-harvest period, he said.

Moreover, there is gross anomaly, corruption and nepotism in distribu-

tion of rice under VGF (vulnerable group feeding) and VGD (vulnerable group development) programmes, he alleged.

The Workers Party leader said Tk 500 crore has been provided by donors under the Char Livelihood Programme in northern districts to create jobs, out of which Tk 200 crore has already been "misused for conducting assessment".

Taking the scope of poverty, Islamist militants are misleading the youths and luring them to violence in the name of Islam, he said.

Menon called upon the people to build a movement against the alliance government who is sheltering Islamist militants but doing nothing to eradicate monga in northern districts.

He called upon the government to prepare a master plan immediately to set up industries based on the cheap labour in northern districts and to create jobs by mobilising the people in income generating activities.

Presided over by Fulchari upazila Workers Party Secretary Solaiman Alim, the rally was addressed by, among others, party leaders Jibuti Barman, Amiul Islam Golap, Jahangir Alam, Abdul Matin Mollah and Mosadek Ahmed Bulbul.

People want relief from misrule

Ershad tells JP rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangpur*

Jatiya Party President H M Ershad yesterday said people of the country now want to get rid of the alliance government's 'misrule'.

They are frustrated with Awami League and BNP as both the parties have failed to fulfill their aspirations. They are now looking for an alternative, he told a public meeting held at Chharan High School ground in Barobala union under Mithapukur upazila, organised by JP.

The people were happier during JP rule than they are now. Jatiya Party is the only alternative now, he said.

He bitterly criticised the government for its failure to contain the price hike of essentials. The government has no control on the market because most of ruling party men are being benefited from the high prices, he alleged.

"The middle class and lower middle class people have been virtually ruined under the BNP-Jamaat rule, let alone the poor and the landless day labourers."

Corruption has become deep rooted under the alliance government. It is shameful that Bangladesh has been branded by Transparency International (TI) as the most corrupt country for the fifth consecutive term, the former president said.

Ershad said the flood affected people in the monga-hit areas in northern districts are passing days without food but the government seems indifferent to the situation.

The meeting, presided over by JP lawmaker Shah Solaiman Fakir, was addressed by, among others, Asaduzzaman, Subal Mohanta, Saifur Rahman and Rangpur Municipality Chairman Abdur Rouf Manik.



PHOTO: STAR

The Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad brought out a broom procession in Chittagong on Friday protesting alleged grabbing of land of a minority community member in the city by the City Corporation.

Land 'grabbing' by CCC protested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

The Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad on Friday brought out a broom procession and held a rally in the port city protesting 'grabbing' of a cattleshed land owned by a minority community member near Golpaha intersection.

The Oikya Parishad leaders announced to hold a dawn to dusk hunger strike at Anderkilla square on November 2.

President of Pashurakkhak Samity, an association for protection of cattle, and elderly revolutionary Binodbihari

Chowdhury presided over the rally.

Advocate Rana Das Gupta, member secretary of Chittagong unit of Oikya Parishad, freedom fighter Nurul Islam, Father Joseph Jibon Gomez, Prof Ranajit Kumar Dey, Ranajit Chowdhury, Dulal Mojumder and Advocate Subhas Chandra Lala addressed the rally.

Speakers said that they had elected Mohiuddin Chowdhury as mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) for protection of civil rights but the mayor's men swooped on the voters within six months of the election. They said we cast our votes for devel-

opment of the city in the last mayoral election. But grabbing of innocent people's land and eviction in name of development is contrary to public interest and city corporation ordinance. They demanded immediate haltage of land grabbing in name of the corporation.

The processionists paraded different city streets and terminated at Chittagong Press Club.

Meanwhile, the City Corporation, in a press release, claimed ownership of the controversial land and said an ultra-modern health centre and a temple will be built there.

Navy checkpoint set up in Barguna coast

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Bangladesh Navy set up a check at the confluence of Bishkhali and Baleswar rivers in Barguna coastal area on Friday to prevent smuggling, particularly of fertiliser and timber from the Sundarbans forest, and to restrict plying of unregistered engine boats and fishing trawlers.

Lt. Commandar Azim, who is in charge of the check post, said law enforcers posted there are also checking route permits and fitness of vessels to ensure safety in naval journey. About 170 coastal and sea-going vessels were checked till yesterday, he said.

One engine-boat was caught after a chase and detained as it tried to avoid the check post. Equipment used for smuggling timber from the Sundarban were recovered from the seized boat but its crew managed swim away.

Golam Mustafa Chowdhury, president of the Barguna Trawler Owners Association, hailed the move, saying this will not only prevent smuggling and illegal transportation of goods, but also will ensure safety of fishermen and naval journey in the coastal areas.

PLAN TO STOP GAS SUPPLY

Workers of Polash Urea threaten greater agitation

A CORRESPONDENT, *Narsingdi*

Tension is mounting in Palash industrial area as workers and employees of Palash Urea Fertiliser Factory (PUFF) are holding agitation programmes almost every day protesting the statement by Energy Advisor Mahmudur Rahman that gas supply to the factory could be suspended due to shortage.

Suspension of gas supply will stop production in the factory.

The workers and employees held several sit-in demonstrations, rallies and brought out processions since October 15, threatening the authorities of a "deadlock" in all government installations in the area including Ghorasal Urea Fertiliser Factory and Ghorasal Power Plant if production in PUFF is stopped. They chanted slogans against the Energy Advisor.

Newspaper reports on October 15 quoted the Energy Advisor as saying that gas supply to PUFF could be suspended due to short supply of gas.

At the rallies held at different points in the industrial area, the workers and employees leaders said the 300 MT daily capacity factory is running smoothly since its establishment in 1986.

A plan to suspend gas supply to it

is a conspiracy to close the profitable factory and make the country more dependent on imported urea fertiliser, they said.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, president of PUFF Employees Union and Narsingdi Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal leader Nazibur Rahman said, "We always exceed the annual production target of one lakh tonnes. The factory utilises 14.5 mmcf/d gas daily, which can be continued if the authorities are sincere to run the factory, he said.

He said suspension of gas supply to PUFF will have a great cascading affect on other fertiliser factories in the country. The production cost of urea at PUFF is lesser than other urea factories in the country, he claimed.

The government will have to import urea worth Tk 190 crore if the factory is closed while the cost of running the factory is around Tk 87 crore, he said. This will be a net loss to the government. Besides, country's agriculture will suffer greatly, he added.

When contacted, Acting Managing Director of the factory Manjur Ahamed Tarafder said, he has not yet received any letter from higher authorities as regards suspension of gas supply to the factory.

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