

AL leader's musclemen ransack Kuakata hotel

Hoteliers on strike as owner, staff beaten up

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A gang of about 50 hoodlums, led by a local Awami League leader, ransacked a residential hotel at Kuakata, beat up the owner and staff and looted cash and computers on Saturday night.

Following the attack, the Hotel Owners Association in Kuakata yesterday began an indefinite strike shutting over 50 hotels in the area demanding exemplary punishment to the perpetrators.

Police, hotel owners and local sources said the gang, led by Monir Bhuiyan, a local AL leader and a notorious land broker, reached there at around 4:00pm as part of a deal to forcibly evict the disputed owner of Golden Palace Hotel and hand over its possession to one of his relatives.

Having evicted the owner of Golden Palace, the hoodlums parted there until late in the evening and attacked the nearby Sky Palace Hotel at around 10:30pm.

A local source said the Awami League activists were not happy with the owner of Sky Palace Hotel Golam Sarwar as he had allowed former ministers and BNP central leaders Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and Dr Moien Khan to use the hotel premises a few days ago for distributing relief among the Cyclone Aila victims.

Sources also said during the attack on Sky Palace, police from the Kuakata police camp were present there but



Vandalised reception of Hotel Sky Palace at Kuakata yesterday. Goons of a local AL leader attacked the hotel and took away computers, cash and other materials.

remained totally inactive. Ironically, the incident occurred when incumbent Patuakhali Police Superintendent Shaibal Kanti Chowdhury and officer-in-charge (OC) of Kalapara Police Station Ishaq Ali were present on Kuakata sea beach on a pleasure trip.

The criminals damaged sofa sets, computers, DVD players in the hotel and took away Tk 1.4 lakh by breaking the cash counter. They also looted seven computers, five DVD players from the hotel. The reception counter and three rooms were totally destroyed.

Hotel owner Golam Sarwar,

staffs Mamun, 26, Sohel, 25, Shah Alam, 35, 11, and driver Nazrul were roughed up by the criminals as they tried to resist them.

Following the attack, police arrested four 'boarders', alleging that they are sex workers. The Sky Palace officials immediately brushed aside the allegation and said the boarders were tourists from Dhaka who had checked in two days ago.

Soleman, 22, one of the attackers sustained serious cut wounds while smashing glass windows. He was sent to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

A protest meeting was organised by Kuakata Hotel and Motel Owners Association at Kuakata Press Club at about 5:30pm where the association leaders demanded their security to run business peacefully.

Kuakata police camp chief ASI Hasis was closed to Patuakhali Police Lines last night. The law enforcers arrested two gang members, Alamgir, 25, and Jasim, 26. Additional police and Rab personnel have been deployed in the area.

When contacted, SP Sahibal Kanti Chowdhury said, "We will take proper action against the culprits."

LAND DISPUTE

17 hurt as locals, settlers clash in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

A clash between indigenous people and settlers over disputed land left at least 17 people seriously injured at Boroitali under Guimara upazila in Khagrachhari district yesterday morning.

Four people went missing after the incident and aggrieved people kept roads blocked for over four hours demanding return of the missing people.

The injured were admitted to Khagrachhari Adhunik Sadar Hospital, Guimara Army Hospital, and Matiranga Upazila Health Complex.

The four missing people have been identified as Hafiz Bandari, 55, Habibur Rahman, 55, Solaiman 32, and Rabiul Islam 36.

Locals and police said the incident began at about 8:30am when a group of indigenous people attacked the settlers to take control of the land, which was provided to settlers in 1981-82.

Later army, police and Ansar members took position to avert further untoward incident, they said.

"This is our land. Bangladesh government gave these lands to us in early 1980s. But we were shifted to a guchhagram (cluster village) in the name of security in 1982. Now they (indigenous people) want to drive us out by creating untoward incident," said Rahmot Ali, 65, a Bangali settler.

Indigenous Ranobir Chakma, on the other hand, said the incident took place as settlers wanted to grab their lands.

Mohammad Shahaz Uddin, secretary general of Parbatya Chattagram Sama Adhikar Andolon, has demanded immediate release of the missing people and arrest and punishment of the grabbers.

Local lawmaker Zatintra Lal Tripura urged people to maintain peace and show respect to laws.

Eviction bid protested

RU CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred indigenous people under the banner of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad yesterday formed a human chain at Shaheb Bazer zero point in Rajshahi city protesting eviction of 74 indigenous families from their land allegedly by local hired goons of a BNP adherent at Khatirpur in Porsha upazila of Naogaon.

Jatiya Adivasi Parishad Rajshahi district unit organised the human chain. Later, they held a protest meeting at

the same venue where speakers strongly condemned the incident and demanded exemplary punishment of the perpetrators.

The indigenous leaders alleged that the local hired goons of a BNP leader looted, tortured and evicted indigenous people from their land in front of police on Saturday. They also criticised police inaction and urged the government to ensure security of indigenous people, especially of women at Khatirpur in Porsha upazila.



Relatives wail over the body of Abdul Hamid who was tortured to death by police yesterday.

Police torture one to death for bribe

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

An assistant sub inspector (ASI) of district Special Branch (SB) and his men tortured a person to death for failing to pay Tk 2,000 yesterday noon.

ASI Harun ur Rashid along with 'informers' Waliur Rahman, Pentrol and Sumon in two motorbikes went to Abdul Hamid's Motir Bazar house in Dimla Upazila at noon, locals said.

Terming Hamid as a 'ganja trader', the ASI demanded Tk 2,000 from him.

As Hamid failed to meet the demand, Harun and his companions began to beat him mercilessly, leading to Hamid's death on the spot, locals said.

Aggrieved locals detained Harun with a motorbike while his three accomplices managed to flee on another motorbike.

Former local union parishad member Ohidul Islam said victim Hamid earned his livelihood by spraying insecticides in crop fields of the local farmers.

Accused Harun was suspended following the incident, said the officer-in-charge of Dimla Police Station.

Additional police forces have been deployed in the area as a tense situation is prevailing.

SNIPPETS

Lima murder protested

RU CORRESPONDENT

General students at Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday morning formed a human chain in the city's Talaimari area demanding punishment of killers. Nima Parvin alias Lima, a first year student of management department, who was killed allegedly by her in-laws for dowry. The students at the human chain covered their faces with white cloth and displayed a shroud to show how Lima was tortured and killed for dowry. Lima died at her in-laws' house at village Jagirpara under Puthia upazila in Rajshahi on Thursday.

Khulna journo 'missing'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Sanjoy Kumar Barkandaj, Dakope upazila correspondent of The Dainik Itihas published from Khulna city is missing since June 8 morning. According to a GD entry with Dakope police station on Friday evening by his wife Shwapna Barkandaj, Sanjoy was kidnapped last Monday night. Shwapna alleged that her husband received several death threats over cell phone from Dipankar, son of Banishanta UP Chairman Shudhangshu Baidya for covering a report in the daily on pilferage of fuel oil from different ships of Mongla Port. Earlier, Sanjoy had filed a GD in this connection on February 9 seeking security of his life, Shwapna said.

Lightning kills two

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A father died and her daughter was killed by lightning at village Chehelgazi of Sadar upazila yesterday. Police said, Md Sharif Uddin, 40, son of Muhammad Ali, and his 11-year old daughter Labony were killed in their sleep when a lightning struck their house in the early morning. At least three cattle were also killed. Labony was a Class Five student of Chandganj Primary School.

Storm lashes 6 villages

A CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Three people were injured as storm lashed six Lalmonirhat villages last night. Scores of kutcha houses were damaged and many trees uprooted at villages Gobordhan, Kamlabari and Durgapur under Aditmari upazila and Shoilmar, Rudhershwar and Dulali under Kaliganj upazila. Meanwhile, two persons were killed by lightning at Sadar and Patgram upazilas yesterday morning. Abed Ali, 36, son of late Karim Uddin at Sree Rampur village and Hasmot Miah, 30, son of Yasin Mollah at village Mogholhat were struck by lightning while they went out of home for daily work at neighbouring villages during rain.

Bandarban voter list

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Updating of the voter list will begin today in Sadar and Roangchhari upazilas of the district. District election officer M Kamrul Hasan yesterday said over a hundred people have been appointed to assist the process of voter updating. The process includes inclusion of new voters and deletion of names of those passed away. On completion of updating, photographs of new voters will be taken from July 1, the district election officer said. According to the existing voter list, there are 49,314 voters in Bandarban Sadar upazila and 14,993 in Roangchhari upazila.

Broom procession in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A large number of women in Masdar area of the town brought out a broom procession yesterday protesting what they said irregular gas supply for the last six months. The procession ended at Narayanganj zonal office of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution office at Chashara at around 11 am. The security guards obstructed their entry to the office. At this stage, they besieged the office for about half an hour. When they were allowed to enter the office, they submitted a memorandum to the Titas Gas authorities containing their demand for regular gas supply to the area.

Fake fertiliser factory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Jhenidah Rab-6 in a drive in Moheshpur upazila on Saturday night unearthed a fake fertiliser factory. A huge quantity of spurious fertiliser and fertiliser making and packing materials were recovered from the spot at village Alampur Kulbagan. During the raid on the house of Hasan, 32, son of Rabiul Islam, it was found that fake fertiliser was being made by mixing sand, salt, small parts of stone and zink.



Nurses of Patuakhali General Hospital bring out a silent procession in the town protesting assault of a hospital staff yesterday.

Beating of hospital nurse in Patuakhali sparks protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Nurses and doctors of Patuakhali General Hospital yesterday brought out a silent procession demanding punishment to 'nephew of a state minister' for severely beating up a staff nurse on Saturday.

Critically injured Mozammel is now under treatment at the Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital. He may become permanently deaf, doctors feared.

Hospital and police sources said, one Shamim, who claimed himself as a nephew of a state minister, brought his son to the emergency of the hospital at about 3.10 pm on Saturday. On-duty doctor and nurses started treatment of the patient. But Shamim brought charges of liveness against them and at one stage of altercation mercilessly beat up Mozammel, a male nurse. Due to beating the ear and nose of Mozammel started to bleed

profusely, witnesses said.

Dr Humayun Kabir, civil surgeon of Patuakhali, later filed a case with Patuakhali Sadar police station in this regard on Saturday.

Local AL leaders including Khan Mosharraf, secretary of district unit AL tried to settle the matter but failed.

Yesterday noon, all nurses, doctors and other staff brought out a procession in the town. The procession started from the hospital premises and ended at the civil surgeon office parading the main streets in the town. They held a brief rally and demanded arrest of culprits. They also gave a 24-hour ultimatum to the civil surgeon to take necessary action within the stipulated time. They also vowed to go for tougher agitation programme if the offender goes unpunished.

Contacted, Sahibal Kanti Chowdhury, Patuakhali police superintendent said, "We are trying our best to arrest the culprit".

Lawachhara still bears the scars of Magurchhara blast

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Twelve years after the explosion at Magurchhara Gas Field on June 14 in 1997, nearby Lawachhara Reserve Forest is far from regaining its biodiversity while foreign operators of the gas field have paid a very small fraction of the money demanded as compensation for the huge losses.

Following the incident, the then operator of the gas field, US company Occidental transferred its business including assets and liabilities to another US company Unocal.

In 2005, the Unocal transferred its business to another company the Chevron, which is now liable for the losses of Magurchhara Gas Field blow-up.

As per a Production Sharing Contract (PSC) signed between the Occidental and the Petrobangla in January 1995 to search for minerals, the Occidental started work at Block No 14 near Lawachhara Reserve Forest in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar district.

The Occidental allegedly gave subcontract of well No 1 under Magurchhara Gas Field to German company Duetag in violation of the terms and conditions of PSC, and the well exploded on June 14, 1997 when the Duetag was working there.

Flame from the well rose to 500 feet high and the fire caused serious damage to a

major portion of adjacent Lawachhara Reserve Forest and Magurchhara paan punji (betel leaf plantation).

Lawachhara Reserve Forest lost several species of flora and fauna including shrubs, worms, insects, small animals and birds as the fire badly affected biodiversity of the forest.

An investigation committee formed by the then government submitted a report saying that losses of the reserve forest due to the explosion was estimated at Tk 9,858

crore 31 lakh while 29 tea gardens suffered losses of Tk 46 crore 6 lakh 84 thousand.

The report also estimated losses due to damage of railway track, electricity supply lines, betel leaf plants.

However, the Occidental and the Unocal authorities termed Bangladesh government's estimate of losses as 'much higher' than the actual.

The Petrobangla had calculated the loss of gas burnt due to the blow-up to be Tk 3,900 crore but the Unocal had

ignored the demand of compensation for it.

The Unocal paid Tk 38 crore as compensation to different loser sectors.

The external affairs officer of the Chevron, Naser Ahmed told the journalists of Moulvibazar, "The Unocal had a survey conducted by a 'third party' to estimate losses. The survey report had been submitted to the ministry concerned. Now the ministry has to settle the dispute over compensation."



A scene of fire spiralling out from Magurchhara Gas Field in Moulvibazar after one of its gas wells exploded up on June 14, 1997.

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