

Ex-Tajik minister dies in police custody

AFP, Dushanbe

A powerful ex-minister in Tajikistan was killed in a shoot-out, the interior ministry of the Central Asian country said Sunday, one day after saying that he was under arrest.

Former Tajik emergency situations minister Mirzo Zioyev was killed Saturday evening by a group of armed men loyal to a local drug dealer whose surrender he was meant to be negotiating, the interior ministry said in a statement.

"Mirzo Zioyev agreed to voluntarily show his weapons caches and to organize negotiations with the remaining members of these criminal groups with the purpose of their surrender," it said.

"During the execution of this operation by security forces... there was a sudden attack by an armed group, as a result of which Mirzo Zioyev was killed and several government agents were wounded."

On Saturday the ministry said that Zioyev had been arrested in connection with an attack on a police post in the volatile Rasht Valley region, located near the ex-Soviet republic's border with Afghanistan.

The death of Zioyev -- an Islamist commander during Tajikistan's 1990s civil war who was given a seat in the government as part of a peace deal -- comes amid rising tensions in the isolated moun-

tain region.

Government forces swept into the Rasht Valley in May, setting up roadblocks and barring access to journalists as part of what they say are routine annual anti-narcotics operations.

But on a recent visit to the region, locals told AFP that government forces were cordoning off entire mountain villages as part of ongoing battles with armed militant groups.

Zioyev's killing is the second mysterious death of an ex-minister in Tajikistan in the past month.

In June, former interior minister Makhmudnazar Salikhov died of a gunshot wound which police said was self-inflicted, although a witness at the scene alleged he was killed by police.

BDR mutiny

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place their suggestions in the House.

The border force would be modernised, said Faruk who heads a committee for coordinating work of the Prime Minister's Office and the home and defence ministries in the wake of the BDR carnage.

He also said the government would make all out efforts to keep the market stable during the month of Ramadan.

The minister also distributed medals and certificates among the trainees.

Tuku sues Moeen

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The complainant said he was hurt and defamed by some remarks General (retd) Moeen made in March 2007.

On a petition filed by Tuku the same day the court asked Moeen to explain within three weeks why his property should not be attacked.

Earlier, in response to the defamation suit, Judge SM Saiful Islam ordered the ex-army boss to appear before it and submit a written statement on August 16.

This is the first time Moeen has been accused in a case.

Tuku, ex-state minister for power and energy, submitted Tk 40,250 as court fee, which is the highest of its kind.

The complaint reads that on March 27, 2007, the then army chief said corrupt politicians had siphoned off at least Tk 20,000 crore from the energy sector during the four-party alliance rule.

He made the remarks at a tea party he hosted in honour of the freedom fighters at the National Parade Square.

The following day different national dailies ran reports on the comments that damaged Tuku's reputation in society and political fraternity.

On February 2 that year, the army-led joint forces arrested the BNP leader at his Mohammadpur house without any charges.

Tuku, who came out on bail on December 15 last year, claims even his family members were not spared torture during the state of emergency.

In the complaint, he cited the incumbent energy minis-

Rules defied

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unable to stop them until instructions come from the top officials," said ASI Habib. "You better keep away from them," he told this correspondent and our photographer.

Residents of Basila said armed activists of the Awami League are protecting the whole activity because of which they cannot even approach the site and talk to the media.

One resident claimed that part of the extraction site consists of his land. "I filed a general diary with Hazaribagh Police Station but the police never came to stop them," he said.

About 50 locals yesterday urged all for help.

"The same group of people started extracting sand last year and vanished after making several crore taken within a very short time at the cost of our land and the river," said one person. He alleged that the police, BIWTA officials and local Awami League activists are directly involved in this illegal activity.

Each of these barges is loaded with sand in less than an hour for a charge of Tk 8,000. Nearly 150 barges are carrying sand daily," he added.

The officer-in-charge of Hazaribagh Police Station said he has nothing to do with the sand extraction activity until BIWTA asks him to intervene.

Police sue 800 over clash at Bhasani University

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Tangail

Police yesterday filed a case against 800 unidentified people including students following the clash at Maulana Bhasani University of Science and Technology (MBUST) among students, locals and police on Saturday.

Sub-Inspector Salahuddin Hira filed the case with Tangail Sadar Police Station on charge of attacking the law enforcers.

Superintendent of Police at Tangail Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star that police team would remain deployed on the campus for an indefinite period to ensure security.

Meanwhile, a five-member probe committee, headed by Motiur Rahman, chairman of Computer Science and Technology Department, was formed to investigate the incident. The committee has been asked to submit reports soon as possible.

The probe body was formed at an emergency syndicate meeting, presided over by Vice Chancellor Prof M Nurul Islam yesterday.

It was also decided at the meeting that the university should not be reopened until normalcy returns to the campus, sources said.

At least 50 people including students and policemen were injured when MBUST students, locals and policemen locked in a daylong clash over a trifling matter.

Bangladeshis

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been enlisted to help the men whose passports are still in the possession of their employer. The lawyer will help the labourers make claims at the labour court in Abu Dhabi, so they can retain their legal status in the country.

The men at present have no access to any medical care.

They also don't have a regular access to electricity and water. The men began noticing that some of the company's projects had stalled in September last year. Around the same time their pay became erratic before it stopped completely.

Some of the men are afraid to leave their living quarters as they fear that they may be arrested for not possessing valid documents, according to the news report.

The United Arab Emirates was one of the countries hit hard by the global recession. According to a poll by The National, one in 10 people in the UAE say they have lost their jobs in the past six months.

Sirajganj town

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corruption or negligence with regard to the work of town protection embankment. "If the officials do it, they will face difficulty," he said.

Abul Hossain urged the officials and residents of the town to work in a united way to overcome the problem.

Talking about the Bangabandhu Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, he said the bridge is completely out of risk and safe for movement. If the mighty river Jamuna takes a more serious turn, the bridge would not face any threat in the next hundred years, he said.

The minister said that he is not sure if the Water Development Board Director General Abul Kalam Mohammad Azad had actually made the comment.

According to media reports, the DG said the guide in the management of Bangabandhu bridge would come under threat if the hard point gets damaged due to erosion.

Maoists kill

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in the east, the poorest part of India.

Estimates of their numbers nationwide range between 10,000 and 20,000, but little is known about their shadowy leadership, which does not court the media and seldom issues statements.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2006 described the Maoists as a "virus" and ranked them along with Islamic militants as a serious threat to the country's internal security.

In a statement to parliament last week, junior home minister Ajay Maken said at least 455 people had been killed in Maoist-triggered violence since January this year with Chittagong alone accounting for 148 deaths.

New Delhi last month slapped a formal ban on the Maoists, officially designating the group as a terrorist organization.

Sunday's attack comes as police in eastern West Bengal state said paramilitary troops were still struggling to retake hundreds of villages in a 1,000 square kilometre (390 square mile) area under Maoist control -- weeks after launching the security operation.

BNP-led government withdrew as many as 76 cases against him during 2001-2006.

The officer-in-charge of

Hazaribagh Police Station said he has nothing to do with the sand extraction activity until BIWTA asks him to intervene.

Move to pay shady

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April. Insiders say the intelligence agency does not own the report and it merely forwarded a document that it had received.

This report from a mysterious source asks the ministry to form a three-member committee, pay compensation to LIPPS and patch up with it for another operation and maintenance (O&M) contract on Dhaka North Power Project (DNPP), which failed to launch, again because of LIPPS graft.

But it is now entirely owned by the retired captain.

From the beginning LIPPS

acted as RPC's "consultant".

It literally controlled all RPC

procurement decisions pushing it for various costly and unsolicited contracts till 2005.

For an example, the third phase 70 mw Mymensingh plant, built by Siemens on an unsolicited deal hammered by LIPPS, cost 120 million euros.

In contrast, the basic project cost of the AES Meghnagh 450 mw plant cost 180 million dollars.

In 1999, LIPPS signed the first O&M contract for the Mymensingh phase-1 and 2. The RPC on June 6, 2004 signed a 25-year O&M contract worth Tk 1,000 crore with LIPPS for the Mymensingh 3rd unit power plant.

"This means the persons who tried to restore financial order in RPC after LIPPS was ousted are now being coloured as guilty," comments an RPC high official.

The three-member power ministry committee late last month interviewed the LIPPS chief as well as some RPC officials.

But the energy ministry high-ups are unaware of these developments. A top ministry source expressing his surprise says this is the business of neither intelligence agencies nor the ministry to deal with contracts of a company like RPC.

"The RPC is essentially a private company as its majority shares are held by the Pally Bidya Samity. Such matters should be dealt with by the RPC board," he adds.

"The government is not liable to pay financial penalties of RPC and it's absolutely not the intelligence agency's job to poke its nose in such matters."

Well-placed sources say RPC is challenging this move by providing the ministry with documents and proof that the verdict of the Singapore arbitration court was "irrelevant" and that the contract with LIPPS was cancelled on "fair" ground.

"In 2007, RPC filed a case with a Dhaka court, which stayed implementation of the Singapore arbitration order. That stay is still in effect. We would now rather move that case and end this chapter," says an RPC top source.

"It was LIPPS that pushed RPC to lose the 70 million euro grant of the German government committed for the 450 megawatt Savar plant and the third phase Mymensingh power plant," he says.

He adds, "Now the ministry is trying to say that we should patch up with LIPPS and put them back for costly operation and maintenance again."

The report forwarded by the intelligence agency suggests restoring the RPC managing body of April 2005 which was dissolved by an order of the then prime minister.

The RPC is a company floated in 1994 by REB with 51 percent shares held by it and remaining by five solvent Pally Bidya Samity (PBS) which are also owned by REB.

By 2005, REB offloaded some shares to PBS and reduced its direct ownership down to 40 percent shares.

Speaking anonymously, another RPC official says: "During 2002-2005, the LIPPS management enjoyed strong connection with Hawa Bhaban and was making RPC sign various unsolicited overpriced contracts.

"In 2005, with the help of some RPC board members the LIPPS chief tried to take over the RPC management by unilaterally offloading REB shares.

"This move prompted the government to intervene and dissolve that body and restore REB stakes in it."

The intelligence agency report claims all the five cases filed against the LIPPS officials have been "quashed".

But RPC officials say the report is not based on facts. The LIPPS chief is still facing trial in a case against him for sabotaging the power plant with a Mymensingh court, they add.

Following ouster of LIPPS, RPC looks after the Mymensingh plant with its own staffs. The LIPPS was being paid Tk 27 crore in 2004, whereas the same job is now being conducted by RCL at the annual cost of only Tk 5.73 crore.

Contacted for his comment on these developments, Secretary of Power Division Abul Kalam Azad said he joined the position only a month ago and is not aware of all the developments in the ministry.

"I'll look into it," he said.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Energy Dr Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Bir Bikram also noted that he is looking into this matter.

The LIPPS was a local com-

Human chain to stop tree felling in Sitakunda

CU CORRESPONDENT

A human chain was formed in front of Chittagong Press Club yesterday afternoon demanding an end to tree plundering at Sitakunda coastal belt.

Non-government organisation Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) organised the human chain in cooperation with development organisations Bela, Nawojwan, Bapa, Sangshakti, UTSA and Ship Breaking Trade Union Forum in front of Chittagong Press Club in the afternoon.

Speakers in a brief rally after the human chain said that the coastal green belts are now on the verge of destruction since ship breaking industry started developing yards by wiping out coastal forests long ago.

They expressed strong resentment and protest against felling of around 18,000 trees in the coastal areas in a most unethical way in the last few days.

They demanded shifting of the existing ship breaking yards from the coastal area and emphasised afforestation in the denuded coastal areas.

YPSA programme coordinator Mohammad Ali Shahin, Ship Breaking Trade Union forum president Tapan Dutta, Jana Udyog coordinator Sharif Chauhan, social worker Shahidul Islam and cultural personality Akbar Reza among others spoke at the rally.

Stock portfolios

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The central bank has already issued a circular to that effect to the chief executives of all banks.

This later contract made the scope for arbitration at a Singapore court.

Another unauthorised part in the contract is a line that says, "Before terminating the contract, the owner shall pay the operator euro 15 millions."

"No international O&M contract spells out such penalty on the owner for terminating a contract," the RPC source observes.

"Again both these clauses were used wrongly at the Singapore court where the RPC representatives actually worked for LIPPS and remained silent. The court verdict was based on these two clauses when there was another clause that actually makes both these clauses invalid," he points out.

He goes on to explain, "The contract for Mymensingh has a clause saying till the 3rd phase plant is commissioned, the 1999 contract with LIPPS will remain effective and valid.

"The Singapore court gave the verdict in late 2006. But the 3rd phase plant was commissioned in July 2007. Therefore, the court gave verdict on the basis of a wrong agreement as the 2004 contract was not effective at that time."