

KILLING OF 'INNOCENT' BSF says sorry upon protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Saikhira

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at a battalion level flag meeting with Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) here yesterday expressed sorrow over the killing of a Bangladeshi civilian on Guburda border in India on April 2.

In response to the protest by BDR over the killing, BSF delegation told the meeting that they would take action against the BSF jawans who gunned down the Bangladeshi national.

Earlier on March 19, Indian Home Secretary Gopal Krishna Pillai while addressing a security dialogue in New Delhi said India might declare a unilateral "no-firing" along its border with Bangladesh for a year to avoid civilian deaths in crossfire.

The battalion level flag meeting between the border guards was held on the no man's land at Baladghata near Baikari border in Sadar upazila opposite to Kajuri camp of India. The meeting took place in response to two separate letters sent by BDR to BSF protesting the killing of the Bangladeshi national and

digging of Kajuri canal on the Zero point by BSF.

The BSF men engaged Indian nationals to dig Kajuri canal near Baikari border in Sadar upazila in the morning of April 2. Amidst protest by BDR, BSF men compelled to stop the digging of the canal.

If the BSF authorities want to dig the canal, they have to inform BDR in writing about the matter, BDR side told the meeting. BDR men will then send the letter to BDR headquarters to know opinion of their higher authorities.

The BSF delegation agreed with the BDR proposal on digging of the canal.

The meeting ended with an agreement that both the border guards would work sincerely to maintain peaceful situation in the bordering areas and settle the prevailing border issues through dialogue.

The border guards also vowed to curb smuggling of drugs.

Lt. Col Iqbal Aziz, commanding officer 41 rifles battalion, led the BDR side while Maj Ananda Singh, commandant of 194 Kalyani BSF Battalion, led theirs.

Secret Service rejects Obama's request to convert limo into hybrid vehicle

ANI, Washington

President Barack Obama has revealed that Secret Service has rejected his request to convert his presidential limousine into a hybrid vehicle due to security reasons.

"I asked them to make these cars hybrids Secret Service said no. Now, the reason is not because Secret Service are bad guys. It's because the cars that I'm in are like tanks," ABC News quoted Obama, as saying at a town hall in Charlotte, North Carolina yesterday.

Obama clarified that since his limo - nicknamed "the beast" - is reinforced for security reasons, and weighs over two times the normal weight of cars, "they just couldn't get the performance in terms of acceleration using a hybrid engine."

Schoolgirl

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and a son of Halima and Amin Mollah, an employee at the Accountant General's Office in Segun Bagicha.

She used to go to school in a van. But as teasing by Rezaul and his associates got intolerable, Halima had been taking her to school for last one and half months.

"On Thursday, Rezaul and five others stopped us on our way back from the school and asked why I complained to his parents," Halima said.

The mother and daughter returned home at around 12:45pm and had lunch together.

"Around three in the afternoon, Elora came to my room and lay down on the floor. She requested me to lie beside her."

As Halima got near her, she knew something terrible had happened; her little girl had taken pesticides.

Elora's sister Oni told The Daily Star that Elora could not go out of house for about a month. She started going to school again only 15 days ago after some influential locals assured the family that she would not be teased again.

Queried, she said they did not seek police help or file any complaint or general diary for fear of reprisals from Rezaul and his gang.

Meanwhile, Rezaul's aunt claimed that Rejaul and Elora had a relationship.

Talking to The Daily Star in return for anonymity, she said her nephew did never tease the girl. Rather, it was the girl's family who would torture her for relations with Rejaul.

A study by Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association in 2008 found teasing to be a contributing factor in suicides of at least a dozen girls between January 2006 and June 2008. The number has only increased in the last two years.

On March 7, a teenage girl committed suicide by taking pesticides at Shanti Nagar village in Sherpur upazila.

The girl, Reshma Khatun, 18, was a student of Salpa Technical School. She had to contend with harassment every day on her way to school.

Her neighbour Munaf and his friend Robin were the alleged teasers.

Earlier in January, Nashfia Akand Pinky, a class nine student, took her life by hanging herself from a ceiling fan in the city's West Agargaon area. The apparent reason was harassment by 35-year-old Murad, a driver by profession.

Central leaders

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Kashem presided over the meeting and Opposition Chief Whip Zainal Abdin Farroque was the special guest.

MK Anwar in his speech said BNP wants to support the trial of war criminals. "But BNP would resist the move for the trial if the government wants to have political vengeance against the opposition."

The meeting was jointly conducted by BNP's Organising Secretary Mizanur Rahman Minu, Harunur Rashid and former deputy minister Ruhul Kuddus Talukdar Dulu.

Barrister Aminul Haque, Aman Ullah Aman, Fazlur Rahman, Shahid Uddin Chowdhury, Selima Rahman and Moazzem Hossain Alal were present.

Some 2,300 grassroots leaders and workers from Rajshahi, Natore, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon, Natore and Pabna districts attended the meeting with some 800 invited professionals, party sources said.

Now it's turn

FROM PAGE 1 capability of the trading company in delivering a power plant.

Previously unheard-of company, the Al-Nahian Trade International proposed the power ministry on February 28 that it could install a diesel-fired rental power plant of 60 to 70 MW capacity in Rajshahi for 10 years at the rate of Tk 12.53 per kilowatt hour.

This rate is five paise lower than that offered by local furniture giant Otobi against a 100 MW diesel-fired rental power project in Khulna. The Otobi deal, considered cheapest in the diesel-fired rental power category, was signed along with two other deals by PDB in February.

Managing Partner and Chief Operating Officer Tozazzal Hossain of Al Nahian Trade International told The Daily Star over the phone his company does not have the experience of installing any power plant.

"But we have our US-based partner that has such experience," he said.

A ministry source justifies the latest action saying the prime minister, frustrated by the load-shedding scenario, has directed the ministry to take up any measure to add some power within the shortest possible time.

The premier has assured that she would approve an unsolicited deal, if need be, the source points out.

"Following the instructions, the ministry has sought offers from different power companies and asked them to match the price with that of Otobi. Al-Nahian Trade International is the only company that is offering a price lower than Otobi's," adds the source.

The Power board scrutinised the proposal of the company and opined that the existing policy does not allow entertaining any unsolicited deal. Only an appropriate authority can decide on such a proposal, it added.

This rental plant might be able to provide some relief in the summer in the context of perennial power crisis of the country, the PDB noted, adding, the present load-shedding hovers around 1,000 MW to 1,200 MW. The PDB added if the government approves this unsolicited deal, an agreement for two years might be signed with the company.

However, the government is trying out rental power deals since 2005 as a quick solution to the ever-increasing power crisis.

At first, the then BNP-led alliance government tried and failed to award over 40 rental power contracts to ruling party men and none to any genuine power companies. Some deals were signed at the fag-end of the alliance government tenure, but these failed to create any positive impact.

The caretaker government revived the venture and awarded several deals except one to inexperienced rental power companies. Half of them failed to launch their plants.

The PDB's late last year's

tender for eight rental power projects totalling 530 MW power capacity drew several dozen bids, mostly from inexperienced companies offering low prices that experienced companies could not match. But when it came to signing power deals, PDB could sign only three deals totalling 250 MW capacity.

Previous attempts of PDB to secure rental power deals have invariably resulted in the contractors' failure to meet project deadlines. Although such failure means paying PDB hefty penalties, the defaulter companies resorted to the court and obtained injunction against such payments.

Till date, PDB could not secure power from the Sikabaha 55 MW rental power project, Ashuganj 50 MW project, Fenchuganj 50 MW project and Bogra 20 MW power project. All of them are now eight to 18 months behind schedule although their contracts are only for three years.

Rental power projects are different from conventional power projects because these are supposed to be installed and uninstalled within a very short notice. A rental power contractor is supposed to own power plant equipment in its inventory to ensure such speedy implementation.

But all rental power contracts in the country, except for one 40 MW deal with a British company, were awarded to entrepreneurs who procured plant equipment after they bagged contracts. As a result, all the contractors failed to meet the deadline and consequently, the government failed to minimise the country's load-shedding as planned.

War crimes

FROM PAGE 16 accounts of their crimes including precise locations and dates of occurrence.

Verbal statements of family members, names of victims' neighbours and eyewitnesses will also be submitted to the investigation agency, Dr Hasan said.

He said they would give a copy of a documentary film titled 'Al-Badr' portraying activities of Al-Badr, one of the auxiliary forces of Pakistani occupation army.

He said the WCCFFC would also give some books and legal documents to the chairman of International Crimes Tribunal and chief prosecutor.

The investigation agency on March 30 visited the Liberation War Museum at the city's Segunbagicha and collected 10 books, booklets and two CDs on crimes against humanity committed during the liberation war in 1971.

After obtaining evidence of crimes against individuals the seven-member investigation agency will file a case with the International Crime Tribunal and then it will go for further field level investigation.

The International Crimes Tribunal Act provides investigation officers with huge authority to enquire into the crimes.

7,000MW by 2013

FROM PAGE 1 the nation from the nagging power crisis.

Mentioning these election manifesto to make the country surplus in power by 2021, Hasina said steps have been taken to raise the power generation capacity to 7,000 megawatt (MW) by 2013. "Contracts were signed to install power plants with 1000 megawatt capacity in different places of the country in the first phase under this plan."

She also said steps were taken to award work orders for installing power plants to produce another 1000 megawatt by next two months.

The prime minister informed that the government has taken measures to implement a scheme to install power plants of 500MW capacity in the private sector.

"The cabinet also endorsed a project last month for installing power plants to produce 830 megawatt of electricity," she said.

Sheikh Hasina said power production is being interrupted as there was not enough gas available right now.

She said measures were taken to import Liquefied Natural Gas from Qatar to resolve this crisis. "We are also considering with importance diversification of energy."

The prime minister also said that the present government is actively considering installing nuclear power plants to meet the increasing demand of power. "In this regard, a team will be visiting Russia soon."

Advertisement for DMP (Dhaka Metropolitan Police) recruitment. Includes logo, text in Bengali, and contact information for recruitment.

Trans-border effort

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Minister of Bangladesh for Environment and Forest Hasan Mahmud will attend a programme today in Kolkata where they will discuss the issue.

Non-government organisations of the two countries jointly will launch a campaign at the programme to vote for the mangrove forest as one of the seven natural wonders in the world. The initiative, first of its kind in South Asia, was taken to draw people's attention to the importance of saving the forest.

The forest officials of the countries will work out details of the joint work during the programme.

Earlier, the countries had taken initiatives regarding the issue but those were all vain attempts with very little progress.

Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh submitted a draft to form the joint taskforce, Sundarbans Transboundary Strategy and Action Plan, to sketch out action plans for saving the mangrove forest.

Bangladesh will discuss the issues that are threatening the existence of the Sundarbans, spread over 10,000 km across the two countries, including change in freshwater flows and sedimentation rates caused by dam building and other upstream water extraction, sea-level rise, logging and wood collection, wildlife poaching and farming/trade, harvesting of aquatic resources, and river pollution.

At the programme, Bangladesh will also recommend that India complete a study to identify the possible threats and prioritise them on their side.

DB defends

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Daily Star in its report "Bashundhara chief to be quizzed by cops" quoted Deputy Commissioner Monirul Islam without his knowledge.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) authorities yesterday in a rejoinder protested against the report published in the Kaler Kantha.

The Kaler Kantha report that quoted Detective Branch of Police officials was totally untrue and motivated, the rejoinders said.

In the report the Kaler Kantha quoting Deputy Commissioner (DC) Monirul Islam said Assistant Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Mahbub Alam didn't talk to him (DC) before he (ADC) talked to the reporters, it said.

The fact is, no DMP official held any press briefing. It is the responsibility of the DMP Media Cell. Even the Media Cell didn't hold any press briefing either.

The reporters, however, gather information from their own sources. The correspondents of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo also collected information from their own

sources, it said.

When asked about the matter by the Kaler Kantha, Monirul Islam said the investigation officer concerned could quiz anyone in the interest of the investigation.

Besides Joint Police Commissioner Amulya Bhushan Barua didn't say anything about Bashundhara Group Chairman Akbar Sobhan's involvement in the DCC councillor Ahmed murder case, the rejoinder continued.

The Kaler Kantha concealed their statements and intentionally quoted them wrongly to demean them, it added.

The Kaler Kantha report said DB officials were trying to divert the case into a different direction to enjoy business advantages by implicating wealthy men in the murder case which is baseless, motivated, and against the ethics of journalism, said the rejoinder.

DMP will ensure proper and impartial investigation of all cases including the DCC councillor murder case, it said.

Upgrade work

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2006, the average daily traffic on this road is about 30,000. The department officials say the number is now much higher.

"Since we have got the support of the prime minister and the finance minister we will complete all the procedure by April and float an international tender in this regard," said Abul Hossain.

He said the government is planning to upgrade all important but narrow highways of the country into dual carriageways as the number of motorised vehicles is growing and accidents have increased.

The Tongi-Ashulia road, the road between Nabinagar and Jamuna Bridge via Chandra, Gabtoli-Sadarghat road and Dhaka bypass are the other roads to be upgraded into dual carriageways. Project proposals of the roads are being finalised, said communications ministry officials.

On 21,000km of major roads in the country 13.5 lakh registered vehicles ply. The number of vehicles occupying the roads is more, as there are thousands of unregistered vehicles.

Hunger strike

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from 11:00am to 4:00pm at the Central Shaheed Minar.

They placed a 8-point demand that includes stopping of chopping down trees at Nahar Punji, punishment of the people who are responsible for the incident, stopping the attempt to evict the Khasias from that area, cancellation of all the faulty reports related to Nahar Garden and ensuring neutral investigation and curbing corruption at all the government forest offices.

Communist Party of Bangladesh president Manjural Ahsan Khan, theatre personality Mamunur Rashid, columnist Syed Abdul Maksud, indigenous leader Sanjeeb Drong, professor Mejbah Kamal of history department and professor Dalem Chandra

Nawaz Sharif rules out joining federal cabinet

ANI, Lahore

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif has ruled out joining the federal cabinet, saying his party has no intentions of joining the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led government.

Denying reports of Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani asking him to join the cabinet and become a federal minister after the 17th amendment were abolished, Sharif said the PML-N would continue to play the role of a 'responsible' opposition.

The former Prime Minister criticised the government for the rapidly increasing prices of daily commodities and petroleum products, and said the price rise has added to troubles being faced by the people of the country.

Sangu bridge

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The construction of the bridge, which started during the tenure of the BNP-led government, was kept on hold after 15 percent of work as no fund was allocated from the ministry concerned. The construction could not be completed within the BNP government's tenure said the sources.

When the Awami League government came to power in 1996, no fund was allocated to complete the project.

Both the incumbent and the then executive engineers of Bandarban RHD, Bikash Chandra Das and Shitangshu Bikash Saha told the BSS that the cost to complete the bridge jumped three times up.

The 19th ECB has engaged contractors, built labour-sheds and done relevant work to complete the bridge in less than three years, said sources in ECB.

Tk 5 lakh

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the two on their microbus and later forced them out of the vehicle at Rajendrapur.

Officer-in-Charge of South Keraniganj Police Station Nil Utpal Day said he heard about the incident, but did not yet receive any complaint.

In airport area, constable Aminul who work as a driver of the Airport Police Station's OC took away Tk 4 lakh from money-changer Abul Kalam Azad at 10:00pm on Friday.

Azad was counting the day's proceeds inside a car at the parking lot.

He however returned the money after airport police held and quizzed him in response to a complaint from Azad.

Nisharul Arif, deputy commissioner of DMP (Uttara zone), told The Daily Star that Aminul would face departmental action.

Ward councillor

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office on the 12th floor of Bashundhara City in the capital. He was also provided with a Nissan Patrol private car, which is now being used by his third wife.

Meanwhile, the victim's family members said anonymous people are threatening them over cell phone after DB arrested Nazimuddin.

Nazimuddin, who was put on a fresh four-day remand on Friday on completion of a three-day remand, was treated as a director of Basundhara Group, the AC said.

He, however, said Nazimuddin could not produce any document in favour of his statement.

DB sources said Shah Alam and Nazimuddin signed a memorandum of understand-

ing that the latter would be paid commission after purchase of the desired land for Shah Alam.

Nazimuddin grabbed some khas land in Keraniganj and coerced most landowners into selling their land for the Riverview Project of Bashundhara. He also bought over 662 highas of land in Cox's Bazar and around 7,000 highas in Keraniganj for Bashundhara, said the AC quoting Nazimuddin.

When contacted, Mohammad Hossain, brother of Ahmed Hossain, refused to talk to reporters, saying they are panicked as a good number of anonymous callers are constantly issuing threats.

Police have arrested seven persons including Nazimuddin so far in connection with the case.

BNP leader

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Officer in Charge of Kaliganj Police Station Mehedi Hassan said Kabir was also a chairman of Pukuria Secondary School.

Robin, a student of class X and a friend of Kabir's cousin Dayal, used to tease girls of the school. He was expelled from the school as a consequence.

Kabir told Dayal's father Altaf Hossain about their friendship and asked him to take care so that Dayal does not mix with Robin.

On Saturday night, Dayal chased Kabir and hacked him indiscriminately.

Kabir was rushed to Kaliganj local health complex where he succumbed to his injuries.

In another incident, criminals stabbed a local Awami League leader in Faridganj upazila of Chandpur on Friday, reports a correspondent from the district.

He was rushed to Chandpur Sadar Hospital.

The victim Abul Kashem, forest and environment secretary of AL Chandpur district unit has accused Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) of the attack.

According to sources,

Power plant

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process was completed in November, 2003. The then cabinet purchase committee had approved it in March 2004 but it was cancelled in mid-2004.

After that the Power Cell of the ministry re-tendered this project, but failed to bag any practical offer in the last six years.

In October last year, Summit informed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina about its interest to revive the project. When it was forwarded to the PDB, the power board sought some clarifications and then Summit gave its explanations.

Power division sources said, World Bank, International Finance Corporation and Asian Development Bank have expressed their interest in funding the project.