

3 cops killed in Kashmir barracks shooting

AFP, Srinagar

Three Indian federal police are dead and another was injured following a shooting at a barracks in insurgency-hit Kashmir, an official said yesterday.

The fatal incident happened late Saturday evening inside the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) camp in the Himalayan town of Kulgam, about 90-minutes drive from Srinagar, the capital of Indian-controlled Kashmir.

"We have three CRPF personnel dead and one injured," a police officer told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak with the media.

Other personnel inside the barracks at the time of the shooting were detained for questioning, he added.

CJ, minister

FROM PAGE 1 law minister disclosed the government plan to make ADR mandatory for disposal of both criminal and civil cases.

Under this system, cases are disposed of outside the courts through mutual agreements between the lawyers of both the sides.

The chief justice and the minister were speaking as chief guest and special guest respectively at the 22nd annual general meeting of Bangladesh Women Judges' Association (BWJA) at the Judicial Administration Training Institute in the capital.

The minister said the government is going to amend the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and Civil Procedure Code (CPC) so that both criminal and civil cases are disposed of through ADR to expedite disposal of pending cases.

But the chief justice said, "If a judge is much interested to get every case outside the court, it may give a bad signal. We may get a bad message or the learned judges may be misunderstood."

Justice Muzammel said the learned citizens of the country will of course express their opinions on the issue. "But we as judges cannot afford to be sentimental, or take any strong or rigid views. But we have to dispense justice in accordance with law, law and law only," he added.

The registrar of the Supreme Court told this correspondent that around 19 lakh cases are now pending with the lower courts across the country, and most of those are of criminal nature.

The chief justice told the meeting that the judges should perform their duties in such a manner that nobody can say the court is not operating properly. It is a judge's duty to keep the court and its environment free from corruption, he said, adding that honesty is the biggest quality and qualification of a judge.

The law minister said some provisions in the CrPC and CPC are creating the huge backlog of cases and obstructing the trial proceedings. The government seeks to amend those.

Others who spoke at the meeting include Justice Nazm Ara Sultana, Justice M Imran Ali, Justice Mohammed Mumtaz Uddin Ahmed and Justice Md Shamsul Huda of the Supreme Court, and judges of different district courts. BWJA President Jasmine Anwar was in the chair.

Bapex starts

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channel ATN Bangla.

Murtaza Ahmed Faruk, managing director of Bapex, said it is possible to extract around 16 to 18 mmcf gas per day from the well now.

Around 20 mmcf of gas will be extracted per day after the experimentation, and this gas will be added to the national grid from January, he added.

The exploration work at the well was completed last February and completed in April, reports ATN Bangla.

Bapex officials expect that around 283 billion cubic feet (bcf) of gas can be extracted from the gas field.

Only 75 bcf gas has been extracted so far from the gas field, they said.

Sun comes out

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continue across the country.

He said that the country experienced severe cold during the last 10 days as the sun was hardly visible due to thick fog and the cold wave.

The mild cold wave will sweep the northern and southwestern regions of the country within the next few days, the official said adding that despite the cold wave, the intensity of cold in the country will decrease.

Ferry services on Paturia-Daulatdia route remained suspended for over seven hours early yesterday as dense fog blanketed the waterway, our Munshiganj correspondent reports.

Bidyut Kumar Saha, manager of Aricha BIWTC office, said the ferries remained stalled from 2:00am due to the thick fog. Sources said three ferries at Paturia ghat (pier), four at Daulatdia ghat and two in mid-river remained stranded with at least 200 vehicles and more than 1,000 passengers.

Meanwhile, passengers and goods-laden trucks yesterday faced immense sufferings due to the suspension of ferry services at

the Mawa-Kaorakandi river routes for around six hours.

BIWTC's Mawa office manager Chandra Shekhar said the services were suspended from 3:30am to 9:30am yesterday.

The disruption began around 9:00pm on Saturday due to a thick fog. Ten ferries were stranded at different points of the route, reports our Munshiganj correspondent.

In Kurigram, at least six people died of cold-related diseases here yesterday. They are two-year-old Moni and Ashok Chandra Roy, 70, of Rajarhat upazila, Akbar Ali, 55, and Fulser Ali, 65, of Sadar upazila, and Fuljan Bewa, 70, and Tofazzal Hossen, 45, of Ulipur upazila.

The victims died in their houses, our Kurigram correspondent reports.

In Rangpur's Pirogachha upazila, two men died of cold-related ailments. They are Abdur Rouf, 80, and Mojahar Ali, 65.

Rangpur Met Office said the sun seemed to be shining after two weeks. The lowest temperature in the district yesterday was recorded at 9.5 degrees Celsius.

Cop-robber

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place with at least 12 members of 'Zihad Group' in Darjir Khal area of Chandeshwar in the Sundarbans.

He said none could be arrested as the robbers fled leaving eight foreign made light guns, a one-shooter gun and 33 bullets.

It is yet to be confirmed whether any robber was killed or suffered bullet wounds, he added.

Responding to a query, the officer said the gunbattle erupted when the personnel of Rab-8 and Coast Guard (West Zone) launched a joint drive on a tip-off that the gang was waiting at Darjir Khal with some abducted fishermen for releasing ransom.

Sources said 'Zihad Group' chief Md Zihad has started robbery and abduction again soon after he came out of jail on bail a weekago.

Workers Party

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the one-hour dialogue is scheduled to start at 11:00am.

Thursday, two other components of the ruling alliance -- Ershad-led Jatiya Party and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal -- had proposed that the president form a "search committee" to find out candidates for the posts.

On expiry of the tenure of the present EC early in February next, the president, on advice of the prime minister, will have to appoint a chief election commissioner and commissioners.

The president started the talks with political parties yesterday, seeking their opinion on the matter.

"We will urge the president to take steps immediately to formulate a law. We have long been demanding this," Workers Party chief Rashed Khan Menon told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Our constitution has also stated that such a law should be formulated. Thirty-nine years have passed but successive governments have not passed it," he said.

"In Bangladesh you will hardly find a person who is honest and bold to discharge the duties of an election commissioner," JP boss Manju told The Daily Star, when asked about the talks.

"We, therefore, will call upon the president to fill the posts of ECs and CEC after consulting the premier," added the veteran politician.

Protesters called for the annulment of the ballot, sacking of the Central Election Commission chief and a re-run of elections.

Hoping to ride out a wave of protests, Putin ignored those demands and promised instead a return to the direct election of governors and a simplified procedure to register political parties.

He earlier accused US for fuelling the unrest.

Putin team

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presidential polls, where the Russian strongman plans to stand for a third Kremlin term after his four-year stint as prime minister.

"Those people who came out onto the streets -- they are a very important part of society. But they are a minority," he added.

The last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev had late Saturday dramatically called on Putin to quit, just as he had done on December 25, 1991 when the USSR collapsed exactly two decades ago.

Gorbachev's resignation hammered the final nail into the coffin of the USSR and instantly cast Gorbachev out to the political wilderness, admired in the West but abhorred by many Russians for presiding over the collapse of their state.

"I would advise Vladimir Putin to leave now. He has had three terms: two as president and one as prime minister. Three terms -- that is enough," Gorbachev said, urging Putin not to pursue plans to run for president in 2012.

"He should do the same thing I did. That way, he would be able to preserve all the positive things he did," Gorbachev told Moscow Echo radio.

Gorbachev had been generally supportive of Putin for most of his two

terms.

Russia's state television took the surprise decision to cover the rally hinting at an easing of a long-held taboo against direct criticism of Putin, who came to power 12 years ago and wants to stay at the helm until 2024.

"This is not an outburst which will die down. This is not about the protests but about the mood," Yevgeny Gontmakher, head of the Centre for Social Policies at the Moscow-based Economics Institute, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"There is a danger of a revolution. Authorities are making concessions but are not keeping up with the development of the events."

Mass protests were triggered by widespread claim of wholesale violations in this month's parliamentary polls which handed a reduced majority to Putin's ruling United Russia party.

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Rail projects derail

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number of locomotives, coaches, wagons and the tracks are falling.

About 40 percent of the 283 passenger trains cannot follow their schedules due to shabby condition of tracks, frequent derailments, and lack of locomotives, causing immense sufferings to the passengers. Railway officials said for a train they do not consider delays up to 30 minutes as late, which is shocking to many.

The railway is unable to meet the huge demand for carrying goods to and from Dhaka and Chittagong due to severe scarcity of locomotives and wagons. The number of locomotives has been reduced to 255 from 486 in 1971.

Recently out of frustration, the railway authority reviewed and scrapped four old projects. Officials told The Daily Star that many of the remaining older projects face similar fates, if the government or donors do not release funds soon.

ONGOING PROJECTS

At present railway authorities are implementing four projects with money from Japan Debt Cancellation Fund to improve the Mymensingh-Jamalpur-Dewanganj sector, upgrading the Parbatipur-Kanchan-Panchagarh and Kanchan-Birol metre-gauge tracks into dual-gauge tracks, modernisation of Saidpur Railway Workshop and to purchase two relief trains. So far, only Tk 535 crore has been invested against an estimated cost of Tk 1,424 crore.

India is to provide Tk 4,424 crore for a dozen projects in which the Bangladesh government's commitment is Tk 1,680 crore. Unfortunately the Indian government has not released any fund yet and the Bangladesh government has released only a paltry Tk 17 lakh.

The rail authorities have received another Tk 872 crore from foreign donors for three projects worth Tk 3,061 crore. There is only one technical assistance project for railway requiring Tk 107 crore but no fund has been made available for it so far.

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"We will urge the president to take steps immediately to formulate a law. We have long been demanding this," Workers Party chief Rashed Khan Menon told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Our constitution has also stated that such a law should be formulated. Thirty-nine years have passed but successive governments have not passed it," he said.

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