

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

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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 Woman 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 Nazmun Ara Sultana, Justice M Imman 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.

Murtoza 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 started 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 Manikganj 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 Pirgachha 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 realising ransom.

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

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.

Primary

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simultaneously today.

After handing over a copy of the results to the prime minister around 10:00am, it will be published in all districts and upazilas/thanas, says an official release.

The results will be available on the websites of Directorate of Primary Education (DPE): www.dpe.gov.bd and http://dpe.teletalk.com.bd.

TeleTalk users can also receive the results through short messaging service (SMS).

To get results this way general students have to type DPE followed by a space then type the thana and upazila code and lastly the roll number and send it to 16222. Madrasa students will have to type EBT first and then follow the same procedure.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Afsarul Amin will brief journalists at 2:30pm on the results at his secretariat office.

The examinations ended on November 30 and more than 26 lakh general and madrasa students of primary level registered for it.

This year the results will be published in grading system in conformity with other public examination results.

The government introduced the examination in 2009 replacing primary scholarship examination.

On the basis of the results, scholarships will be equally distributed to male and female students under talent-pool and general categories. The students of class V must qualify terminal examinations to enrol in class VI.

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.

To speed up rail projects, the railway authorities have been pushing the government to give the sector its due importance.

"We have urged the government to allocate an additional Tk 2,277 crore this year to implement six important projects," Abu Taher, director general of Bangladesh Railway, told The Daily Star recently.

Before the budget for fiscal year 2011-12, the communications ministry sought Tk 5,783 crore from the finance ministry for the railway's ongoing development projects. However, the money did not come through.

"You can't develop any sector on such a small budget," a senior railway official lamented.

Former communications minister Syed Abul Hossain, when he was at the ministry, said he would try to get soft loans from various countries to inject more money in the railway sector.

"At the same time, we are looking for foreign funds," he told The Daily Star.

Suranjit Sengupta, who took charge of the newly created railway ministry, said he would try to get soft loans from various countries to inject more money in the railway sector.

"At the same time, I will also try to manage more government funds for the implementation of at least some of the projects," he told The Daily Star Saturday.

Although the railway sector was ignored, Suranjit said the present government realises the importance of the railway and taking up projects for its development.

If all the projects are implemented, the railway would get 40 new locomotives, 537 coaches, 466 wagons and 454km new tracks. Under the projects, 219km tracks will be developed and revamped while the signalling systems at 13 stations will be modernised.

PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S WORK

The government recently signed three deals to upgrade 64km of the Tongi-Bhairab Bazar single track into double track, procure 20 sets of diesel-electric trains and improve the Laksam-Chandpur track.

The Tongi-Bhairab Bazar track will cost Tk 724 crore while the diesel-electric trains will cost Tk 654 crore. They are to be purchased by 2013. The Laksam-Chandpur line will be improved by 2013 at a cost of Tk 168 crore.

There is no allocation yet for the Tongi-Bhairab Bazar project and only Tk 5 crore has been released to buy the diesel-electric trains. Only Tk 10 crore has been released for Laksam-Chandpur project so far.

Bringing tourist city of Cox's Bazar under the existing railway network is an important initiative taken up by the present govern-

ment. Even though the prime minister inaugurated the work of the new rail line back in April, actual work of the Tk 1,852 crore project is yet to begin. The government has released Tk 20 crore so far, which is a little over one percent of the total cost of the project.

Construction of another new rail line, from Ishwardi to Dhakarchar via Pabna, has gained some momentum as the government has so far released Tk 163 crore out of the Tk 982 crore required. The work on linking Mongla Sea Port with the railway network in Khulna will however take time.

OLDER PROJECTS

In January 1996, the then government undertook a project under which 46 diesel-electric locomotives were supposed to be procured within the next few years. Even though 15 years have gone by, the project is yet to be implemented, giving startling evidence of how negligent successive governments have been about the railway sector.

Iran ready to expand military links with Iraq

AFP, Tehran

Iran stands ready to expand its military and security ties with Iraq, its armed forces chief of staff said yesterday, a week after the exit of US forces from the neighbouring Arab country.

General Hassan Firouzabadi hailed the "forced departure" of the US and allied forces that he said "was due to the resistance and determination of the Iraqi people and government," the state Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

The statements were made in messages Firouzabadi sent to his Iraqi counterpart, Lieutenant General Babaker Zebari, and to Iraq's acting defence minister, Saadun al-Dulaimi, IRNA said.

The departure of the US troops "was due to the resistance and determination of the Iraqi people and government," he said.

"I hope the humiliating failure of the United States after nine years of occupying Iraq will serve as a lesson for them to never think of attacking another country," he said.

Last respects

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flown back home from London.

The veteran Awami League leader breathed his last in a London hospital on Friday, drawing to a close his five-decade illustrious career in politics.

Leaders of the Awami League and other political parties received his coffin, draped in the national flag, after a Bangladesh Biman aircraft carrying it touched down at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at about 12:20pm.

Senior AL leaders paid tribute to Razzak by placing wreaths on his coffin. Many were seen struggling to hold back tears.

Hundreds of his admirers, friends and well-wishers waited outside the airport terminal for hours to bid farewell to the freedom fighter.

Razzak, who wished to be laid to rest at Banani graveyard in the capital, will be buried with due state honours at 4:00pm today.

Razzak's body was taken to his Gulshan residence from the airport. President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid their respects to him by placing wreaths on his coffin.

Hasina and Zillur stood beside his coffin for a couple of minutes. Hasina later talked to his bereaved family members and consoled them.

"Awami League will never get an organiser like Razzak Bhai," said senior AL leader Tofail Ahmed, one of Razzak's close friends, while trying to swallow back tears.

Razzak's body was taken

to the Central Shaheed Minar at about 4:20pm after namaz-e-janaza was held twice for him. Noted politicians, teachers, cultural activists, journalists and common people paid homage to Razzak at the Shaheed Minar premises.

"People loved him [Razzak] as he loved the country and the people," said senior AL leader Abdul Jalil.

Razzak's namaz-e-janaza was held at South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan at 3:00pm. Speaker Abdul Hamid and Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali along with ministers and lawmakers attended the janaza.

His second namaz-e-janaza was held at the Jatiya Eidgah Maidan at about 3:30pm. Senior leaders of the AL and the opposition together with representatives of different socio-cultural organisations attended the janaza.

Razzak's coffin was taken to the central AL office on Bangabandhu Avenue where a floral tribute was paid to him at about 6:30pm.

"He [Razzak] practised the politics of ideals which is rare in Bangladesh. His death has created a void in the country's politics and we can feel it," said Communications Minister Obaidul Quader, also an AL presidium member.

"Razzak's contribution to the country's politics can hardly be overstated," said BNP leader Abdullah Al Noman, who went to the Shaheed Minar to pay respects to Razzak.

Razzak's body, kept at the Birdem hospital mortuary in the capital, will be taken to

his village home at Damuday in Shariatpur by helicopter at 10:00am today. It will be then brought back to Dhaka after a namaz-e-janaza.

Razzak's colleagues and senior AL leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdul Jalil, Suranjit Sengupta, Obaidul Quader, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Faruk Khan, and Sahara Khatun, among others, received his coffin at the airport.

BNP leaders Amanullah Aman, Khairul Kabir Khokan and Sadeque Hossain Khoka also paid tribute to Razzak at the Shaheed Minar.

Meanwhile, acting AL General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif expressed profound shock at Razzak's death.

Razzak had been receiving treatment for liver and kidney complications at King's College Hospital in London, where he died on Friday.

SULTAN MANSUR SUFFERS HEART ATTACK

Razzak's close friend and AL leader Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed suffered a heart attack on his way to Razzak's namaz-e-janaza at the Jatiya Eidgah Maidan at about 2:30pm.

Sultan, a former AL lawmaker, was whisked off to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in the capital.

Doctors at the Coronary Care Unit told his family members that it would take at least 72 hours for them to make an assessment of his health condition, said a source.

7pc growth

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"I think the 7 percent economic growth will be achieved...the overall economic determinants indicate this," Atiur told UNB over the phone.

The central bank governor said they analysed the statistics of overall economy and collected data from rural economy.

He said the progress of overall rural economy made him optimistic over the achievement of the GDP target.

On Wednesday, Finance Minister AMA Muhiht said achieving the projected 7 percent economic growth might not be possible in the current fiscal year due to high import cost, spiralling inflation, downward investment flow and excessive subsidies in public spending.

"The GDP growth in the last fiscal year was 6.7 percent and in this fiscal year the target is 7 percent. But, I'm not sure where we'll ultimately go as it depends on how we'll tackle the current problem of inflation," he said while addressing a function.

Atiur said the key determinants of macro economy remained high in the country even during the post-recession period.

He said the country saw 47 percent growth in RMG export and 20 percent growth in remittance inflow during the last three years.

The central bank chief said the country's foreign currency reserve stood at \$9.35 billion till December 11.

The country saw a 6.7 percent GDP (gross domestic product) growth in the last fiscal year, driven by sustainable agricultural growth and strong expansion of manufacturing and service sector, he said.

The finance minister in his recent remark mentioned factors like excessive bank borrowing by the government and high inflation rate which are hindering the targeted growth.

He voiced concern over high commodity price, subsidies in petroleum products and soaring inflation.

He also admitted that the country is in a very difficult situation with the inflation crossing the double digit.

Biman's Boeing

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Biman took the Boeing 747 on wet lease basis, and under the leasing arrangement, the lessor provides an aircraft, complete crew, maintenance, and insurance (ACMI) support to a carrier or the lessee, who pays by hours operated.

Sources in the civil aviation authority said the Biman aircraft crossed the demarcation line after being tugged by a pushcart and its left wing smashed the vertical stabiliser and left-end elevator of GMG's parked Boeing 767 aircraft.

The engines of an aircraft become fully operational after a pushcart tug the aircraft to a certain distance.

The sources also said the accident might have happened due to a miscommunication between the 747's crew members and pushcart operator or engineers.

Biman officials said the aircraft's crew members and engineers are provided by the lessor as per the wet lease, and pushcart operator does his duty as per the direction of an engineer, who maintains communication with the flight's cockpit crew during the movement.

Asif Ahmed, director (marketing & communication) of GMG Airlines, said "It was an accident." Asked about the damage and loss, he said their engineering section was preparing a list of damage to the jet.

Managing Director of Biman Air Commodore (ret'd) Muhammad Zakiul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday that a strong committee has been formed to investigate the reasons behind the accident and assess the damage of both the aircraft.

"It may take the committee around a week to complete the investigation," he added.

The Biman MD also said since the lessor has insurance for the aircraft, the insurance company will arrange compensation for GMG.

Asked if the fault lies with the ground handling staff of Biman then who is going to compensate, he said that everything will become clear after the investigation.