

Two dead as truce ends in Philippines

AFP, Manila

More than 50 communist rebels attacked an army patrol base in the southern Philippines yesterday, leaving one pro-government militia and a guerrilla dead in the clash, officials said.

The daring pre-dawn attack by the New People's Army (NPA) on the southern island of Mindanao was the first since an 18-day Yuletide truce declared by the government ended on Monday, the military said.

The attack came on the same day that the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the NPA's mother organisation, reiterated a demand for the government to release detained senior rebel leaders.

Yunus calls

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economic theory that business is all about making profit and said all economic activities should focus on solving the problems of society.

Speaking at the inaugural session of an international conference on Technology Enhanced Education at Amrita Mutt near Kollam town in southern Indian state of Kerala, the Grameen Bank founder said it was important to use technology to improve the lives of the common man.

"Business is also for solving problems in society and not merely to make money," he said.

Recalling his experience in developing Grameen Bank to help poor women in rural areas of Bangladesh, Yunus said 97 percent of 8.3 million beneficiaries of various schemes of Grameen Bank were women.

Explaining how he used technology to solve the energy crisis in Bangladesh, he said promotion of solar energy had greatly helped solve the power crunch.

In 1990s, nearly 70 percent of the population in rural areas had no access to electricity. The situation had changed dramatically with the introduction of "solar home system" which his organisation had promoted, Yunus said.

Right now, about 750,000 solar systems are operating in Bangladesh, which could go up to 1 million by the middle of his year. A similar revolution had also taken place in the use of mobile phones, he said.

Govt wants

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conspiracy to thwart the road march. Many arches set up in Chittagong ahead of the programme have been torn up, burnt and pulled down as part of the conspiracy," BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

He was briefing reporters after a meeting with the leaders the party's front organisations at its Naya Paltan office in the capital. The meeting discussed the preparation of the road march and also mapped out programmes to mark the 76th birth anniversary of party founder Ziaur Rahman on January 19.

BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia will start the road march from the capital at 10:00am on Sunday. She will hold street rallies at Chandina and Comilla and a public rally in Feni on the day. The march will end through a public rally on Polo Ground in Chittagong the next day, Fakhrul said.

He sought cooperation from the government to make the march peaceful and said, "It'll be the largest ever road march."

"The economy is in a deep crisis. The law and order has worsened and the prices of daily commodities are soaring. The government has failed in every sector," he said, adding that there was no coordination between the government agencies.

Programmes on Zia's birth anniversary will include hoisting of party flag at all offices of the party, placing wreaths at his grave, and holding blood donation programmes and discussions.

Small mistake

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in case Ishrat got noisy or caused disturbance.

On her advice, Rozina left her daughter in the waiting area and went for a check-up which lasted about 25 minutes.

Emerging from the ward, she found her daughter missing and searched around the hospital in vain.

She then informed the DMCH authorities and sought their help.

At around 11:30am, the hospital authorities through loudspeakers requested hospital visitors, officials and doctors to report to them should they find the girl.

At about 1:00pm, a security guard reported that a child had been found on the second floor of the 11-storey Centre for Nuclear Medicine and Ultrasound building.

Prof Md Sanowar Hossain, director of Centre for Nuclear Medicine and Ultrasound, said the child was found on the second floor staircase, which is a quite deserted area.

Police sent the body to the DMC morgue for autopsy.

On preliminary examination, morgue officials found some injury marks in Ishrat's abdomen.

Police said she might have been killed by kidnappers who initially tried to take her away.

Tannery relocation

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bidder, took the matter to court for the second time with "an apparent intention of delaying the project."

The tanneries pour thousands of litres of untreated and highly toxic liquid waste into the Buriganga River every day, posing a serious risk to human and animal health.

The industries ministry has taken up the project to relocate the tanneries as soon as possible considering the hazards posed to the environment and health.

There is also a legal obligation here for the ministry as the High Court has ordered the government to relocate such polluting companies.

On December 5 last year, a cabinet committee on purchase approved the ministry's proposal to award the contract to the Chinese company, JLEPCL-DCL joint venture.

JLEPCL-DCL emerged as the lowest bidder offering a price of Tk477.46 crore while VA Tech WABAG came second with Tk 523.82 crore, according to the minutes that the ministry prepared for the cabinet committee.

According to court records, the Indian company has claimed that JLEPCL-DCL's submitting the bank guarantee through SWIFT code is illegal.

The Indian company has filed a writ petition with the High Court, seeking an order to the government to implement the judgment of Review Panel-2 of the Central Procurement Technical Unit.

According to the Panel-2 judgement on October 5 last year, the bank guarantee is not authentic as a Nanjing branch of a Chinese bank has issued it using SWIFT message through the local correspondent, Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd.

The message has put in these words: "without any risk, responsibility and engagement on our part".

Islami Bank Bangladesh, local correspondent of Shanghai Pudong Development Bank, and Bangladesh embassy in China authenticated the bank guarantee.

"The SWIFT message issued by the Chinese bank is authentic as its local correspondent does not dishonour the message," said a senior lawyer at the High Court, preferring anonymity as the matter is sub-judice.

Contacted, a senior bank official said all SWIFT messages should be accepted as legal.

However, a full-bench of the appellate division of the High Court will hear the writ petition tomorrow.

"We want to set up the CETP as soon as possible and relocate the tanneries in a transparent way,"

The DMCH authorities had hoped to get a clue about her killers from CCTV footage. "But after an extensive search, nothing could be found from the footage," said DMCH Director Brig Gen Shahidul Haque Mallik.

Govt to buy

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contract worth Tk80.24 crore.

The meeting also approved a tender of Bangladesh Water Development Board to procure dredger and relevant equipments to implement the river dredging project.

A joint-venture of a US firm and the local Ananda Builders won the contract worth Tk220.32 crore.

The meeting gave its nod to appoint consultant for a project on higher education expansion under the education ministry.

The purchase body also approved work-order of two packages under the Dhaka-Chittagong 4-lane upgradation project.

A tender for the improvement of bridges in the Eastern region at a cost of Tk 599.33 crore also received the nod at the meeting.

Chaired by Finance Minister AMA Muhiht, the meeting was attended by senior ministers and secretaries concerned.

Father kills son

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Following a feud with his wife Bina Akhtar two months ago, Shafiqul had been staying in the shop. Bina had been living at her father's house, just a few yards away from the shop, with the two children.

Ali Hossain, grandfather of the two kids, said Shafiqul took Sadia to the shop from a nearby street on Thursday morning and Azizul from a Madrasa, where he studied, in the evening.

After the children went missing, a general diary was filed with police the following day.

Md Mizan, who lives right behind the shop, told this correspondent that they called police yesterday after getting a foul smell coming out of the shop, which was locked for the last couple of days.

Cops argue

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He said there are many allegations that police are showing unwillingness to record cases at police stations, people are not getting services when they go to the police stations.

People are being harassed at check-posts and in the name of vehicle requisition, he added.

"Police are not being trained properly, power is being misused and corruption in the force is increasing," said Phani.

At that point, DMP Commissioner Benazir, who is also an additional IG (current charge), shouted out, "I want to respond!"

As an astounded Phani took a pause from his speech, the state minister for home and the IGP requested Benazir to wait until the police coordinator's speech is over, and calmed him down.

Phani then resumed his speech and said, "It is time to look into whether the chain of command in the force has broken down. It is the best time to correct ourselves, and be introspective, as this government is doing everything for the betterment of the police department, which none did in the past."

State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku in his speech said, "Although the police coordinator exaggerated the allegations to a certain extent, allegations do exist."

There are also examples of departmental proceedings and punishments in connection with corruption, abuse of power, and negligence in duty, he added.

"It is our duty to figure out how to bring down the number of allegations. We will have to take responsibilities," the state minister said.

Home Minister Shahara Khatun delivered a written speech, but did not say anything about the allegations or about the incident at the meeting.

The IGP in his speech reminded his colleagues that the theme of this Police Week is "self-purification". He said the new recruits are doing much better.

Earlier the DMP commissioner in his speech expressed his dissatisfaction about the home ministry's "lack of attention towards the proposals and demands sent by the police department", said meeting sources.

Nazrul Hossain, a superintendent of police (SP) of Madaripur, told the meeting that there is no coordination between police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at the district level.

He said as a result quite often both forces work on a same case separately, which sometimes causes face offs between them.

He suggested that Rab camps at district levels be put under the command of superintendents of police.

Joint Commissioner of DMP (Finance and Admin) Shahabuddin Qureshi complained that although the capacity of Rajarbagh Police Line is to accommodate only 3,000 persons, currently 11,000 police are living there.

Police officials attending the meeting expressed mixed reaction about Phani's speech and the DMP commissioner's reaction.

Some officials criticised the DMP commissioner for his reaction to his superior while some other officials said the police coordinator should not have criticised the police wholesale.

MP Kamal Majumder

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Talking to The Daily Star over the phone, Aparna said, "He [Kamal] behaved very aggressively and pushed me aside. He used such a dirty language that I cannot utter it."

Resentment has been among guardians, who alleged that the school authorities had been charging between Tk 20,000 and 26,500 for admission in class I-X. The government-fixed fee for admission in all private schools is Tk5,000.

Receiving complaints from some guardians, the Rtv team went to the school to make a report on the matter.

Osman Gani Babul, Rtv's Mirpur correspondent who was present at the time, said security guards of the school tried to obstruct them from entering the school but they still managed to go inside to talk to the authorities about the allegation.

School principal Farhad Hossain drove them out as soon as they entered his room and asked about the additional fees, Osman alleged. He added that some employees of the school engaged in heated arguments with them and asked them to leave the premises.

When Kamal came to the school at around 11:30am, Aparna and her colleagues, who were waiting outside the gate, sought his comment on the high admission fee. At this, Kamal pushed Aparna and her cameraman aside.

PM hopes BNP won't boycott

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elections if it believed in democracy.

"...Either directly or indirectly they [BNP] will participate," she added.

In the radio interview, the prime minister said, "They [BNP] might commit a political mistake if they don't take part in the election."

The BNP and its allies say they will boycott the next general election if the caretaker government system is not reinstated. The system was scrapped through a constitutional amendment on May 30 last year.

Asked why her government did not accept the High Court suggestion that two more national elections could be held under caretaker governments, Hasina said, "The High Court did not give any order; they just gave their opinions."

The caretaker government system has been abolished to execute the main rule of the High Court, she added.

Back in 1990, Hasina said, the three opposition parties decided by consensus that the next three general elections would be held under caretaker governments, and that has already been done.

Besides, she continued, the experience with the 2007 military-backed caretaker administration had been anything but pleasant. Coming to power as an interim government, the caretakers clung to power for two years, oppressed political leaders and businessmen, put them in jail and sought to implement a "minus-two formula".

"I wonder if the opposition leader has forgotten how she suffered at the hands of the caretaker government. Her sons were made to leave the country after giving undertaking; cases filed against her by the Anti-Corruption Commission are still going on," Hasina said.

"Still, she [Khaleida Zia] wants the caretaker system reinstated. Who can guarantee these incidents will not be repeated under the caretaker government in future?"

The prime minister said the Election Commission, not her government, would conduct the next election. She claimed that all elections held under the AL-led government had been free, fair and credible. For example, she said, the ruling party-backed candidates had been defeated in the Narayanganj and Chittagong city corporation polls and in the Habiganj by-election.

"It amuses me when the BNP wants to forge a movement for a caretaker government. When we campaigned for the caretaker government system, they said there

Journalists of other media houses and another team of Rtv rushed to the spot on hearing the news. Kamal's men aggressively advanced toward them, witnesses said.

At one stage, Kamal entered the school premises. When he came out about an hour later, reporters asked him why he had misbehaved with Aparna.

At this, he and some men around him were heard screaming, "Shoot them...shoot them."

A number of reporters lay down in front of Kamal's Pajero vehicle when he tried to leave the school without answering their questions, forcing him to retreat.

Qazi Wazed Ali, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station, said Kamal was escorted out of the school at around 2:45pm.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid regretted the assault on Aparna, saying such behaviour is "totally unacceptable" from a lawmaker.

"I'm sorry and saddened by the incident," he said at a press briefing.

The education ministry formed a three-member committee to probe the incident.

At an instant press conference in the school, Kamal, however, refuted the allegation of having struck Aparna's wrist.

"I have just recovered

from illness and still cannot stand up. How can I sprain her hand?" he said.

Contacted by The Daily Star, he said, "I'm too sick to even lift a cell phone. How can I assault her in this physical condition?"

He, however, admitted that he had pushed Aparna aside. "As soon as I reached the school gate, she held out a microphone in front of my face and started filming me. I refused to talk at the moment and pushed her aside."

He accused the Rtv camera crew of filming him without his permission.

On the matter of additional fees, he claimed that the education minister had given him the go-ahead considering the fact that other private institutions had also increased their fees.

"The fee was fixed in consultation with the guardians," he claimed.

Later in the evening, the lawmaker at a talk show on Mohonatu, which he owns, criticised journalists for their "aggressive attitude and their conspiracy against him in the name of journalism".

On the show titled "information terrorism: conspiracy of capitalist mass media," discussants, including the school principal and the assistant principal of the school, blasted the Rtv reporter for "conspiring to tarnish the image of the school".

Positions

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three months as she has already directed the ministries concerned in this regard, the premier said.

Currently, only the inspector general of police and the police coordinator enjoy grade-I status, which is equivalent to that of a secretary.

There are nine posts of additional IGP in the department and the three most senior officials among them will rise to grade-one; the decision is implemented, sources said.

The prime minister also said initiatives were underway to ensure more participation of the police in UN peacekeeping missions, adds UNB.

To reduce work pressure, the government has decided to create 32,031 cadre and non-cadre posts in police force, she added.

The prime minister on the occasion presented Bangladesh Police Medals and President's Police Medals to 59 policemen.

Power plan

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mitment, he or she has to do so on own responsibility."

Monsur was talking to reporters at his office in the capital on the development of the gas sector in the last three years.

He made the comments in reference to the power system master plan of the PDB to generate around 8,850 MW of electricity by using domestic natural gas or liquefied natural gas.

The country has consumed 10.74 trillion cubic feet of gas as of 2011 out of its proven and probable reserves of 20.61 tcf.

The Petrobangla chief said Bangladesh must explore alternative sources in coal, nuclear and renewable energies as the country's natural gas reserve is drying up fast. "We will need 22 to 23 tcf gas up to 2021, which means we will have to discover another 7 to 8 tcf of gas."

"After 2021, our gas reserve could dry up. We have little potential too. Only non-technical people can say that the country is floating on gas."

Bangladesh now produces 2,064mmcf of gas against the demand for over 2,500mmcf, according to Monsur.

At present, power plants get a supply of 715 million cubic feet of gas a day against a demand for 920mmcf. The gas shortage causes 500 to 700 MW less power generation, according to PDB.

2 Bangladeshis

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operations room of the Abu Dhabi Police. The investigation was on, reported Khaleej Times Online.

Eyewitnesses said the two workers -- Azamir Rahman, 32, and Alamgir, 22 -- plunged to their death from the eighth floor of the building on Najda Street around 2:00pm on Monday. Their details could not be known until yesterday.

"They fell when the wooden plank of the scaffolding broke and crashed to the basement. It was a horrible scene as one of the workers got beheaded after falling on sharp materials on the ground, while the other got his head chopped into two pieces vertically," said a co-worker, also from Bangladesh.

The National, another newspaper in Abu Dhabi, reported three men were standing on a platform on the seventh floor of the building, its highest level, inside the elevator shaft.

But about 2:00pm, the load they were carrying overwhelmed the platform and it collapsed and they plunged all the way to the fifth basement level, officials said. Two of the men died immediately, officials said.

Another Bangladeshi worker, identified by eyewitnesses as Ashraf, suffered severe injuries after being hit by the debris of the scaffolding and was taken to Shaikh Khalifa Medical City complex, the witnesses said. However, the police did not confirm this.