

BSF beats Bangladeshi to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Benapole

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) beat to death a Bangladeshi cattle trader along Putkhali frontier in Benapole early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Shahadat Hossain, 35.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and local sources said Shahadat was caught by BSF men while he along with other cattle traders was bringing cattle from India.

Though his companions managed to flee, Shahadat was beaten mercilessly leaving him dead on the spot, said Joynal Abedin, Putkhali camp commander of BGB 26 Battalion.

Police recovered the body of the deceased near the frontier, said Hasan Hafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Benapole Port Police Station.

The body, which bore marks of injury, has been sent to Jessore Sadar Hospital for autopsy, he added.

Donors' aid sought to repair coastal embankments

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque yesterday sought assistance of the development partners in repairing the coastal embankments, which he said was the biggest challenge for Bangladesh.

"Due to resource constraints, the government is not being able to repair the coastal embankments and build adequate cyclone shelter centres," he told Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Disaster Risk Reduction Margareta Wahlstrom.

Wahlstrom, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a four-day visit, held a meeting with Razzaque on various ministries concerning disaster management, says a press release.

The coastal embankments, constructed in the 1960's, got damaged in many parts and require repairing. The embankments need to be heightened and strengthened, Razzaque said.

This is crucial because the frequency and intensity of cyclones have gone high in the recent times, he explained to the UN official at his ministry.

WB waits

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"As we have stated before, we are waiting for the preliminary outcome of some ongoing investigations," WB Country Director Ellen Goldstein told reporters after a meeting at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) office in Dhaka.

"But while doing that, we are maintaining our dialogue with the Bangladeshi authorities on this particular issue and on the implementation of our entire programme here," she added.

The Washington-based lender suspended the funding of the \$2.9-billion Padma bridge project last October over a corruption allegation in the bidding process. The project has been stalled since then.

Canada is investigating the allegation as questions had been raised over appointing a Canadian consulting firm for the project.

ERD Senior Secretary Iqbal Mahmood said the meeting with the development partners did not discuss any specific project.

On Padma bridge, the biggest-ever infrastructure project in the country, he said, "it is an ongoing project and will continue."

Bangladesh had signed loan agreements with the WB for \$ 1.2 billion, Asian Development Bank for \$ 615 million, Japan International Cooperation Agency for \$ 400 million, and Islamic Development Bank for \$ 140 million to construct the 6.15-kilometre Padma bridge.

Thai trade show begins in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The three-day Thailand Trade Show 2012 kicks off from today at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in the capital.

Open for all from 10:00am to 8:00pm, the fair is going to showcase products of 14 categories, including food and beverage, gift and decorative items, health and beauty aids, household and kitchenware, construction materials and hardware, and rice mill, garment and textile machinery.

A total of 46 Thai manufacturers and exporters are participating in the show.

Commerce Minister GM Quader expects that the trade between the two countries will exceed \$ 1.5 billion within this year compared to last year's \$ 1.25 billion and \$ 909.9 million in 2010.

The bilateral trade, however, is largely in favour of Bangladesh.

Energy-starved Pakistan turns to solar power

AFP, Muzaffarabad

From mosques, to homes and streets, Pakistanis are increasingly seeing the light and realising that year-round sun may be a cheap if partial answer to an enormous energy crisis.

"It's the best thing I bought this winter," says Sardar Azam, a former civil servant retired to a riverside home in Pakistani-administered Kashmir, showing off his water-heating solar geyser installed on the terrace.

"The biggest advantage is that you spend money once and it runs on sunlight which is free," Azam added.

Pakistan needs to produce 16,000 megawatts of electricity a day but only manages 13,000 megawatts, according to the Pakistan Electric Power Company.

The shortfall means that millions endure electricity cuts for up to 16 hours a day, leaving them freezing in winter and sweltering in summer while hitting industry hard, exacerbating a slow-burn recession.

Voters say it is their biggest single concern, secondary to the war against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and so the government has been increasingly vocal about redressing the problem as it eyes elections within a year.

"We can't afford to be selective of where we

receive our energy supply from," Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar said this month.

At the time, she was referring to Pakistan's determination to build a pipeline and import gas from Iran, regardless of US threats of sanctions, but the message was clear: on the energy front, Pakistan needs any help it can get.

Arif Allaudin, who heads the Alternate Energy Development Board, would like to see more of that help coming from renewable sources, saying there was a 2.4 million megawatt potential for solar energy alone in Pakistan.

The fire service official, however, said the blaze might have originated from an electric short circuit and spread over the entire three-storey building on 215 Gulshan Link Road under Tejgaon Industrial Police Station.

A top official of the sales section of Rangs Group told The Daily Star that the warehouse was used for storing spare parts of Mercedes Benz and Mitsubishi cars.

"Almost all the spare parts stored there were burnt down," he said.

He, however, said the loss or damage could not be estimated immediately.

BNP reminds govt

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front of the party's central office at Nayapaltan in the capital.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at the March 12 grand rally in the city issued an ultimatum to the government to reinstate the caretaker government system within 90 days.

Hundreds of party leaders, workers and supporters joined yesterday's rally followed by a procession from Nayapaltan to Moghbazar through Kakrail, Shantinagar, Malibagh and Mouchak.

Besides colourful banners, placards and posters, the party men bore portraits of Ziaur Rahman, Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman in the procession. They also chanted slogans against the government while marching to Moghbazar.

Fakhru said, "BNP is a pro-liberation party... a party of independence proclaimer." He urged all to unite and take a vow to protect the country's independence and sovereignty, and to restore democracy.

Demanding release of the detained political leaders, the BNP leader said they would continue their protest until the government fulfilled their demand for the caretaker government to oversee the next general elections.

He also asked the government to withdraw the cases

filed against Khaleda Zia and her elder son Tarique Rahman, saying that BNP wants to see democracy flourish in the interest of the country's independence.

Criticising the government, Fakhru said people are being killed on the border every day whereas the government is busy providing corridor facilities to India.

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Zainul Abdin Farroque, BNP's publicity secretary and opposition chief whip, meanwhile, said the main opposition would not attend parliamentary sessions from Thursday unless "objectionable" statements about the party's Senior Vice-chairman Tarique Rahman and alleged ISI funding were expunged from parliament proceedings.

He was addressing a human chain organised by "Zia Brigade" in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

Sheikh Hasina is not only the ruling Awami League chief but also the prime minister of the country, Zainul said, adding that the statements Hasina makes in the House are not acceptable.

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Leopard

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The Daily Star last night over telephone.

Locals believe the leopard entered the village from forests beyond Bangladesh territory.

Kabir who rushed to Panchagarh from Dinajpur following the incident returned with the body of the leopard, which was 6.5 feet (head to tail) long.

He urged business leaders of the country to explore new market opportunities in Thailand and Thai business delegates to set up factories here to enjoy considerable cost cuts.

Suwapong Sirisorn, chargé d'affaires of the Thai embassy, said economic relations between the countries can also be enhanced by joint venture investment and tourism.

Thailand exports rice, polymers, woven fabrics, sugar, yarn, synthetic filament and staple fibres, chemical products, refined fuel, machinery and parts, auto parts and paper to Bangladesh.

It was then hung from a tree and put on display.

The injured Shohar Uddin, 60, Alam, 30, Saddam Hossain, 20, Shaheed, 18, and Monju, 10, were first admitted to Panchagarh Sadar Hospital. Alam and Shaheed were released after first aid while Shohar, Saddam and Monju were shifted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Informed of the incident, Boda Upazila Nirbahi Officer Jahurul Islam accompanied police to recover the dead animal and handed it over to the forest department, the UNO said.

Contacted, Range Officer of Debganj Forest Department Abdul Majid told this correspondent that his office sent the dead animal to Dinajpur Divisional Forest Office for further action.

According to Bangladesh Wildlife Protection Act 1974, a person could be imprisoned for six months to up to a year and penalised Tk 500 to Tk 1,000 for killing such animals.

However, section 37 of Bangladesh Wildlife Protection Bill 2011 denotes killing of rare animals, like leopard, as a punishable offence. The killer would be imprisoned for three years or fined Tk 3 lakh or charged with both the punishments for such a crime.

Renewal

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between the commerce secretaries of the two countries at the Udyog Bhavan, which houses the Indian commerce ministry.

A formal announcement of the two decisions is expected on the second and final day of the meeting between Commerce Secretaries Golam Hussain of Bangladesh and Rahul Khullar of India with a joint statement.

The existing trade agreement between the two countries, which had gone into force April 1 in 2009, will be renewed through a Letter of Exchange. Bangladesh apparently wanted to renew the trade accord for only six months, pending further discussions on some contentious issues.

The two countries yesterday also discussed the issue of tariff and non-tariff barriers in the way of boosting bilateral trade and setting up four more border hats on either side of the demarcation with northeastern state of Tripura.

The issue of standardisation norms of the two countries also came up in the meeting. India has already accepted the certification of products by Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution.

However, India raised the issue against using a certain chemical in dyeing jamdani saris, which reportedly causes skin problem but it is to be examined by Indian Standard Institution, sources said.

The commerce secretary level meeting was held after a gap of more than eight years with the previous one being held in 2003 in New Delhi.

India-Bangladesh trade is currently heavily skewed in favour of India, as exports from Bangladesh have long been restricted due to Bangladesh's narrow manufacturing base and imposition of numerous non-tariff and para-tariff barriers by India.

The trade gap was \$4.57 billion in 2010-11, according to the data of Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) of Bangladesh.

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