

German minister says Erdogan backers threatened his wife

AFP, Berlin

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel has accused supporters of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of threatening his wife amid a festering diplomatic crisis.

He said that Erdogan's strident style "had apparently led some to feel motivated to try to threaten and harass my wife," in comments broadcast yesterday by news channel NTV. "Of course, this is a terrible outcome," he said without giving further details, at a time when relations between the Nato allies have plunged to their lowest point in years.

On Saturday, Erdogan launched a bitter personal attack on Gabriel, who has frequently criticised the president's leadership and his treatment of opponents and critics.

"Who are you to talk to the president of Turkey?" Erdogan said in a televised speech. "Know your limits. He is trying to teach us a lesson... How long have you been in politics? How old are you?"

Relations between Turkey and Germany, home to three million ethnic Turks, have deteriorated sharply, particularly since a failed coup against Erdogan over a year ago and a subsequent mass crackdown on its alleged plotters.

Gowher Rizvi

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Rahman told The Daily Star.

But they could not say anything about the content of the meeting.

Gowher Rizvi could not be reached for his comments despite repeated attempts over phone.

The meeting was held a day after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina came down heavily on the chief justice for comparing Bangladesh with Pakistan.

During the hearing of Masdar Hossain case, also known as judiciary separation case, the CJ on Sunday said the Pakistan Supreme Court recently disqualified the prime minister, but there was no fuss.

On Monday, the PM said she was not at all scared of "such a threat and this was not tolerable either." "This is very disgraceful that Bangladesh has been compared with Pakistan. This is not tolerable at all."

Earlier on August 12, Awami League General Secretary and Road, Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader met Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha at his residence.

Several ministers and ruling party leaders have been criticising the Supreme Court verdict that scrapped the 16th amendment to the constitution. Food Minister Qamrul Islam, a senior AL leader, has even demanded removal of the CJ.

An ominous sign

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He alleged that the PM through her statements threatened the CJ to step down and attempted to provoke the people against the CJ and the judiciary.

"We fear that this irresponsible behaviour might make the country's prevailing situation more confrontational," he added.

Fakhrul said the way the PM pushed the country's public and constitutional bodies into a confrontation was tantamount to "playing with fire".

"We want to say that the consequences of undermining the judiciary and the country's top court won't be good. We call upon the ruling party to turn away from this path of self-destruction."

Asked about the AL's ultimatum to the CJ to step down, Fakhrul said the party's only target was to introduce "a one-party rule in the country as it didn't have any public mandate".

Replying to a query from a journalist, he said a "confrontational situation" among the three organs of the state was not a good sign at all.

Speaking at the press conference, BNP Standing Committee Member Moudud Ahmed said, "It's rare that the prime minister of a country made such comments on the judiciary. It's not possible in any other country in the world. I think if she [prime minister] was elected in the true sense, she would not have made such comments."

Speaking at a discussion in the capital on Monday, Hasina said the higher court was suddenly making "some political comments and issuing threats", reported BSS.

She said there were many "irrelevant issues" in the 16th amendment verdict.

About the Supreme Court's observations on the reserved seats for women MPs, Hasina said the CJ might have forgotten the appointment process. "He was appointed by the president who is elected by lawmakers. He should have resigned from his post before making any comment on the election process of the women MPs or after delivering the verdict."

Instant 'triple talaq' illegal

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introduce a new law on the practice, taking into account concerns of Muslim bodies and the Sharia law.

However, justices Joseph, Nariman and Lalit said triple talaq must be struck down as it goes against the constitution and is unacceptable.

Justice Kurian ruled that triple talaq violates Sharia law. "It is extremely difficult to agree with the CJ that triple talaq is integral to the practice of Islam," he said. Justice Nariman and Justice Lalit set it aside, terming it unconstitutional.

In a reaction to the verdict, Shayara Bano, the main petitioner, said "I welcome and support the judgment. It's a historic day for Muslim women. In the Muslim community, the condition of women needs to be understood. This judgment needs to be accepted and the law must be made as soon as possible," she said.

Former Indian federal minister and senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid, who was allowed by the court to assist it as amicus curiae, said "What we hoped to happen has now happened, it is a good decision." During the hearing, he had told the SC that instant triple talaq "cannot be justified or given legal validity".

The SC, which began hearing petitions challenging the practice on May 11, had reserved its verdict on May 18. Six Muslim women petitioners had argued that it was "unlawful and unconstitutional".

The apex court verdict vindicates

the stand of the government which contended that triple talaq violates fundamental rights of women.

Terming the apex court ruling "historic", Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government said it grants equality to Muslim women and is a powerful measure for women empowerment.

"Judgment of the Hon'ble SC on Triple Talaq is historic. It grants equality to Muslim women and is a powerful measure for women empowerment," Modi tweeted yesterday.

The PM had raised the issue in a big way during elections to the state legislative assembly in India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh earlier this year. His party BJP emerged a runaway winner in the electoral battle.

The BJP has since long pitched for a uniform civil code to be in place.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), a non-governmental body which oversees the application of Muslim personal law, opposes any ban on triple talaq and argues this is a religious matter and not for courts.

The five judges of the apex court were drawn from major religions -- Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism.

India allows religious institutions to govern matters of personal law -- marriage, divorce and property inheritance -- through civil codes. Triple talaq has been considered a legal avenue for the country's nearly 180 million Muslims to end marriages.

Causes mostly man-made

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aftermath of the landslides.

He went heavily on the disaster management ministry for failing to meet the needs of the victims after the June 13 disaster.

Ushwe Sing said 23 to 26 crore bamboo shoots, among other plants, would be planted as part of efforts to afforest the areas.

Presenting the keynote paper, M Shahidul Islam, professor of geography and environment at the Dhaka University, said the natural causes of landslides could not be prevented, but the man-made causes, including massive scale hill cutting and unauthorised settlements, could be controlled.

"To do so, a strong political commitment is a must," he said.

Prof Samiwal Ratna Bajracharya, a Nepalese geologist and remote sensing specialist, highlighted the need for taking up "bio-engineering and civil engineering" measures to lower the risks of future disasters in the region.

He said a storm water drainage system was necessary in the region to ease water flow beside roads.

Lt Col (ret'd) Parimal Bikash Chakma, a UNDP hills security

adviser, suggested eviction of vulnerable human colonies from the hilly areas to avert loss of lives in landslides.

Rangamati Deputy Commissioner Manzurul Mannan demanded that the government properly equip the fire service and civil defense for rescue operations in the region.

He alleged that no warning was given to the hill districts ahead of June 13 landslides.

"Had we received warnings from the department concerned we could have saved many lives by alerting them much before the disaster," he said urging the government to rehabilitate the people who have been staying at shelters in Rangamati.

The DC also demanded immediate construction of more shelters in the three hilly districts -- Rangamati, Bandarban and Chittagong.

Among others, lawmakers Ushatan Talukder and Firoja Begum Chino also spoke at the seminar chaired by Naba Bikram Kishore Tripura, secretary of the CHT Affairs ministry.

Several officials from NGOs and fire service department also spoke on the occasion.

Twilight descends

FROM PAGE 16
Monday, August 21, the beloved home saw its darkest day as the eminent Raj Razzak breathed his last.

For years, Lokkhikunjo was the space for lively conversations and joyous memories. It also played host to the many visitations by numerous film stars. For actors it was also a safe haven, synonymous with love and learning in the presence of one of the most renowned actors of the Bangladeshi film industry.

On the day, the grief was palpable even before one set foot in the house. Actor Ferdous sat alone in the balcony for a long time, the weight of sadness clear in his demeanour. He was joined by Zayed Khan, who was soon followed by actress Shabnaz. Another balcony was occupied by Ali Raj and several other actors.

Stage and film director Nasiruddin Yousuff Bachchu arrived at the residence a while later, and retreated into the heart of the house to join the late actor's family. Razzak's sons Bapparaj and Samraat confronted the first day without their beloved father. Minister of Information Hasanul Haq Inu and actor Alamgir arrived shortly after,

Orphan sisters

FROM PAGE 16
education and clothing.

Mannan disclosed the matter of taking the children's responsibility at a seminar on Landslides in CHT: Causes and Prevention in the capital.

At the seminar, state minister for CHT affairs Bir Bahadur Ushwe Sing termed the DC's initiative as "a noble move" and gave Tk two lakh to the two children.

He also said, "If there is anything to do for them, the ministry will do so from time to time."

The Daily Star spoke to the DC afterwards to learn the details of the initiative.

Asked why he took such a measure, the DC said a bond of affection and love began to grow between him and the two children when he used to visit them at the shelters after the landslides.

"I thought of doing something for them when people from USA, Germany and Dhaka wanted to adopt them and their relatives did not agree and sought my help," he said. "I brought them to the DC office on August 16 and announced undertaking their complete care," he said add-

and extended their condolences to the bereaved family. Famed sisters Bobita, Suchanda and Champa were also among the countless visitors.

"Raj Razzak took me under his wing and brought me into the world of acting. I cannot envision Lokkhikunjo without him," said Ali Raj.

As day turned into night, the air of melancholy only grew heavier, and visitors to the residence did not cease. From actors and directors to theatre owners and camera crews, individuals attached to every aspect of the film fraternity came forward to express their condolences.

At 11pm, a heavy silence descended upon Lokkhikunjo as all the guests took their leave. The lawn however, was still buzzing with reporters and cameramen. As the air grew quieter, actress Shabana made her appearance in the household. She had shared the screen with the late Raj Razzak in numerous films, enchanting the audience with their memorable performances.

As time drew on, the guardian of the household ascended farther away from us all...

ing that Meem and Sumaiya's uncle and grandmother are not well-off and could not take care of them properly.

Additionally, their parental uncle and grandmother will also get food and other facilities from the DC office from now on, he said.

The DC said Meem and Sumaiya will be raised as his own children.

"They will come to the DC's Bungalow and taken out for recreation. They will enjoy whatever facilities my children enjoy. I will make sure of it at any cost," he said, adding that the two children will be nurtured with love and care that their parents would have given them had they been alive.

Besides, a magistrate from the DC office will look after where they will be living and assess their needs.

When queried what will happen after he leaves the office, the DC responded by saying, "I believe anyone who comes after will continue this initiative. However, wherever I am posted, I too will do whatever is in my capacity to help them."

"Till I am alive I will be taking care of them. Before I die, I will ensure financial security for them also," the DC said.

EU may send 150-member observer team

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Pierre Mayaudon, outgoing EU ambassador and the head of delegation, has reiterated the European Union's interest in sending a 150-member election observer team for the next general polls in Bangladesh.

Mayaudon showed the interest as he paid a farewell call on Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali at his ministry yesterday.

They also discussed migration and cooperation through "Horizon 2020" in the field of science and innovation.

The EU Ambassador informed Mahmood Ali the readiness of the EU to extend support to the Bangladesh government in the post flood rehabilitation process.

In reply, the foreign minister said the government was dealing with the relief works efficiently and would take up the rehabilitation process in the affected areas immediately after the floodwater disappeared.

During the call on, Mayaudon thanked the minister for continuous support and cooperation during his tenure in Dhaka.

He also praised the Bangladesh government for the infrastructural development that took place in Bangladesh in the last couple of years, making the life of millions comfortable and rescuing them from abject poverty.

The foreign minister appreciated the outgoing EU ambassador's contribution in lifting Bangladesh-EU relations to a newer height and wished him good health and success in his new assignment in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Man who shot

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The DB official said a team of detectives on Monday arrested one Shantonu from Jatrabari on charge of involvement with the shooting incident that left the police AC, a police informant and another man injured.

Shantonu admitted his involvement in the shooting and informed detectives about his associates including Mamun.

A detective team went to Jurain graveyard area around 2:00 am yesterday to nab the gang when they opened fire on the team forcing the law enforcers to retaliate. Shantonu died in the ensuing gunfight.

Police recovered two pistols from the spot. "We will send those for ballistic test to confirm whether any of the firearms was used in the August 12 incident," Baten said.

Mamun's body has been kept at Dhaka Medical College mortuary after autopsy. Morgue sources said Mamun sustained one bullet in the head.

AC Rahul Patwari, meanwhile, was released from Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Monday.

The police informant Belal Hossain Mridul was shot in the left leg while Selim, a driver at a nearby tea stall, was hit on his back.

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