

Seven more abducted in Teknaf

Body found in Ukhiya

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Criminals have again abducted seven people when they went to collect firewood in Teknaf hills of Cox's Bazar and demanded ransom for their release, said the victims' family members.

This incident took place in Jahazpura hilly area in Baharchhara union of Teknaf around 12:30pm yesterday, said Mashiur Rahman, officer in charge of Baharchhara Police Investigation Centre under Teknaf Police Station.

The abductees are Gias Uddin, 17, Fazal Karim, 38, Jaberul Islam, 35, Arif Ullah, 22, Mohammad Rashid, 28, Mohammad Zafar, 38, Mohammad Zainal, 45, of Jahazpura village, said police.

Around 15 to 20 criminals wearing masks besieged a group of nine villagers, including two children, who went to the hill to collect firewood and held them hostage at gunpoint, said Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, a member of ward-6 of Baharchhara Union Parishad.

The two children escaped tactfully while the criminals were taking the villagers deep into the forest after an hour of the abduction, said the member.

The miscreants are demanding ransoms, Rafiqul said.

Abdul Halim, officer in charge of Teknaf Model Police Station, said, "Several police teams are conducting raids in the hills."

Locals are also cooperating with police in the operation, he added.

Inspector Moshiur, of Baharchhara Police Investigation Centre, said police were also trying to identify the perpetrators.

Forty-one people, including 17 Rohingyas and 24 locals, were abducted in Teknaf hills in the last six months.

Most of them returned after paying ransoms, locals claimed.

Meanwhile, a Rohingya man was found dead at a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya yesterday morning, a day after an armed group abducted him.

The body of Mahbubur Rahman, 35, bore several stab wounds likely inflicted by sharp weapons, police said.

An inhabitant of Kutupalong camp-5, Mahbubur went to his father-in-law's house in Balukhali camp-9 on Wednesday morning when an armed group picked him up, said Amir Jalor, additional deputy inspector general of Armed Police Battalion-8.

Locals found his body near the bordering area of camp-9 this morning and informed police, the police official added.

Police are suspecting he was murdered over enmity centring establishing supremacy in the camps, the APBn official said.

The body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.



People conditioning the hull of a trawler with bitumen and fire in Majerghat area along the Bakkhali river in Cox's Bazar town. Any vessel that stays in the sea for a long time gets infested with barnacles that cause drag and reduce the vessels efficiency. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVU

BLACK SEA DRONE INCIDENT

Pentagon releases de-classified video

Moscow says US directly participating in Ukraine war

REUTERS, Washington

In a rare move, the Pentagon yesterday released a de-classified video showing Russia's intercept of a US military surveillance drone downed over the Black Sea two days ago.

It was the first direct US-Russian incident since the Ukraine war began, worsening already tense relations between Washington and Moscow.

In the video, a Russian Su-27 fighter jet comes very close to the US MQ-9 drone and dumps fuel near it, in what US officials say was an apparent effort to damage the American aircraft as it flew over the Black Sea.

It also shows the loss of the video feed after another close Russian maneuver, which the Pentagon says resulted from the Russian jet's collision with the drone. It ends with images of the drone's damaged propeller, which the Pentagon says resulted from the collision, making the aircraft inoperable.

The video, which is about 40 seconds long, has been edited by the US military for length but shows events in a sequential order, the Pentagon said.

Russia has denied US accusations that its jets acted recklessly in the incident on

Tuesday over the Black Sea, and instead has blamed "sharp maneuvering" by the drone for the crash, claiming its jet did not make contact.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Russian ships had been seen near the area where the drone had crashed, though they did not appear to have recovered any parts of the drone yet. It was not clear if they were still in the area.

Washington has said that any recovery efforts relating to the drone would be difficult because of the depth of water in the region. It said it has taken measures to ensure that no sensitive information can be gleaned from the remains of the drone.

The release of the video followed separate calls on Wednesday between the top US general, Mark Milley, and his Russian counterpart, Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, as well as between US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu.

In remarks to reporters on Wednesday, Milley said it was clear that the intercept and harassment of the drone by Russian jets was intentional, but it was unclear whether the Russian pilots meant to slam their aircraft into the drone -- a move that could also put the Russian aircraft at risk.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei

Shoigu told his US counterpart that US drone flights near Crimea's coast "were provocative in nature" and could lead to "an escalation ... in the Black Sea zone," a ministry statement said.

"The Americans keep saying they're not taking part in military operations. This is the latest confirmation that they are directly participating in these activities - in the war," Kremlin Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev said.

Russia, in a statement said, has "no interest" in escalation "but will in future react in due proportion" and the two countries should "act with a maximum of responsibility", including by having military lines of communication in a crisis.

In its daily intelligence update on the Ukraine war, Britain's defence ministry said Russian attempts to capture the town of Vuhledar, about 150 km (93 miles) southwest of Bakhmut, had "almost certainly slowed" after repeated, very costly failed attacks over the last three months.

President Vladimir Putin, meeting members of Russia's business elite yesterday for the first time since the invasion, urged them to invest in their country to help it weather what he called the West's "sanctions war".

Tourist's body found hanging in hotel room

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Police recovered the hanging body of a young woman from a hotel room in Cox's Bazar on Wednesday night.

Sharmin Akhter, 26, from Gopalganj's Kashiani, travelled to Cox's Bazar alone on Tuesday night and rented a room in the hotel.

The next night, a cleaner found her room locked from the inside and informed the hotel authorities.

On information, police arrived and broke down the door and found the body hanging from the ceiling fan.

The body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said Nazmul Huda, inspector (Investigation) of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station.

UP member hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A union parishad member succumbed to his injuries yesterday hours after he was hacked with sharp weapons in Kushtia's Daulatpur upazila.

Kajol Hosen, 42, was an elected member of ward no-7 of the upazila's Sadar union and a local Jubo League activist.

Around 6:00pm on Wednesday, unidentified criminals attacked Kajol at Sadarpara intersection and fled the scene, said Mujibur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Daulatpur Police Station.

Locals rescued Kajol and admitted him to the hospital where he passed away around 5:00am.

The OC said Kajol had a dispute with the people in Sardarpara over establishing supremacy in the area.

No case has been filed in this connection yet.

SCIENCE LAB BLAST

Another victim dies, death toll now 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another victim of the explosion at a market near the capital's Science Lab intersection died yesterday, taking the death toll from the blast to five.

Johur Ali, 52, who suffered 44 percent burn injuries, passed away at Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery around 7:30pm, Samanta Lal Sen, chief coordinator of the hospital told The Daily Star.

On March 5, three people were killed and many others injured in the explosion at Shirin Mansion on Mirpur Road around 10:50am. Many were injured and suffered burns.

7-yr-old killed after being hit by train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A child was killed after being hit by a train in Jamalpur Sadar upazila around 6:30pm yesterday.

Akash Mia, 7, son of Akram Hossain of Ranagachha village, was playing in the Ranagachha railway crossing area when a local train ran him over.

Locals rescued Akash and took him to a hospital where he was announced dead.

Hasina, Modi to inaugurate Indo-Bangla pipeline tomorrow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi will inaugurate the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline tomorrow at 5:00pm via video conference.

The first-cross border energy pipeline between the two countries has the capacity to transport one million tonnes per annum of high-speed diesel (HSD) and will supply the product initially to seven districts in northern Bangladesh, our New Delhi correspondent quoted the Indian PMO as saying yesterday.

The operation of the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline will put in place a sustainable, reliable, cost-effective and environment-

friendly mode of transporting HSD from India to Bangladesh and will further enhance cooperation in energy security between the two countries, read a statement from the Indian PMO.



Of the Rs 377 crore pipeline, the Bangladesh portion was built at a cost of approximately Rs 285 crore with help of an Indian grant.

A long-term agreement was signed in 2017 to import diesel

from India to Bangladesh through the pipeline which stretches from West Bengal's Siliguri to a Meghna petroleum depot in Dinajpur's Parbatipur.

The project missed the earlier deadline of June 2022 which was pushed back another year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pipeline stretches 125km inside Bangladesh's territory and 5km inside India.

In the past, Bangladesh used railway carriages to import diesel from India.

To facilitate the pipeline construction, India withdrew its objection to Dhaka building any establishment inside 150 yards of Bangladesh territory along the zero lines, foreign minister AK Abdul Momen had said recently.

Dhaka will first seek to know the facts

FROM PAGE 1

irrigate farms in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts.

Teesta water is crucial for irrigation in the northern part of Bangladesh, especially during the lean period between December and April.

Seheli said life and livelihood of the people in a large part of Bangladesh depend on the Teesta water. Therefore, Bangladesh has been trying for a water-sharing deal with India for many years.

In 2011, the two neighbours finalised the Teesta water-sharing agreement, but it was not signed due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's opposition during then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka.

Seheli said considering Bangladesh and India's excellent relationship, Bangladesh will continue to work to

resolve the issue through dialogue.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Water Resources Zaeed Farooque said India-Bangladesh Joint River Commission (JRC) members in Bangladesh have already prepared a letter that would be sent to India soon, seeking to learn officially the facts about the reported plan of diverting water from the Teesta by the West Bengal government.

"We have learnt about the plan of digging canals and withdrawing water. We want them [India] to officially tell us the facts. Then we will be sure if India is withdrawing water or not," he told journalists at the foreign ministry after a stakeholders' consultation on the UN Water Conference to be held in New York on March 22-24.

Farooque said he is expecting a JRC meeting before Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to New Delhi in

September.

He said in February, Bangladesh invited Indian Water Resources Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat for the JRC meeting in Dhaka. Last year, the JRC meeting was held in Delhi.

Regarding the Water Conference that will also be attended by Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Farooque, Seheli said they would highlight Bangladesh's rights to having water as a lower riparian country as well as impacts of climate change and seek support of the international community.

"Bangladesh will highlight the basin-wide water management of the international rivers. Bangladesh will focus that proper water management will be a major determinant of regional and international cooperation, peace and security," Seheli added.

Chaos all throughout SCBA polls

FROM PAGE 1

The signs that there would be chaos during the election were obvious: The pro-Awami League and pro-BNP camps formed two separate subcommittees to hold the election in what senior lawyers said was an unprecedented incident in the history of SCBA.

After the formation of the two committees by the two opposing camps, Supreme Court's Senior lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan on February 26 warned of chaos during the election.

"I have never seen more than one election sub-committee to conduct SCBA elections. Leaders from the two groups should immediately settle the dispute through discussion," he told The Daily Star then.

SCBA Secretary Md Abdun Nur Dulal who was elected from the pro-AL Bangabandhu Awami Ainjibi Parishad last year, issued a notice on February 23 forming a seven-member election subcommittee led by Shah Md Khasruzzaman.

On the same day, SCBA Senior Assistant Secretary Mahfuz Bin Yousuf, who was elected from the pro-BNP Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Oikya Panel last year, issued a separate circular forming another seven-member subcommittee led by AZM Fariduzzaman Farhad to conduct the election.

Amid controversies over the formation of two separate committees, both the camps reached a settlement, making senior lawyer and former justice Md Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury the head of a election conducting sub-committee.

But Munsurul resigned from the post citing personal reasons on March 13.

Later, the AL-backed SCBA members formed another sub-committee led by Moniruzzaman while the pro-BNP lawyers formed another committee led by ASM Moktar Kabir.

Pro-BNP lawyers then started demanding formation of a committee under someone who is "acceptable" to all.

Meanwhile, Wednesday's police assault on journalists and pro-BNP lawyers on Supreme Court premises was widely criticised with many raising questions about the sanctity of the apex judicial body.

Lawyer Zi Khan Panna said, "I have never seen police enter the Supreme

Court and attack people, not even during the military regime. I am ashamed of it. I don't know why we reached such a state."

A total of 4,137 lawyers cast their votes in the election conducted by the Moniruzzaman-led subcommittee formed by the pro-AL faction of the SCBA. The number of voters in the association is 8,589.

The 12 other winning candidates are Mohammad Ali Azam and Jasmine Sultana (vice presidents); Masud Alsm Chowdhury (Treasurer); Noor-Alam-Uzzal and Harunur Rashid (assistant secretaries); and Safayet Hossain Sajib, Mohiuddin Rudro, Shafique Raihan Sawon, Suvas Chandra Das, Nazmul Hossain Swapan, Delwar Hossain and Moniruzzaman Rana (executive members).

Yesterday, a large number of police were deployed on the Supreme Court premises.

Some lawyers formed a human chain in front of the SCBA office in protest of the assault on lawyers by the police.

Meanwhile, on the ground floor of the SCBA building, three to four lawyers, including Amatul Karim Swapna and Aynunnahar Siddiqua Lipi, engaged in a heated argument with some pro-AL lawyers over the presence of so many law enforcers. Attorney General AM Amin Uddin was seen trying to stop the fight.

Contacted, Mohammad Mominul Islam Bhuiyan, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), said around 500 police personnel were deployed on the instruction of higher authorities.

Snatching of ballot papers and scuffles took place the night before the election day, he added.

Before resigning from the post of convenor of the subcommittee citing personal reasons, Munsurul on March 11 wrote to the DMP requesting deployment of an adequate number of law enforcers on the SCBA premises during the election.

There is no necessity for taking permission from the SC administration for deploying police at the SCBA, said the deputy commissioner.

A lawyer named Salahuddin Rigan was arrested on charges of stealing ballot papers and assaulting lawyers on Wednesday, he said.

Yesterday, SC Registrar General Md

Golam Rabbani told this correspondent that after learning about the deployment on Wednesday morning, he instructed the police not to take any action unless someone's life and properties were at risk.

DMP REGRETS

DMP Commissioner Khandker Golam Faruq yesterday expressed regret over the assault on journalists while Detective Branch chief Muhammad Harun Or Rashid said the attacks were unintentional.

Police will work to prevent such incidents in future, said Harun.

Pro-BNP lawyers met Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique and informed him what had happened on Wednesday. The chief justice was presiding over an eight-member full bench of the Appellate Division at the time.

In the morning, former attorney general AJ Mohammad Ali, a leader of the pro-BNP group, told the bench that "an unprecedented incident took place on the Supreme Court premises on Wednesday. It is still going on. Even today, there are police stationed in front of many of the lawyers' rooms."

Another pro-BNP lawyer Ruhul Qudus Kazal said, "I was attacked and my robe was torn. Today, I borrowed a robe and put it on. Thousands of police have been deployed. Lawyers were beaten up by the police and thrown out of the polling station. Why can't I be present at the polling station?"

Lawyer Mahbub Uddin Khokon said, "Police were kicking us. I am not able to stand properly because of the pain. Many lawyers and journalists were injured."

The chief justice then asked the pro-BNP lawyers to meet him at his office after court hours. The lawyers met the chief justice at his office and requested him to take measures over the incidents.

The chief justice told the lawyers that he would talk to Attorney General AM Amin Uddin.

Later in the day, Amin Uddin told reporters at his office that the chief justice has nothing to do with the situation that unfolded over the SCBA election.

Ain O Salish Kendra, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and several other organisations yesterday condemned the police assault on lawyers and journalists and demanded investigations.