

Anti-talks KPLT holds Abhijit Rabha and Ranger to ransom



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Syed Miraz Ahmed 4 March 2012 15016 views

Police considers that The Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF) anti-talks faction who renamed itself as Karbi People's Liberation Tiger (KPLT) as recently as 8th January 2012 in an unexpected turn of events held Abhijit Rabha, Chief Conservator of Forests, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and Forest Ranger Ranjan Baruah of Karbi Anglong East Division to ransom. It is to be noted that in a statement to the media on 8th January, KPLT General Secretary Nilip Engti informed that it is a 186 member strong smartly equipped splinter group of the KLNLF defying ceasefire in demand for complete autonomy (hemprek kangthim as they term it) in the Karbi Anglong District of Assam. Of late KPLT is under pressure from scripted counter insurgency combing operations in the district.

On the 27th of February Abhijit Rabha heading a group of about 40 people comprising researchers, geologists, botanists, forest personnels, porters and local guides trekked to Singhason Peak - the highest peak of Karbi Anglong situated at an altitude of about 1600 meters above the sea level. He returned on the 3rd having conducted for the first time a scientific departmental survey to accumulate information of the area's rich unexplored biodiversity, an attempt which was under incubation for a long time. Singhason Peak despite its scenic beauty and agricultural produces is reputed to be a notorious hiding ground of most insurgents groups talked about in Assam including few from the neighboring states where even the armed forces dread to patrol.

Interestingly 16 members of the KPLT anti-talks faction surrendered before police on Thursday the 26th of January 2012 at Diphu during the Republic Day Celebrations. It is hard to figure as to why such an incident took place when sir had such a good network and local support in place said Nayan Das, Geographic Information System Laboratory Incharge of the Environment & Forest Department, Karbi Anglong, Diphu.

Nayan Das was one of the team members apart from the previous 30 that comprised two visiting Japanese Researchers from the Japan Tiger and Elephant Fund (JTEF) and three Wild Life Trust of India members from New Delhi who returned unscathed on the 29th of January. Following a series of meetings with locals chiefs and villagers Abhijit Rabha and the remaining team members stopped by at two successive places on their way back before facing abduction.

According to eyewitness Nayan Das, Abhijit Rabha's official vehicle was leading four conveyances when while approaching Batlog near Thekerajan under Manja Police Station a direct gun fire confrontation forced the chauffeur to pull up. According to Dinesh Patgiri accompanying Beat Officer of the Biodiversity Range he heard 10 rounds of ammunition being fired from assault rifles. Seven armed men from the larger group approached and circumvented them in the broad daylight of 1330 hours IST. The militants who appeared between 20 and 25 years of age paraded and frisked everyone and made good with all the available mobile phones and Global Positioning System sets used during the expedition. Eventually they forced out Abhijit Rabha and Ranjan Baruah from their office vehicles and marched them away at gun point. Pawan Hansu, Abhijit Rabha's official chauffeur and prime witness to the entire event said that he missed the bullets fired upon only by inches. He is of the opinion that he was actually targeted upon to be the first kill when luck favored him from possible fatal injury but the Scorpio he was driving suffered bullet dents. "They set us scot free but took away Rabha and Baruah sir alongwith them back to their hideout and could not do anything about it. A village headman who accompanied us requested the militants to let off sir but they did not heed and were motivated to do things their way. March 4th is Abhijit sir's birthday and it is very unfortunate not have him and Baruah sir with us," said Nayan Das while talking to this correspondent.

Poilce on the other hand were oblivious about Rabha's intended trip to Singhason Peak. Abhijit Rabha to avoid a face-off confidently banked on popular local support but the idea turtled on completion of the trek just about one and a half hour before reaching Diphu. With a messaged demand of Rupees one crore placed against their release it has become important for Bhuban Chandra Terang, Executive Member in charge of the Forest Department, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and others at Dispur to think up measures that will access the duos immediate and safe bail from the militant's custody.

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BY SYED MIRAZ AHMED

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