

Outlaws, criminals regrouping under political cover

Nine godfathers in Chuadanga evade action: Gangs to be used in next polls, police officials say

AMANUR AMAN, Back From Chuadanga

KUSHTIA: 'Listed' outlaws and criminals sheltered by their political godfathers are regrouping in terror infested Chuadanga, keeping in view the next parliamentary election.

They are regrouping as may political leaders in the southwestern region use outlaws and criminals to manipulate polls, officials of law enforcing agencies told this correspondent seeking anonymity.

Those on the list include at least 80 hardened criminals and outlaws who are evading arrest for long because their godfathers are influential political leaders belonging to different parties and they also have

links with a section of law enforcers, the officials said.

They are now expanding their activities under the shelter of nine godfathers, the sources claimed.

Their activities are now aimed mainly at establishing supremacy in their respective areas to gain strength for showdown ahead of the polls. This may also cause a slide in law and order, they told this correspondent during a recent visit to the district.

Meanwhile, at least eight cadres of rival outlawed parties and gang groups were killed in the district in last one and half months. Several incidents of bomb attack, abduction, extortion and robbery also took place during the period.

According to sources, use of

outlaws during any election in southwestern region is a practice going on for years. This was admitted even by law enforcers on different occasions.

"This is an old tradition to use outlawed parties in vote rigging in southwestern region," a high police official posted in the region for several years told this correspondent over cell phone on Sunday.

"A good number of godfathers of outlaws and gangs are political leaders belonging to major parties," the official said.

Acting on orders from higher authorities last year, intelligence agencies prepared a list of criminals and their godfathers. The list containing 133 professional criminals belonging to outlawed parties and their nine godfathers has been sent to higher authorities, the official said.

Fifty-two out of the 133 'listed criminals' were killed in 'crossfire' in the last one and half years, sources said. The victims also include some cadres of political parties.

But none of the 'godfathers' has been arrested.

As a 'last-ditch attempt,' Chuadanga police on October 24 last year announced bounties of different amount for information on 20 'top outlaws' out of the 80. But it also proved futile.

At least 12 outlawed parties having about 10,000 armed cadres are active in the region. The parties are four factions of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP)—PBCP-ML, PBCP-Janajuddho, PBCP-Red Flag and PBCP-CommunistWae-, Biplobi Communist Party (BCP), New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP), Banglar Communist Party (BCP-Laltu), Gono Mukti Foj (GMF), Gono Bahini (GB), Socialist Party (SP), Biplobi Anuragi and Chhinnomul Communist Party (CCP).

"It is impossible to change the situation in the district overnight where underground parties are active for 30 years", Chuadanga Police Superintendent Md. Sarwar said.

"All out steps have been taken to arrest the criminals and we are hoping success", he said.

Road barricade in Satkhira for fertiliser

Three dealers held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Over 2000 farmers yesterday put up a barricade on the Satkhira-Khulna highway in front of Patkelgheta Palli Biddiyut Samiti (REB) office in Tala upazila demanding fertilisers.

Angry farmers also laid a siege to Patkelghata thana, but there was no untoward incident, police said.

Traffic on the road was interrupted for over three hours from about 9 am to noon due to the barricades, which created a long snarl-up of vehicles on both sides.

Police said that farmers came to Patkelghata Bazaar in the morning to buy fertilisers for IRRI-Boro crops.

As there was scarcity and high price of urea, angry farmers barricaded the road and besieged the nearby thana.

A spontaneous rally also held on the road during the barricade. It was addressed by, among others,

Satkhira district Krishak League (peasant front of opposition Awami League) president Biswajit Sadhu, district JSD General Secretary Obaidus Sultan Bablu, journalist Mahidul Islam and some farmers.

On information, Tala Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mostafizur Rahman went there. Persuaded by him, the farmers withdrew the barricade.

Speakers at the rally said IRRI-Boro crops are being affected due to high price and inadequate supply of urea fertiliser and frequent load shedding and urged the local administration to address the problems.

Meanwhile, three dealers were arrested yesterday evening for selling fertiliser at high price. Dealers Abu Daud and Abdul Alim were arrested from Baikari Bazaar and Mirazul Islam from Kaliani Bazar in the Sadar upazila. A case has been lodged, police said.

KIDNAP THREAT 30 women teachers of Gonoshastha schools resign

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Thirty women teachers of primary schools run by Gonoshastha Kendra in Thanchi upazila have resigned following continued threat of sexual abuse and kidnap by local indigenous youths.

Gonoshastha, an NGO, runs 38 schools styled Gram Pathshala with 64 women teachers in the upazila.

They submitted their resignation to a Deputy Director of Gonoshastha Kendra on January 16, they said at a press conference held at Bandarban Press Club on Sunday. The official came on a visit and left for Dhaka.

No official of the NGO was available for comment on the allegations as it has no office in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

At the press conference, the teachers alleged that indigenous youths often make objectionable remarks and hurl abusive words at them at their workplaces and threat to kidnap them even in presence of local officials.

Despite appeals, neither Gonoshastha nor the government has not taken any step for their security, they said. "There is no alternative to resignation in such a situation", miss Himu Marma said.

"Recently, one of my colleagues was kidnapped for refusing a proposal by a youth. The youth confined her for seven days and then married her against her will", Himu said.

Newsmen to be sued for 'false report'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Criminal cases will be filed with the court against the journalists for writing 'false and baseless' reports against government and BNP men.

A decision was taken to this effect at the Baufal Upazila Development and Co-ordination Meeting held at the Upazila Parishad Auditorium on Sunday.

Dashpara Union Parishad (UP) chairman Nur Mohammad presided over the meeting, attended by BNP lawmaker Shahidul Alam Talukder and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Nurun Nabi.

Dhulia UP chairman Khalilur Rahman, also a close relative of the BNP lawmaker told the meeting that the journalists should be punished for 'false and baseless reports.'

BNP MP Shahidul Alam said editors and publishers of newspapers will also be sued.

When contacted, Baufal UNO Nurun Nabi told this correspondent that 'a false report' on lease of a market was published in a Dhaka based daily recently.



PHOTO: STAR
Students of Shilpachariya Zainul Abedin Fine Arts Institute in Mymensingh painting drawings on roads in the town yesterday, marking the International Mother Language Day.

15x2



PHOTO: STAR
Jubo Mahila League, woman front of Awami League, brought out a procession carrying hurricanes in Dinajpur town yesterday demanding adequate power supply.

DIESEL CRISIS IN NILPHAMARI BNP leader refutes DC's statement

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The general secretary of ruling BNP in Nilphamari yesterday contradicted a statement by the Deputy Commissioner that supply of diesel in the district was normal and its price did not increase.

They spoke at a meeting of the District Community Motivation Committee, held at the Deputy Commissioner's conference room. The committee has been formed to resist creation of artificial crisis of fuel and fertiliser.

DC Rabin Dranath Roy Chowdhury informed the meeting that about 26,000 diesel-run shallow irrigation pumps are in operation in the district in the current Irri-Boro season. About 50 percent of the pumps run on alternate days and they consume about 55,000 litres of diesel a day, he said.

The DC informed the meeting that the stock of diesel in the district yesterday was 1.38,000 litres, leaving a surplus of 83,000 litres on the day. He also said dealers were selling diesel at the government fixed rate of Tk 30.40 per litre.

BNP General Secretary Anisul Arefin Chowdhury differed with him, meeting sources said.

He said that just outside the municipality, per litre diesel was being sold at Tk 37.

To this, the DC asked, "Where such a rate exists?"

Journalist Md. Abdullah, who was present at the meeting then said, "In Ramganj market, only seven kilometres from the district town, diesel was sold at Tk 37 per litre", the sources said.

Then the DC said Magistrates were frequently monitoring fuel prices and he did not receive any report on price hike of diesel.

At that stage, ADC (General) Md. Alefuddin told the meeting that small traders in remote areas might be selling diesel at a price only Tk 2 higher than the government fixed price only to cover the transport cost.

Nilphamari district Muktiyudha Sangsad Commander Shamsul Islam then pose the question: If there is no diesel crisis, why farmers are bringing out processions with empty containers?"

Saidpur Municipality Chairman and Awami League leader Akhtar Hossain Badal also asked the same question.

The DC did not answer these questions.

Govt apathy responsible, says Ershad

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday criticised the government for price hike of diesel, fertilisers, and power crisis in northern districts.

Farmers are buying diesel and fertilisers at high rates due to government's indifference to their problems, he told a party workers' meeting at its Rangpur office.

Ershad said people of the country now seek relief from the 'misrule' of BNP-led coalition government.

The government did not do anything good for the people but created scope for party men to plunder resources, he alleged.

Presided over by Karim Uddin Bharsa MP, the meeting was attended by GM Quader MP, Moshir Rahman Ranga MP and other party leaders.

Ershad also criticised Awami League, saying, BNP and AL during their 14 years' rule destroyed the country's economy. People now look for an alternative like JP, he said.

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