

# Outlaws slip thru' dragnet

Only one caught and killed since start of combing in 10 SW districts Tuesday

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Only one out of 3,000 armed cadres and 42 top leaders of ten outlawed parties was arrested and killed since police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) launched their special combing operation in 10 south western districts Tuesday night.

Rezaul Haq alias Kalu, 28, was killed in a crossfire at Jagirhude village in Alamdange upazila in Chuadanga district Thursday night. He was the son of Rabiul Mondol of Rangpur village in the upazila.

The special combing operation has been launched at the directive of Lutfuzzaman Babar, State Minister for Home Affairs.

The operation is aimed at 'weeding out' extremists and nabbing their godfathers 'at any cost' before the next parliamentary election. A fresh list of the wanted persons has been prepared, said a highly placed source at Khulna Range DIG office.

Experienced and courageous police officers have been posted in all

police stations in south western region to make the operation a success, said a source in Khulna Rab-6.

On the other hand, extremists are also not sitting idle. Some leaders and cadres of PBCP Janajuddho held a secret meeting on Thursday at a house at Darbeshpur village in Meherpur to plan how to face the special combing operation, sources said. A PBCP cadre was killed while making bomb at that house on the same night. He could not be identified till yesterday, Meherpur police said.

Besides, Janajuddho has circulated leaflets in Jessore town, bitterly criticising four-party alliance government for what it called harbouring militants of banned Jamaatul Mujahideen, Bangladesh (JMB). The leaflets termed the arrest of JMB leaders an eyewash and stage-managed drama and said JMB kingpins Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai are creation of ruling parties.



Indigenous people presenting a dance during their traditional Bhaha and Sharol festivals in Kakhonhat in Rajshahi on Friday. PHOTO: STAR

## Khulna NGOs seek protection

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Offices of all non-government organisations (NGOs) in Khulna city have been asked by Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) to remain on high alert.

The advice was given following a bomb attack on the office of ADAMS, an NGO, in Daulatpur Friday night.

NGO offices in the city have also sought protection and security from KMP.

## Section 144 at Chowhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*

Section 144 was imposed at Chowhali Degree College ground as Awami Secchashobok League and BNP called meetings at the same venue at the same time yesterday.

Police and UNO office sources said, Chowhali upazila Awami Secchashobok League called a council of the party at 3.00 pm at the venue. BNP also called a public meeting there.

The two parties however shifted their meeting venues elsewhere after imposition of Section 144.

## Recognise our rights, indigenous people demand in Rajshahi

ABU KALAM, back from KAKONHAT Rajshahi

The leaders of indigenous people at a discussion held at Sundarpur in Kakhonhat of Godagari upazila on Friday have demanded constitutional recognition to their rights.

Organised by Advasi Sangskritik Unnayan Sangstha (ASUS), the discussion was followed by a cultural function marking the Bhaha and Sarol festivals.

ASUS executive director Rajkumar Shaw presided it while Godagari upazila assistant commissioner of Land Shahidul Islam Bhuiyan was present as chief guest.

The speakers demanded recognition of their language and enactment of law to protect their traditional culture.

'The indigenous people have a distinctive culture and heritage, but those are being lost into oblivion due to lack of government patronisation and 'haughtiness' of local Bangladeshis,' they said.

They also demanded of the government to give back their land rights and ensure their educational rights.

Among others, indigenous leader Jakob Hasda, Kabius executive director Modhushudon Maitra, Rajshahi district unit leaders of National Advasi Parishad Lakhi Tudu and Bangamin Shasda spoke.

At the cultural function, Santal and Orao dancers enthralled the audience by presenting traditional dances of indigenous people.

Performers also depicted the lifestyle of indigenous people in drama and song.

A large number of indigenous people including Santal and Orao people of northern districts attended the day-long programme.

Earlier, a big colourful procession was brought out to mark the occasion. The processionists paraded different streets of Kakhonhat town. They chanted various slogans carrying banners and festoons in favour of their demands.

Bimal Chandra Sarker, a leader of Rajshahi district unit of National Advasi Parishad read out a set of their demands at the discussion.

## Rajshahi BNP leader held on rape charge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Hours after his suspension from ruling BNP, police Friday night arrested Shawkat Ali on charge of gangrape. Ali was president of Rajpara thana unit of BNP.

A team of detective branch police caught him from his Laxmipur house at about midnight. He was sent to jail and will be produced before court today, police said.

An arrest warrant was issued against him 10 days ago on charge of rape of a housewife.

He was arrested after a letter signed by BNP central office secretary Mafidul Hasan Tripti suspending his primary membership of the party for 'tampering its image' reached here.

The BNP leader was escaping arrest by using political influence.

The rape victim went to police to record a case but was denied. She then lodged a complaint with Metropolitan Magistrate Khodeza Khatun on March 21.

In her complaint, the victim alleged

that Shawkat and his aides Mantu Kabiraj (quack) and Wali raped her at the house of Anju Begum on the night of March 8.

The victim alleged that the rapists also threatened her with death when she was under treatment at the One Stop Crisis Center (OCC) at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

The gangrape sparked protests by people in Rajshahi city in Rajpara.

Rajshahi Mohila Parishad and people of Rajpara upazila in separate memorandums submitted to the Director General of Health Directorate, Director RMCH and Rajshahi Police Commissioner alleged that Shawkat's goons in league with a pro-BNP doctor at the OCC threatened the victim.

In the memorandums they demanded a judicial probe into the incident and withdrawal of the pro-BNP doctor from the OCC.

Women leaders, lawyers and journalists were not allowed to talk to the victim at the OCC, they said in the memorandums.

Police arrested Wali and Anju Begum earlier.



GrameenPhone opened its 9th Service Desk at Index Plaza in Rajshahi city on Thursday. PHOTO: STAR

## Two JMB men held in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on Friday rounded up two active members of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) from Katabaria in Shahjahanpur, Bogra.

The arrestees are Tajnur Rahman and Abdur Rahman, according to a Rab press release.

During interrogation, Tajnur confessed to his involvement in JMB activities since 2002. He said he took part in the anti-outlaw operations in Rajshahi in 2004.

Abdur Rahman said to Rab that he used to provide shelter to JMB leaders at his house and worked as a JMB coordinator in Fulcourt area in Shahjahanpur.

Rab also seized 16 lead dice and 21 tin-made equipment used for publishing JMB leaflets from a madrasa.

## 'Govt still trying to protect militants'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

Awami League Organising SSaber Hossain Chowdhury yesterday said government leaders are still blaming the opposition even after JMB kingpins gave confessional statements admitting responsibility for bomb attacks across the country.

Statements of government leaders prove that they are still trying to protect the Islamist militants, he said while addressing a public meeting at Trishal Degree College ground. Trishal upazila AL organised the meeting, marking the Independence Day.

Saber said he and some other AL leaders have not been relieved from charges of involvement in

Mymensingh cinema hall blasts after JMB chief Abdur Rahman admitted that JMB caused the blasts.

The four-party alliance government is adamant to implicate the opposition in incidents of violence perpetrated by militants under ruling party's protection, the AL leader said.

He said there will be no election without reforms to the caretaker system and the Election Commission.

With Trishal AL acting president Haider Ali Master in the chair, the meeting was addressed by among others by central AL leader Asim Kumar Ukil, Mymensingh AL President Motiur Rahman, Abdul Matin Sarker MP, Mahmud-Al-Noor Tareq and Abul Kalam.

## RU journos protest police attack on colleague

RU CORRESPONDENT

Journalist at Rajshahi University yesterday held a rally in front of Central Library demanding punishment to police men who beat up Ali Asgor Khokon, RU Correspondent of Daily Janata, on Thursday.

They also took out a procession and paraded campus streets, chanting slogans demanding security while on professional work.

Khokon was severely beaten alleg-

edly by police when he went to collect information after Thursday's clash involving rival factions of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and police.

At the rally, speakers criticised police for the attack on Khokon and university authorities for not taking any step to stop such attacks and harassment of journalists.

They demanded withdrawal of the police camp on the campus and compensation to injured Khokon and his better treatment.

RU journalists will form a human chain today in front of Central L premises and submit a memorandum to RU VC to press their three-point demand including security of journalists and general students on the campus.

The Progressive Teachers Association (PTA), Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Samajtrantik Chhatra Front (SCF), Chhatra Federation also protested frequent incidents of police attack on journalists.