

FRESH ANTI-CRIME DRIVE IN 10 SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICTS

# Poor show as top criminals still remain out of dragnet

AMANUR AMAN, *Kushtia*

The fresh joint anti-crime operation by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police to net 42 'top criminals' and their accomplices in southwestern districts showed little success so far.

The operation was launched on March 28 with a fresh list of the hardened criminals in hand as law and order deteriorated in the 10 districts.

The list included 'chiefs' of 12 outlawed parties and leaders and cadres of other gangs.

Sources in the law enforcing agencies however said they arrested 18 'criminals' and recovered 10 arms since launch of the operation.

Of them, five were killed in 'crossfire' and the rest sent to jail. Two of them were killed in Khulna, two in Kushtia and one in Chuadanga.

But other sources claimed that only one out of the five killed was among the 42 most wanted criminals on the list. He was Tapash Mistry, 'regional leader' of outlawed Janajuddho faction of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), killed in April 1 in Batiagahata in Khulna.

Rezaul Haq alias Kalu an alleged cadre of Janajuddho was killed in Chuadanga on March 31. Two top cadres Sabirul Islam 32, and Mohidul Islam 28 of Fahmid-Faisal Bahini a notorious syndicate involved in various crimes in border areas were killed in Kushtia on April 15.

According to police records and other sources, at least 89 people were killed in three months in 10 districts in the region. Of them 19 were killed in January, 34 in February and 36 in March. The

districts are Kushtia, Jhenidah, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Magura, Jessore, Narail, Satkhira, Khulna and Bagerhat.

Police said most of the killings were done allegedly by outlaws.

The fresh list was prepared under the supervision of Rab Director General (DG) Abdul Aziz Sarkar who worked in the region for many years, sources said.

After preparing the list, Aziz Sarkar held a close-door meeting with high police officials in Chuadanga on March 28. The combing operation started on the night of March 28.

Those on the list are 28 outlaws belonging to four factions of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), 10 of New Biplobi communist Party (NBCP) and four of Chhinomul Communist Party (CCP), the sources said.

There has not been any let up in

activities by outlaws in the region despite the Operation Clean Heart and Operation Spider, conducted by law enforcers earlier and incidents of crossfire.

A total of 286 crossfire deaths took place in the region from June 2004 to April 16 this year— 158 in 2004, 108 in 2005 and 22 so far this year, according to police records. The latest incidents took place yesterday in which two alleged outlaws were killed in Khulna and Jhenidah. They are Purba Banglar Communist Party leader Iku alias Minaruddin, killed in Khulna and Azizur Rahman of Biplobi Communist Party, killed in Jhenidah.

Chuadanga police on October 23 last year announced varying amounts of bounties to net 20 top outlaws but this brought little success. Only two out of the 20 were killed in crossfire in six months.

"It is not possible to root out outlaws overnight in a region where they are active for about 30 years," a high ranking police official of Khulna Range told this correspondent over cell phone yesterday.

He said outlaws are virtually protected by political leaders who use them for vote rigging and maintain supremacy in their respective areas.

Twelve outlawed parties with about 10,000 cadres having a large number of firearms are active in the region. They are four factions of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP), Banglar Communist Party (BCP-Lattu) Gono Mukti Foj (GMF), Gono Bahini (GB), Socialist Party (SP), Biplobi Anuragi and Chhinomul Communist Party (CCP).



Human chains formed by Shahjalal University Photo Journalists Association in Sylhet (left) and by different organisations in Chittagong yesterday protesting Sunday's police action on journalists.

## More protests against police excess in Ctg

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Journalists across the country yesterday staged more against Sunday's police attack on media men in Chittagong.

Joined by civil society members, professionals and political leaders and activists, they brought out processions, held rallies and formed human chains demanding punishment to persons responsible for the incident and end to such repression.

Our RU Correspondent reports: Rajshahi Union of Journalist, Rajshahi Press Club, Metropolitan Press Club, Rajshahi Photo Journalists Association and civil society members jointly brought out a procession in the city and held a rally at Shaheeb Bazar zero point protesting the police action.

The processionists paraded the main roads chanting slogans against the government.

It was announced at the rally that journalists in Rajshahi city will stage a one-hour token hunger strike from

11:00am today in front of Rajshahi Press Club protesting the attack.

Speakers at the rally condemned the attack and demanded withdrawal of Deputy Police Commissioner (DC) Ali Akbar from Chittagong and punishment to policemen responsible for the incident. Protests will continue till he is punished, they vowed.

Those who beat journalists are working as 'cadres' of ruling parties to save the government, they said.

Speaking at the rally, Rajshahi Editors Forum Convener Liyakat Ali threatened to launch tougher agitation if the culprits are not brought to book.

He demanded termination of the Ali Akbar, police sergeant Anwar and others responsible for the 'savage' attack and their arrest within 24 hours and compensation to victims.

Our staff Correspondent reports from Sylhet: Journalists brought out a procession, held a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar and formed

a human chain in front of Shahjalal University demanding punishment to the policemen who attacked the on-duty journalists during professional work in Chittagong. The human chain was also joined by teachers.

Speakers at the rally included Sylhet city BNP president Ariful Haq Chowdhury, who expressed his solidarity with journalists' agitation against the alleged government move to gag the media.

A Correspondent reports from Narsingdi:

Members of Narsingdi Press Club held a rally in front of the local press club and formed a human chain at Shah Pratap Square and paraded the streets of the town protesting the police action.

Civil society members, political leaders and activists and professional joined the programmes.

## Evicted landless in Kaliganj now under open sky

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Over 400 of landless families evicted by hired goons from government lands in Bairagirchak and Chingrikhali in Kaliganj upazila on Saturday are under the open sky.

They narrated their plight to newsmen at Satkhira Unnayan Kendra in the town yesterday.

At least 25 people including women and children were injured, some of them bullet-hit, when the goons swooped on them in the early hours of the day firing shots and blasting bombs. The attackers torched 65 houses, beat the inmates indiscriminately and looted their belongings, the victims told newsmen.

The goons led by Ashraf Mir, Mani Sardar and Shaheeb Ali were

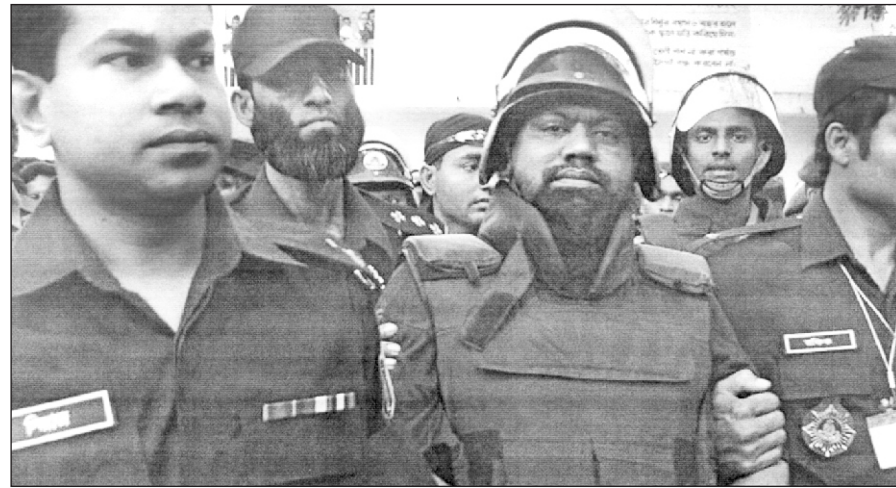
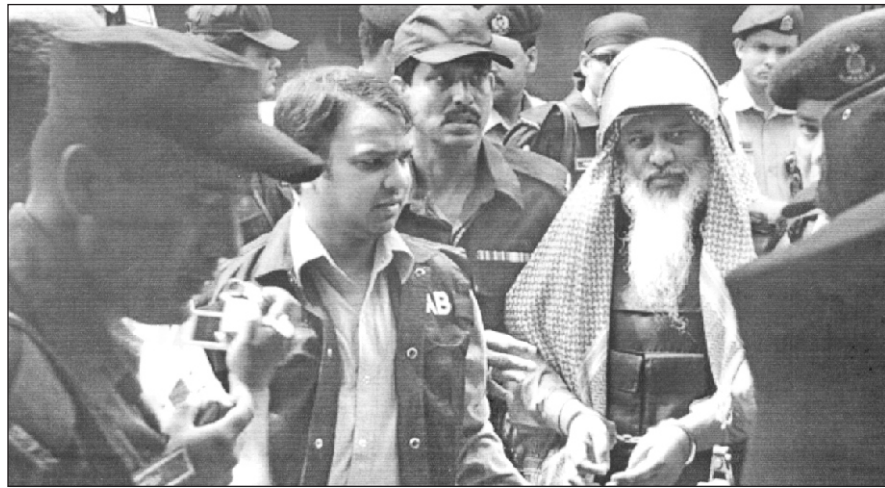
let loose by some local influentials and grabbed the lands, allegedly in connivance with a section of corrupt revenue department officials, they claimed.

The landless people took shelter there five years ago.

They sought intervention from the Prime Minister's office as they failed to draw the attention of local administration, they said.

They also blamed police for remaining inactive during the attack and for taking any action after the incident.

The goons are now moving in the area freely and threatening them but the administration and police have not taken any step to rehabilitate them, they alleged.



JMB chief Abdur Rahman (left) and JMB chief Siddiqui Islam being taken to the Jhalakathi Judge Court yesterday in connection with killing of two judges there allegedly by JMB bombers.

DAMAGE OF MOTORS, CROP LOSS DUE TO LOAD SHEDDING IN NILPHAMARI

## Deep tube-well users demand compensation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

Deep tube-well beneficiaries here have demanded compensation from the Rural Electrification Board (REB) authorities for damage of deep tube-well motors and irrigation pumps and loss in IRRI-Boro crops due to severe load shedding and voltage fluctuation.

Nilphamari District Deep Tube-wells Beneficiaries Committee president and general secretary Khairat Hossain and Ayub Sarkar handed over a memo in this regard to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) recently.

In the memo they alleged that some officials of the REB gave power connection to additional 1,500 irrigation pumps despite failure to ensure smooth supply to the existing 3,500 pumps.

The memo said although the daily demand for power is 16 megawatt, the REB supplies not more than 2-3 megawatt. The additional power connections have created severe load-shedding damaging seven motors of deep tube-wells and 300 motors of shallow irrigation pumps. As a result the beneficiaries could not irrigate their IRRI-Boro

fields on time, it said.

The committee also urged the DC to intervene and help realise their compensation.

Talking to the journalists, Khairat Hossain alleged bribery and corruption in the REB office. Without naming, he said at least three high officials illegally earned about Tk one crore each by realising bribe between Tk 5,000-6,000 from each owner of the 1,500 newly connected pumps.

An owner of a newly connected irrigation pump, Tarikul Islam of Sahapara village in Sadar upazila told newsmen that he had been harassed

and denied power connection for about six weeks until he bribed Tk 6,000 to a REB assistant general manager (AGM) through a line man.

Both Khairat and Tarikul demanded probe into their allegations.

When contacted, Palli Bidyut Samity (REB) AGM Mainuddin denied the allegations of taking bribe from farmers for power connection. The new connections were given as per suggestion of donors to grow more food, he said claiming that despite scarcity of power, irrigation was not hampered.

He said that as per written agree-

ment, the farmers can neither demand compensation from the REB nor file any case against it.

Farmers in Domar upazila recently brought out a procession and besieged the Upazila Nirbahi Officer's (UNO) office protesting severe load-shedding and punishment to corrupt REB officials.

A meeting held at the UNO office premises was presided by local Krishok Samity president Delwar Hossain.

Speakers at the meeting threatened to go for tougher agitation if their demands were not met within 15 days.

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