

Outlaws still out of control in 3 southwestern districts

22 killed, 20 bomb attacks by Janajuddho in 6 months: Political leaders shelter them for use in next polls

HOSSAIN SERAJ, back from Jhenidah

Despite several anti-crime drives and death of at least 200 'cadres' in 'cross fire', there is no sign of a let up in murders and other crimes by the Janajuddho faction of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho) in outlaw infested Jhenidah, Chuadanga and Meherpur districts.

According to intelligence sources and police, Janajuddho killed at least 22 people in the three districts in last six months.

The victims included political leaders, public representatives, businessmen, police informers and 'rivals' in the outlawed outfits.

Police said, the 22 killed by Janajuddho include two ruling BNP

men, one Awami League (AL) activist, three Union Parishad members and one municipality chairman. The rest are businessmen, police informers and 'rivals' in factions of outlawed parties.

The outfit also made at least 20 bomb attacks in different areas of the districts during the period, killing three people and injuring at least 35.

In their bomb attack on May 22, BNP leader Suman was killed at Mahishkolla village in Gangni upazila of Meherpur district. On April 13, two persons including housewife Fatema Begum were killed on the spot at Pucca village in Jibonnagar upazila in Chuadanga district.

Meanwhile, during March and this year, outlaws also launched bomb attacks on a brick field, a construction firm office and at Modern square in

Jhenidah town, injuring at least six people. They also hurled bombs on a Union Parishad office at Koatchandpur upazila headquarters and also on Shailakupa upazila BNP leader Idris Ali in Jhenidah.

Following the spate of murders and bomb attacks, police launched a special anti-crime operation. But the drive yielded a poor result. Only seven Janajuddho cadres were arrested from Bonpara village in Koatchandpur upazila.

Two arrestees -- Sohail and Mizanur -- confessed to their involvement in bomb attack at Pucca village in Jibonnagar upazila in which two persons were killed.

Acting on their confession, police arrested four alleged cadres of the outfit -- Shahin, Monir, Mannan and Rezaul -- from Koatchandpur.

Following the leads extracted from them, police on May 13 arrested another Janajuddho cadre--Afangir alias Kalu-- from a slum near Jhenidah Cadet College. Police also seized 5 kg explosives and some leaflets of PBCP Janajuddho from there.

Kalu in his confessional statement before a magistrate made under Section 164 said Janajuddho cadres are now out to avenge the 'crossfire killings' of party men in Jhenidah and adjoining districts.

According to his confession, there may be more killings and bomb attacks as Janajuddho has vowed to 'eliminate' its 'rivals' and 'class enemies', police and intelligence sources said.

"Now, PBCP-Janajuddho is the most powerful outfit because they are being sheltered by local leaders of

two major political parties to use its cadres in the next parliamentary election", a high ranking police official in Khulna range said while talking to this correspondent over cell phone.

Jhenidah Police Superintendent Akram Hossain also shared the same view and said, he is determined to check outlaws' destructive activities.

This correspondent also talked to a Janajuddho leader who responded to a cell phone call from his hideout but declined to be named.

"Peace loving innocent people are not our target. We did not kill any innocent man. We kill traitors and those involved in misdeeds."

"Our struggle is to establish a society where the poor and labourers will get food", he claimed.

RU recruiting 200 more 'controversial' staff

546 appointed in 2004 yet to be regularised

RU CORRESPONDENT

The Rajshahi University authorities are going to recruit more 200 people in lower grade jobs, allegedly on political considerations.

While the authorities are proceeding with the recruitment, services of 546 appointed earlier also on political ground, are yet to be regularised, campus sources said.

The university authorities have chosen the ongoing summer vacation to finalise the recruitment of 200 people as there is possibility of protests, the sources claimed.

On Thursday, the Registrar told newsmen at his office that no permanent appointment was made in the university in last five years. He mentioned that many departments have been opened and offices of deans and faculties as well as dormitories have increased.

The 546 employees still continue agitation on the campus demanding regularisation of their jobs. Unwanted incidents like

assault on teachers also took place during their agitation.

Meanwhile, RU officials and employees under the banner of Officer and Kamachari Oikkyo Parishad have been agitating on the campus to press their five-point demand including regularisation of job of 31 officials and employees who were recruited in 2001.

They observed work abstention on May 22 and 23 and also laid a siege to the office of Registrar on Thursday for several hours.

Rafiqul Islam Sadar, convener of Oikkyo Parishad representing 546 employees said, they will oppose any fresh appointment till their jobs are regularised.

Ayub Ali, general secretary of Officer and Kamachari Oikkyo Parishad also vowed to oppose the authorities' move for fresh recruitment.

Another home of delicious mangoes in the making

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Char Anandipur and nearby villages in Mymensingh Sadar upazila have all the reasons for producing good quality and delicious mangoes.

The soil of the area, like Chapainabaganj in Rajshahi, is suitable for raising mango orchards.

About 300 farmers are raising 325 small and big gardens in the village. Starting two years ago, most of the farmers there plucked considerable quantities of the sweet fruit this year, according to farmers and officials of Kewatkhali Horticulture Centre (KHC) who are supervising their work with great interest.

"Anandipur will turn into a famous village for mango production and we hope it will be the second Chapainabaganj", Abu Md. Enayel Ullah, Assistant Horticulturist at KHC told The Daily Star during a recent visit to the village.

"We initiated Amrapali (a delicious variety of sweet mango) cultivation in the village in 2002 by distributing saplings to some farmers under a nutrition project of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE). Each farmer was given 10 to 12 saplings."

"We were encouraged by their keen interest and our project to adjacent Bhawanipur and Char Haripur villages. But Anandipur

farmers are leading", he said.

Director General of DAE Md. Ibrahim Khalil who launched the nutrition programme through 15 horticulture centres in the country also visited Anandipur village.

The KHC so far distributed 20,000 Amrapali saplings and fertiliser to farmers in Mymensingh Sadar upazila for free. Most of the recipients are from Anandipur village.

"We also trained 800 farmers in mango cultivation in the last two years", said KHC sources.

A marginal farmer can easily earn Tk 5000 to 6000 by planting 12 Amrapali variety at his homestead, they said. He can earn more by selling cuttings from twigs in mother plants. A cutting is sold between Tk 50 and 60 in local markets.

Shakhina Begum, 40, wife of Abdur Rahman of Anandipur village, told this correspondent that she is expecting to earn Tk 5000 by selling her Amrapali mango from 12 trees this year. The trees were planted two years back. Mother of four children, Shakhina, a marginal farmer, sees mango cultivation as very profitable.

Poor housewives Runa and Noorjahan in the village also expressed similar hopes, saying mango cultivation could change their lot.

KHC Supervisor official Idris Ullah who looks after the project in the three villages said they are very encouraged seeing the enthusiastic participation of farmers including women in the training and nursing their small gardens.



An inundated kitchen market in Chawk Bazar (left) and a house in Kapashgola in Chittagong city yesterday after two days' downpour.



PHOTO: STAR

DEATH OF YOUTH IN POLICE CUSTODY Hartal today in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Gaibandha Nagorik Committee has called a day-long hartal in the town for today protesting the recent death of a youth in custody and demanding punishment to the police men allegedly responsible for this.

Sajedur Rahman Sajid, 26, of Katpatti area in the town was arrested on May 18 along with a revolver. He died in police custody on May 21 while on remand.

Police said he committed suicide but the autopsy report said he was strangled.

In support of today's hartal, the Nagorik committee held a rally at bus terminal yesterday where the speakers claimed that Sajid was killed in custody and the persons responsible should be punished.

They called upon the townspeople to observe hartal today to lodge their protest against such incidents.

The rally was addressed by, among others, Nagorik Committee Convener Aminul Islam Golap and

its leader Farhad Abdullah Harun Bablu, Communist Party leader Mihir Ghosh, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) leader Shah Shariful Islam Bablu, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal leader Ahsanul Habib sayeed, Nirmatendu Barman Bhaiya and Sirajul Islam Babu.

Besides, a section of lawyers also brought out a procession and held a rally in the court area yesterday in support of the hartal.

Parents of Sajid at a press conference on Saturday demanded a judicial probe into the incident and capital punishment to the "killers" of their son.

Meanwhile, Sub Inspector Abu Yousuf of Gaibandha Sadar thana, who was the investigation officer of Sajid arrest case, was sent to jail after expiry of his three-day remand.

Police said during remand SI Yousuf denied involvement in the murder. Investigation is on, they said.

The Officer-in-Charge of Gaibandha sadar police station Noor Alam and Sub Inspectors Masud Rana, Sajid Hossain, Farhad Hossain have been withdrawn in connection with the death in custody.

Hartal observed in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A half-day hartal was observed in Sylhet city yesterday at the call of the local unit of Bangladesh Shainik League to protest the attack and foiling of its rally in the city allegedly by the JCD men on Wednesday. No untoward incident was reported during the hartal hours.

Sainik League also called for withdrawal of the finance minister's 'unwanted remarks about Sylhet people. Sylhet district and city units of Awami League also extended their support to the

hartal.

All types of vehicles remained off the roads during the hartal hours while most of the commercial establishments also kept their shutters down.

A rally was held at the city's Court Point with Babrul Hossain Babul, Convener of the district unit of Shainik League in the chair.

Sylhet City Corporation Mayor and city AL chief Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, general secretary Ahmed Misbahuddin Siraj, district AL chief ANM Shafique and General secretary Iftekhar Hossain shamim addressed the rally.

Caged fishery in open water Poor in Gaibandha meet protein deficiency

KM REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Altafunessa of Hasilkandi village in Shaghata upazila is among 1218 men and women who do not worry for protein needs. They have enough fishes for their families, thanks to the initiative by Practical Action (Bangladesh), an NGO, which trained them in open water fish culture in cages.

"I do not ask any body for fish when relatives visit my house. It is always available with me", said Altafunessa with a smile on her face.

"I have 10 such floating cages for rearing fish. I can also sell fish in market after meeting my family needs", she said.

Akbar Ali of the same village said many go to him for fish even at night. "I catch live fish from cages and give them. It is always ready with me".

The NGO has trained 1218 poor people in Gaibandha in caged fish farming in open water bodies and rivers. Almost half of the trained people are women and most of them are victims of erosion by Brahmaputra river.

More people are joining the teams of open water fish farmers, said Utpal Kumar Dutta, Senior Fisheries Technologist of Practical Action.

Gaibandha is a disaster prone district where river erosion and flood are common. Every year, a large number of people are displaced by river erosion that cause permanent loss of cultivable land and shelter as well.

Practical Action (Bangladesh) initiated livelihood programmes for erosion victims. It trains the erosion-affected people and gives financial assistance.

It started with two semi-closed water bodies, one stretching 20 acres in Bharardaha and Kanchipara in Fulchhari upazila and the other in Sreepur in Sunderganj upazila covering about 30 acres. Erosion victims are involved in community based fishery in the two water bodies and a roadside canal.

Practical Action Manager Gaibandha Ataur Rahman explained to this correspondent how the programme was implemented. The poor displaced people formed an association, contributing Tk 200 each. They cleared the water bodies and released several lakh fish fries in cages. That was all they had to do. The fries grew into big fishes.

The NGO trained the association members in 17 batches. About half of the trainees were women.

Seeing their success, poor erosion victims in Dhumaitari, Gaibandha Sadar and Shaghata upazilas also formed associations and started fish culture in the same method. A cage made with bamboo and net costs only around Tk 110 and it lasts about four years.

The beneficiaries are also cautious not to destroy fries in open water using current nets, Ataur Rahman said.

MURDER FOR DOWRY UNO's office besieged for arrest of killers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Several hundred people including students and teachers laid a siege to Raiganj Upazila Nirbahii Officer's office in Sirajganj yesterday protesting to the killing of young school teacher Shikha Khatun and demanding arrest of the killers.

The demonstrators brought out a procession in the upazila headquarters and held a rally in front of UNO office with Shamsul Huq in the chair.

The protesters besieged the UNO office for an hour from 10 am and submitted a memorandum to the UNO demanding immediate arrest and punishment to the killers.

Speakers at the rally said a tougher agitation will be launched if the killers are not arrested within two days.

Shikha, a computer teachers at Charpara High School, was murdered on May 4 allegedly by her husband for dowry, according to a case filed by her family.

Her husband Abu Taher, a teacher of Bramhagachha Primary School, is absconding since the murder, police said. He hailed from Bramhagachha village in Raiganj upazila.

Raised homesteads ease life

MOKHLESUR RAHMAN LITON, Kishoreganj

Fatema Akhter's family in Chatir Char Purba Para village in Kishoreganj haor (marshy) area will not leave home in the coming monsoon to take shelter on a high land.

She, unlike in previous years, will stay back with her domestic animals and fowls. They are now safe from turbulent sheets of haor water as their homesteads have been raised above the flood level.

Fatema is among 90 poor families in Niklee upazila whose homesteads have been raised by a local NGO, POPI (People Oriented Programme Implementation), with assistance from Oxfam, an international NGO.

They have also been provided with tubewells for safe water, sanitation facilities and micro credit for income generating activities like poultry, goat and cow rearing, fishing and small trade.

People of the area very poor. They do not have any work from June to October as fields go under 10 to 15 feet water.

During monsoon, they usually sell domestic animals and move to higher areas as most of the homesteads go under water. They return when the monsoon water subsides and rebuild their houses and erosion-affected homesteads.

Raising of homesteads by Oxfam has been of great help to them, they

said.

Anwara, 50, of the village said every year she had to sell her cows and ducks and leave home for about six months.

"We had to spend Tk 500 to Tk 1000 on house rent during monsoon. Now we got our own raised home where we can live permanently", she added.

Abdul Hakim said, "Though we remained half-fed, we had to rent a house for the monsoon period. Now the permanent shelter provided by POPI gives us the scope to have a stable life to be self-reliant".

Elderly Milon Begum said vegetables from the backyard, eggs from ducks and milk from cows meet their

daily needs. All these have been possible as her homestead has been raised, she said.

Milon Begum said her family used to rent a thatched house of a fisherman in the nearby village during monsoon.

Manik Chowdhury, Chairman of Chatir Char Union Parishad, said the 90 poor families in the village had become virtually homeless as their homesteads was eroded by waves. They are now rehabilitated.

The lone government primary school in the village, damaged by subsequent monsoons, can not be rebuilt for lack of a raised space. This correspondent also saw a teacher taking classes at an open place under the sky.

Morshed Alam Sirkar, Executive Director of POPI, said people in haor areas are the worst victims of natural disasters. "They can be properly rehabilitated only if their homesteads are raised above the flood level".

We have also lunched a programme to protect the raised homesteads from waves by planting Koras trees. Koras is a fast growing bushy tree which survives in deep water for more than four months, he said.

We supply saplings and ask the people to plant those around their homesteads to protect those from erosion, he said.

POPI has also built a raised filed in the village which is used as a weekly market place and a play ground for children.

Farid Hasan Ahmed, Program Co-ordinator of Oxfam, said they will raise more 200 homesteads in the area in next dry season.



PHOTO: STAR

Women making a case for open water fishery in Hasilkandi village in Saghata upazila in Gaibandha district.



PHOTO: STAR

Raised homesteads have brought a new life to haor people in Chatir Char village in Niklee upazila in Kishoreganj.