

Hawkers hostage to extortionists

Tk one crore paid in tolls every day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 200 extortionists under 25 godfather illegally collect tolls of about Tk. one crore every day from two lakh hawkers of the city from 25 different spots.

Alleging this leaders of Bangladesh Hawkers Federation, an apex body of the small traders and hawkers associations yesterday demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the 'identified' extortionists of the city at a press conference at the National Press Club yesterday.

Everyday about 200 identified extortionists under 25 godfather, in

the name of lineman take away major share of the income—in an average Tk 50 of the poor two lakh hawkers of the city who work very hard for their families, said Nurul Hossain Muroi, president of the Federation at the press conference.

He revealed the name of some 'identified' extortionists on the basis of newspaper reports and Federation's own findings, who collect Tk. one crore from the hawkers of the different parts of the city including Gulistan, Baitul Mokarram, Paltan, New Market, Farmget, Malibagh and Mouchak area.

He said at Gulistan area around

25 extortionists collect toll under the leadership of Sardar Waliullah Patwari Ledu Mia. Beside a Sardar, over 25 years Ledu Mia has been collecting toll from the Hawkets of the area.

He said though police arrested Ledu Mia in 92/93 as the hawkets of the area besieged Motijhil Thana, he again started extortion during the previous government and his activities are continuing.

Muslem Sikdar and Tamij collect toll from 10 'footpaths' of west side of Baitul Mokarram car parking, GPO and Paltan, Kadir and Khalil from the south gate of Baitul

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PHOTO: STAR

These hawkers, who have illegally occupied a stretch of the footpath at Purana Paltan, are also subject to extortion by organised gangs. Every day they have to pay a handsome amount to police as well to keep their business running.

Five killed in Rangamati tribal clash

UNB, Rangamati

A violent clash between two feuding tribal groups left five people killed and another ten wounded by bullets in Longadu Upazila of the hill district Sunday.

Police recovered the body of an attacker and over 150 cartridges from the spot.

The clash erupted when 20 to 25 cadres of the United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF), the anti-peace treaty group, tried to take control of Rangapanichhara area, some 110 kilometres off the district

headquarters, and the peace-treaty supporters resisted them.

Two supporters of the pro-peace treaty and three of the anti-peace treaty group died on the spot in the two-hour clash. Only two of the dead were identified -- Bir Kumar Chakma, 38, and Sukhomoy Chakma, 30.

On information, a police-army joint team raided the area and recovered the body of Sukhomoy. Police sent the body to the Sadar Hospital

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SHAZNEEN CASE

Hearing adjourned till Oct 1

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two of the accused in the Shazneen case -- Shaniram and Badal -- pretended to be asleep although the gruesome murder took place only yards away in the same house.

The second prosecution and father of the victim, Latifur Rahman, said this during cross-examination in the Second Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, yesterday.

Lawyers for Shaniram and Badal cross-examined him for about an hour.

Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah then adjourned the hearing till October 1.

The adjournment followed a time petition by the defence lawyers, as they did not get certified copies of the inquest report.

During the cross-examination, Latifur Rahman told the court that he had filed a murder case accusing Shahidul Islam alias Shahid (principal accused), but involvement of other accused persons was mentioned in the FIR of the case.

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Probe into BRAC primary textbook deal soon

STAR REPORT

The inquiry into the alleged irregularities in awarding BRAC the work to print primary-level textbooks without floating tender will be initiated on return of the education secretary, said State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon.

Education Secretary Mohammad Shahidul Alam is on a tour to the country's northwestern district of Rangpur.

"It has been revealed that the education secretary gave the order without informing the ministers," Milon told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said there is no such rules of business under which the secretary could give his nod to the deal without informing the ministers.

"Let the secretary come... maybe he knows other rules better...." the state minister said.

However, he added, it is now clear that the education minister did not know of the deal.

Milon earlier took up the matter with Education Minister Dr Osman Farruk. He also asked the secretary to investigate it and act against the officials concerned.

The education ministry on August 24 allowed BRAC, the country's leading NGO, to print 28 types of primary level textbooks for class III, IV and V for its non-formal schools and reduced the government royalty to 7.5 per cent from the conventional 15 per cent.

BRAC in a statement yesterday said a special permission was sought from the education ministry to print only the books it is in need of considering the scarcity of textbooks for its students.

The statement said BRAC, which purchases books from the government for its 11 lakh students in the 34,000 non-formal schools, sought the permission as the National Curriculum Textbook Board (NCTB) could not supply books in time.

BRAC placed an order for 13.61 lakh books and deposited Tk 24.62 lakh in advance.

However, supply of 28,000 books against a previous order was not made in time and according to a revised schedule, 13.89 lakh books were supposed to be delivered by June 2002, which did not take place, as well.

It said the NCTB was also not in a

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Meter must for three-wheelers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday made the use of fare meter mandatory for all three-wheelers, including the CNG-run ones.

In the absence of metering, three-wheeler drivers have been charging unrealistically high fares. Sometimes the city dwellers have to pay more than the fare the non-air-conditioned taxicabs charge.

As per the decision, the

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) would not issue route permit or registration to any three-wheelers without meters. Besides, the three-wheelers, both two- and four-stroke which are already plying the city roads, will have to install meters.

Three-wheelers without meters would be fined and the vehicles seized.

The communication ministry

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