

# The Daily Star

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## Deadline expires 80,000 arms deposited

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About 80,000 licensed firearms were deposited with police stations across the country till yesterday, sources said.

The deadline for surrender of such arms under a government order issued on November 5 expired last midnight.

According to official sources, there are 1,89,142 licensed arms in the country.

The arms not deposited are thought to be in possession of criminals or taken without following proper procedure.

Hundreds of people thronged the police stations across the country and stood in long queues for hours to surrender their arms on the last day.

In the city, most of the police stations saw heavy rush of arms depositors yesterday.

The government would go for tough action against those who did not surrender their arms till expiry of the deadline -- midnight. Licenses of those arms would also be cancelled, officials noted.

Police could not give the exact figure of deposited arms as surrender of those continued till late last night. But they said the highest

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## Case against 2 launches for violating weather signal

AKHTER FARUK SHAHIN, Barisal

Galachipa police in Patuakhali filed cases against two launches and arrested their two staffers yesterday on charge of violating weather cautionary signal.

With more than 100 passengers aboard, the MV Lupa-4 and the MV Rahat left the Galachipa terminal at 4.00pm Tuesday, defying the weather signal No. 7 for a cyclonic storm in the Bay of Bengal, said police.

The same day, a navy survey ship sank near the Kutubdia off-shore island in the cyclonic storm.

No official of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) was on duty at the terminal at the time, police added.

The launches left the river-port terminal without permission of the BIWTA, risking the lives of passengers, police said in the complaints.

The arrested launch staffers are Md. Masud of MV Lupa-4 and Jalil Gazi of MV Rahat.

Water transport is the main mode of communication in the southern region of the country. But launches, trawlers and mechanised boats lack safety equipment.

The MV Salauddin operating on the same route capsized in the Meghna on May 5 this year and the MV Subha sank in the Baleswar on May 24, killing more than 500 passengers.

### Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
10	16		5-16
11	17	4-52	5-16
12	18	4-52	5-15

### Sun Rises, Sun Sets

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Nov 16		5-13 pm
Nov 17	6-15 am	

### Prayer Timings

Nov 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-51	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-16	5-27
Esha	7-30	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

## 'Geological structure damaged' Bakhrabad gas production hits a critical low

SHARIER KHAN

Production in the Bakhrabad gasfield has slid down to 35mmcf from 240mmcf, as its geological structure was damaged due to wrong decisions in the 1990s.

Because of neglect by two subsequent governments, the Bakhrabad pipeline gas pressure fell to 500psi (pounds per square inch) from 1,000psi, while the gasfield pressure fell to around 800psi from 2,200psi, meaning the Bakhrabad pipeline system lost its compatibility with the rest in the country.

The Bakhrabad gasfield was primarily assessed to have 1.8 trillion cubic feet (TCF) gas. When it started producing up to 200mmcf gas through six wells in the late 1980s, an international consultant suggested that its production be cut down to a maximum of 180mmcf. The

consultant also reassessed the field's gas reserve at not more than 0.80TCF.

But soon after the BNP government came to power in 1991, Petrobangla was pressed to increase the production up to 240mmcf despite the expert warning.

The government's concern was to cater to KAFCO, a losing concern for Bangladesh and its gas sector alike.

To that end, two additional wells were hastily drilled in the same gas bed, which augmented production to 200mmcf to 240mmcf, said a source.

"When they started extracting gas in huge volume from the same gas bed, it created an unusual pressure on its geological structure. As a result, the internal gas

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## Maoists attack 2 towns, kill 56 Nepalese cops

### 50 rebels killed in fighting, official claim

AP, AFP, Katmandu

Maoist rebels fighting to topple Nepal's constitutional monarchy attacked two mountain towns, killing at least 56 policemen and soldiers in a setback to possible peace talks.

The Thursday night assaults came just hours after the deputy prime minister said that the government was working to start negotiations with the rebels.

The bodies of 30 policemen and three soldiers were recovered at Khalanga, a northwestern town where fighting began just before midnight and continued until daybreak yesterday, an army official said.

In a separate attack Thursday night in the northwest, rebels killed 23 policemen and injured 13 as they swarmed over a station in the town of Tarkokat, said a district official.

The two officials spoke on condition of anonymity.

At Khalanga, the attackers blew up and burned government buildings and the smoke made it difficult for rescue helicopters to land, said the army officer.

He said the casualty figures could be much higher, which may make it hard for the government to push for peace talks.

Though both sides have expressed willingness to talk, neither has made real progress toward negotiations and the military forces have continued their offensives.

Deputy Prime Minister Badri Prasad Mandal had said on Thursday that the government was working with human rights groups to establish contact with the rebels and start peace talks.

"It is the Maoists who need to respond positively. Violence will not get them anywhere," Mandal said. "The rebels need to agree to the talks and then we can set an agenda on what we need to discuss."

On Wednesday, the leader of the rebels, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, repeated his offer to hold peace talks. He made the offer after a three-day nationwide strike ordered by the rebels.

AFP adds: Dozens of people were killed yesterday when Maoist rebels mounted an offensive in two districts of rural Nepal as they pressed the government to agree to peace talks on their terms, officials said.

In the western district of Gurkha, the ancestral home of King Gyanendra, the guerrillas bombed a

### Nepal clashes



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PHOTO: STAR

Traffic jam and illegal parking are commonplace on the Mirpur Road in the New Market-Gauchhia area. Although the two nagging problems eased after the launch of the Operation Clean Heart, they bounced back with the army patrol having slackened in the area during Ramadan.

## 40 more listed criminals held, 19 arms recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army arrested 154 people including 40 'listed criminals' from different areas of the country and seized 19 firearms along with 30 bullets during the last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

In the city, police raided two houses in Pallabi area and arrested six alleged criminals including two 'listed' ones. Police recovered five pistols, three revolvers, 110 bullets and two magazines from their possession and also seized three

mobile phones.

A police team of Pallabi thana, led by Assistant Commissioner Mohammad Kamrul Ahsan and officer-in-charge Mohammad Nurul Amin, first raided a house at E-Block and arrested two 'listed criminals' AM Zaman Khan alias Asish and Mohamad Rakib alias Robi. Police recovered two unlicensed pistols along with 58 bullets from them. Zaman is accused in over 15 cases including three for murder, police said.

Acting on their statement, police

raided a house at C-Block in the area and arrested Mohammad alias Mohammad Ullah, Ahmed Ullah alias Jiban, Sujon and Raihan. Police recovered three revolvers and three pistols, all unlicensed, 52 bullets and three magazines from their possession.

Meanwhile a press release issued from the police headquarters in the city said police arrested 1,500 people including 13 'listed criminals' from different areas of the country in the last 24 hours. Police also recov-

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## Listed criminal murdered in Tejgaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tejgaon Police recovered the body of a listed criminal from Tejguri Bazar in the city's Tejgaon area yesterday evening.

The deceased was identified as Zubayer Rahman, son of Fazlul Haq,

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## Caught in vicious circle

NICOLE MEIER, back from JESSORE

Children of sex workers hardly have any chance to escape the psychologically choking condition in brothels. Most of them even engage in prostitution at a very early age. It is a vicious circle: Although several projects are there to educate and enable them to live a better life, no one can guarantee that they would never turn back to where they come from.

A narrow passage leads to a dimly lit backyard. The ground is slippery and a bad smell hangs in the air. The yard itself is surrounded by about two dozen cabins, poorly built of wooden laths and covered by reed and bricks. Mosquitoes swarm around an electric bulb -- the only source of light.

About 40 women work and live here, subjecting themselves to sexual abuse for Tk 20 to 50 a client. There is no kitchen, no bathroom -- the sex workers cook and take showers in the open. And so do their children. Many of the prostitutes have children from their clients. They spend the everyday life in this environment, observe exploitation of their mothers, and many ultimately resign themselves to the same exploitation.

This brothel is located in Jessore, but it could be anywhere in the country. Lots of women have a similar story to tell. A young sex worker says, "My family treated me badly, my husband hit me and I have been raped by criminals." Due to such abuse by relatives and other reasons like rapid urbanisation, extreme poverty and natural calamities, the number of sex workers rises continuously. According to different sources, there are up to two lakh prostitutes across the country.

There are newcomers like the young woman. On the other hand, there are children having hardly any chance to escape the environment they are in. They are caught in a vicious circle: growing up in a brothel means no education and no chance to build up relations with the world outside. Unlikely to find a normal work, they follow in their mother's footsteps.

According to a study by Save the Children Sweden on brothel children in Bangladesh, published last year, the children wise up to brothel life at a very early age. Small children help their mothers in household chores and bring refreshments for their mother's clients. After puberty, boys assume a more important role in domestic affairs since their mothers and sisters are busy with clients. In accordance with brothel conventions, most children have a fictive father who is often their mother's fixed client. Some of them can be caring towards their 'children', but others take advantage of their weakness and sexually abuse them.

Children in brothels spend much of their time with their peers. They have a few opportunities for fun. They become onlookers and sometimes take part in unsavoury adult activities, including dancing in front of shops for customers, sexual activity (consensual or

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PHOTO: STAR

NOWHERE TO GO: A child lazes about in isolation in a dilapidated kitchen of a brothel in Jessore. Born to a sex worker, he has no fun as such in his life. Nobody knows when he will be freed from the suffocating confines of the brothel and will see a larger world ahead for education or a better life. Maybe never.