

# Horror in Kawkhali hills

## 150 more flee to Ghagra: Singya Chakma recounts days in captivity

### No let up in UPDF terror

**MONIRUL ALAM, back from Ghagra (Kawkhali)**

**Rangamati:** More 150 indigenous people, terrorised by UPDF, fled homes in Kawkhali hill villages and have taken shelter at the Ghagra community centre.

The number of people at the centre rose to 450 on Saturday.

Fleeing homes, most of them kept hiding in deep forests for days and then reached the community centre, Bono Kumar Chakma, former member of Fatikchhari Union Parishad in Kawkhali told this correspondent during a visit to the community centre on Saturday.

They include families of Shanti Jibon Chakma, Sattya Kumar Chakma, Kobi Dhan Chakma, Singya Chakma and Kolpan Chakma of Panchhari and Dolupara villages in Ghagra union.

Most of the sheltered people are women and children, now facing crisis of food, medicine and other essentials.

Several hundred others who fled homes have taken shelter at relatives' houses in Ghagra and Rangamati town and many others are still hiding in dense forests, the victims said. Many indigenous young men have also moved to Chittagong in search of work, they said.

The UPDF (United Peoples Democratic Front) who oppose the CHT peace agreement

signed in 1997 during the rule of Awami League have created a reign of terror in the remote Kawkhali hills, known as Kalapahar. But the administration has taken no meaningful steps to contain them, they alleged.

They collect toll at random and abduct people for defiance, the victims said.

About 300 people of seven indigenous villages took refuge at the community centre about two week ago.

The indigenous people are leading a sub-human life at the centre. The administration gives one kilogram of rice and a small quantity of edible oil only to each family daily, which is too meager, they said. A doctor has been engaged there but there is lack of medicine.

Deputy Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs Moniswapon Dewan visited the centre on Tuesday and promised Tk 1000 grant for each family.

But the pledged money did not reach them till Saturday, the victims said.

"It will take time (to reach the money) because there are some official formalities", an official in the district administration said.

Singya Chakma, 34, reunited with his family at the Ghagra Community Centre on Wednesday, narrated a horrifying tale while in UPDF captivity.

He was abducted by armed UPDF activists as he refused to pay the toll demanded by them.

He was released on payment of Tk 15,000 and pledge to pay more Tk 35,000.

Singya Chakma suffering from acute pain from beating during nine days' captivity.

"About 100 to 150 armed men cordoned me in the Jhum field at around 3:30 pm and fired blank shots. I tried to run away but they caught me", Singya Chakma told this correspondent.

"They kicked me, tied my hands and abducted me blind-folded".

He said the abductors beat him during captivity as he did not pay them Tk 50000 demanded earlier.

"At last I sold my two cattle for Tk 15, 000 and paid them. They release me on a pledge that I would pay more Tk 35,000.

"But I do not know how I will pay them the amount", a terrified Singya said.

He survives by selling fire-wood and bamboo collected from forest and working on the Jhum land near his house.

"Most people in Dolupara and nearby villagers in Kawkhali upazila face being kidnapped or



PHOTO: STAR

Singya Chakma reunited with his family at Ghagra Community Centre

killd for non-payment of toll demanded by UPDF men", Singya Chakma said.

The area is a stronghold of UPDF for long, he said.

Former member of Fatikchhari Union Parishad in Kawkhali upazila Bono Kumar Chakma said, "The (toll) amount doubles if the deadline expires

"If refused, they (gunrunners) take away the targeted man at gunpoint, storm his house and later kill him to create fear among others", he said.

The gunrunners demanded Tk three lakh from 80 families in

Dolupara, Tk one lakh from Bono Kumar Chakma and Tk two lakh from Buddhmoni Karbary (village leader), the former UP member said.

The gunmen also threatened Buddhmoni that his son Sushil Chakma would be kidnapped even after toll payment.

"They threatened that I have to hand over my son to them (gunmen) even after payment of the amount they demands", sideways standing Buddhmoni said with a vacant look.

"As a father can I do so?" Buddha said.

# Silent shuttles keep weavers hungry

## 50,000 flood-damaged handlooms in Tangail cannot be reactivated for want of loan

**JAHANGIR ALAM, back from Tangail**

Netrakona: The shuttles are still silent. Weavers ponder how to reactivate those.

This is the scene in most weavers' villages in Tangail, a district known for handloom products.

The poor weavers said they do not have capital to repair the flood-damaged handlooms and buy yarn and other raw materials. Most of then said they ate up the capital for survival during the recent deluge for a month and a half.

The floods silenced about 50,000 weaving factories in Kalihati, Delduar, Ghatail, Nagorpur and Madhupur upazilas as most areas there were inundated. Kalihati and Delduar upazilas were the worst affected.

Weaving is the main profession of most of the people in Balla, Singir, Behulabari, Kazibari, Borotiabari, Momin Nagar and Khasia villages in Bala union; Kokdhrum, Tenguria, Utrail and Dandagram in Kokdhora union; Nagbari, Kadim, Khasila, Gachina, Tajpur, Birpukutia and Borobari in Nagbari union; Koloha, Ruayel and Satihati in Paikura union and Akua and Chamuria villages in Sadebpur union in Kalihati upazila.

During a recent visit to the areas, weavers said about 80 per cent handlooms in the area, which were closed due to stagnant floodwater, are yet to be reactivated. The number would be around 30,000, they estimated.

Same is the condition of about 20,000 handlooms in Ghatail, Nagorpur, Delduar and Modhupur upazilas.

Some sources estimated the weavers' total loss at around Tk one crore.

The factories can not be re-opened as equipment like 'Tana' and 'Zu' have been damaged and lack of capital to buy raw materials.

As most of the people in these upazilas depend on weaving, they have been exposed to utter misery. Small weavers having no land are hard-hit.

Amena Begum of Gunipara village in Nagarpur upazila said she has five handlooms. She produced gamcha, lungi, and bedsheet and maintained her family.

The flood damaged her five handlooms. She has not work now.

She went to different banks for loan but did not get.

Fatema Khatun of Ghatail has six handlooms. She sold a small land and is trying to start the business. She could not manage loan from any bank or NGO.

There are many like Amena and Fatema in the villages.

They said NGOs like Karitas, World Vision and BRAC do not give them any loan. World Vision officials however told this correspondent that they are examining the possibility of giving loan to flood affected weavers.

Many weavers said they applied to the Handloom Board for loan, but did not get any reply.



PHOTO: STAR

With the money from sale of land, Fatima is mending her looms to start life anew.

## SNAPS

### 6 drug peddlers held

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria**

Brahmanbaria police, during raids under its Operation Durber Saturday night arrested six alleged heroin paddlers from different areas of the pourasbha.

The raids were led by Sadar thana OC Md Ismail.

The arrested persons are Abdul Hannan of Kalaisripara, Noor Mia of Paertala South, Samim Mia of Bha Dughar, Kawsar Mia of Bhadughar, Sapur Mia of Sarkerpara and Md Jahar Mia of Khairsar areas.

They were produced before court yesterday. The court sent them to jail, police said.

### Arms dealer held

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

Rab on Saturday arrested illegal arms seller Mohammad Rubaiyah Hasnan Rupom, 24 from in front of Siddiquia Madrasse under Sonadanga thana and recovered four bullets from him.

Rupom members went to him in the guise of arms buyers to purchase a revolver, police said.

In another raid Sonadanga police arrested two extortionists from Gobarchaka area on the same day. They are Kamal Talukder and Milon Shaikh.

They were held when they attempted to realise Tk 3,000 toll from a businessman-- Shohag Ahmed. They also face several criminal cases, police said.

## 6 Jubo Dal men held for occupying shrimp farm

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

President of Dumuria upazila unit of Jubo Dal Molla Monirul Islam and five other activists of the party were arrested on Saturday on charge of illegal occupation of a shrimp enclosure in Shovna union.

The five others are Kamrul Islam, Zaminur Shaikh, Zillur Rahman, Rezaul Islam and Waliur Rahman.

According to police, the Jubo Dal leader and his supporters went to the shrimp enclosure and drove away the caretaker and other employees at gunpoint.

On receipt of information police rushed there and caught them.

Four others escaped during raid. Dumuria thana Officer-in-

Charge Abu Hena said the shrimp enclosure was so long under illegal possession of Monoranjon Goshai alias Mrinal, slain leader of outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP).

Meanwhile, special drives by police are continuing in all upazilas of Khulna district to nab cadres of NBCP and recover illegal arms. The drives were launched on Wednesday.

Till 4 pm on Saturday, 56 people were picked up from Dumuria, Batiaghate and Paikgacha upazilas of Khulna district. But none of them were identified as NBCP cadre.

Locals in these areas have accused police of doing excesses including storming into houses of innocent people during raids.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League central leader Asaduzzaman Nur distributed CI sheets among tornado affected people of Khokshabari village in Nilphamari on Saturday.

### Sweetwater fishes netted in Bay

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal**

In a rare phenomenon, fishermen in Kuakata coastal areas are having good catches of sweet water fishes in shallow waters of the Bay for the last 4-5 days.

Fishes like Ruhi, Katla, Pangas and small varieties of fishes are being netted.

Rahim Khan, owner of a whole sale fish market in Kuakata, said these sweet water fishes are available along with Hilsa.

Fisherman Rafiqul said due to availability of good quantities of sweet water fishes, fishermen now go to the shallow coastal waters with very thin current nets or mosquito nets and are having good catches.

They said these fishes, cultivated by farmers in waterbodies, have flown into the sea along with the floodwater that inundated hundreds of ponds in the south western districts. Fishes of rivers and canals have also drifted to the sea in the receding floodwater.

## Launch dacioty at 3 spots on the same day

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal**

Gangs of armed dacoits looted launch passengers at three terminals in Sarbahara-prone Babuganj upazila in the district early morning Saturday.

Ten of the passengers were injured when beaten by dacoits.

Police said double-decker MV Rajdoot from Dhaka on its way to Hularhut in Pirojpur distinct touched Bhangarmukh at 3-00 am, Rahimganj at 3-30 and Baherchar at about 4 am morning.

Dacoits were waiting at the three terminals. As the passengers

alighted, they beat them looted all belongs.

On an average, 30 to 35 passengers alighted at each station.

Police and other sources said the dacoits looted at least Tk 4 lakh in cash and valuables.

The dacoits left the places safely by trawlers.

When contacted, Babuganj thana OC Md. Salehin admitted the incidents. He said he visited the spots. But no case was filed.

Local people claimed that the dacoits were members of outlawed Sarbahara Party.

## 5x2



PHOTO: STAR

Dr M A Hadi, Vice Chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and President of Bangladesh Medical Association addressing a discussion on 'Improvement of Medical Service in Mymensingh' held at Mymensingh Press Club on Thursday. It was arranged by local Reporters Unity.

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphaman**

Syedpur Jubo League, youth front of opposition Awami League, brought out processions in the town yesterday and the day before demanding release of its upazila joint-convenor Joynal Abedin Liton, arrested on Friday on charge of threatening to bomb and blow up Syedpur thana.

Syedpur Sadar thana police said they received a posted letter on September 19 which said the police station will be blown up on the holy night of Shab-e-Barat. The letter written in English bore the name of one Shibli Hasan of old Babupara area in the town as the sender.

After getting the letter, police conducted a search but did not find any one in the address. After investigation, they arrested Joinal Abedin Liton as the prime suspect, police said.

Jubo League leaders and Liton's family refuted the allegation and said he was arrested out of "conspiracy".

## Kidnapped men not rescued in 10 days

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore**

An official of a private commercial firm in Dhaka, kidnapped from Khajura bus stand in Jessore town ten days ago is jey to be rescued.

Ashrafur Islam Mintu, son of Reazul Haque and a resident of North Shahjahanpur in Dhaka alighted from a bus from Dhaka at about 10 am. He hired a rickshaw to go to his father-in-law's house at Kholadanga village on the outskirts of the town.

When his rickshaw reached near the gate of Dr Abdur Razzaque Municipal College, some armed people stopped him on gunpoint and kidnapped him.

The abductors used Mintu's cell phone (No. 0171043816) and demanded Tk 1, 50, 000 as ransom to his wife Polly (cell phone No. 0171346329).

The victim's father-in-law lodged a case with the Kotwali police. But Minto is yet to be rescued. Police said they are trying but failed to find any clue.

## 12x2