

## Rab preparing list of hoarders, smugglers for crackdown

NURUL ALAM

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) is preparing a list of smugglers, hoarders and syndicates of unscrupulous traders operating in the port city to launch a major crackdown on them, officials said.

"The process is now underway to prepare the list of the identified hoarders and smugglers who create artificial crisis in the markets as well as economy. We are collecting information and proper evidence about them," said Rab Commander Lt Col Kazi Emdadul Huq.

"We will clamp down on them after a green signal from the higher authority in this regard," he added. "We are keeping watch over the identified smugglers and hoarders," he said.

"Already we have prepared a list

of 30 identified smugglers operating in Chittagong. Some of them went into hiding to avoid arrest during our raid," he said.

Meanwhile, Rab members arrested one Shafiqur Rahman alias Haji Shafi on charge of his involvement in smuggling from Khulshi posh residential area in September and recovered huge foreign currency, several passports and credit cards from his possession.

He was shown arrested in the sensational 10 truckloads of arms smuggling case.

Haji Shafi was taken to Dhaka for joint interrogation before sending him to jail here.

But he was released from jail on bail.

Rab team raided Khatunganj against the backdrop of price hike of onions and other essentials in middle of October.

Rab also raided the kitchen market at Reazuddin Bazar located in the heart of the city.

Rab forced the shop owners at Khatunganj to sell onion at Tk 15 per kg and asked them not to create any artificial crisis in the market that cause suffering to the public.

The businessmen of Khatunganj and Chaktai enforced a day-long strike by keeping the shutters of their shops down and staged demonstrations protesting the Rab raids.

Market sources said some hoarders went into hiding fearing arrest during the raids and the businessmen demanded government intervention to stop the raids by Rab.

The Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) leaders led by its President Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury held a meeting with the leaders of

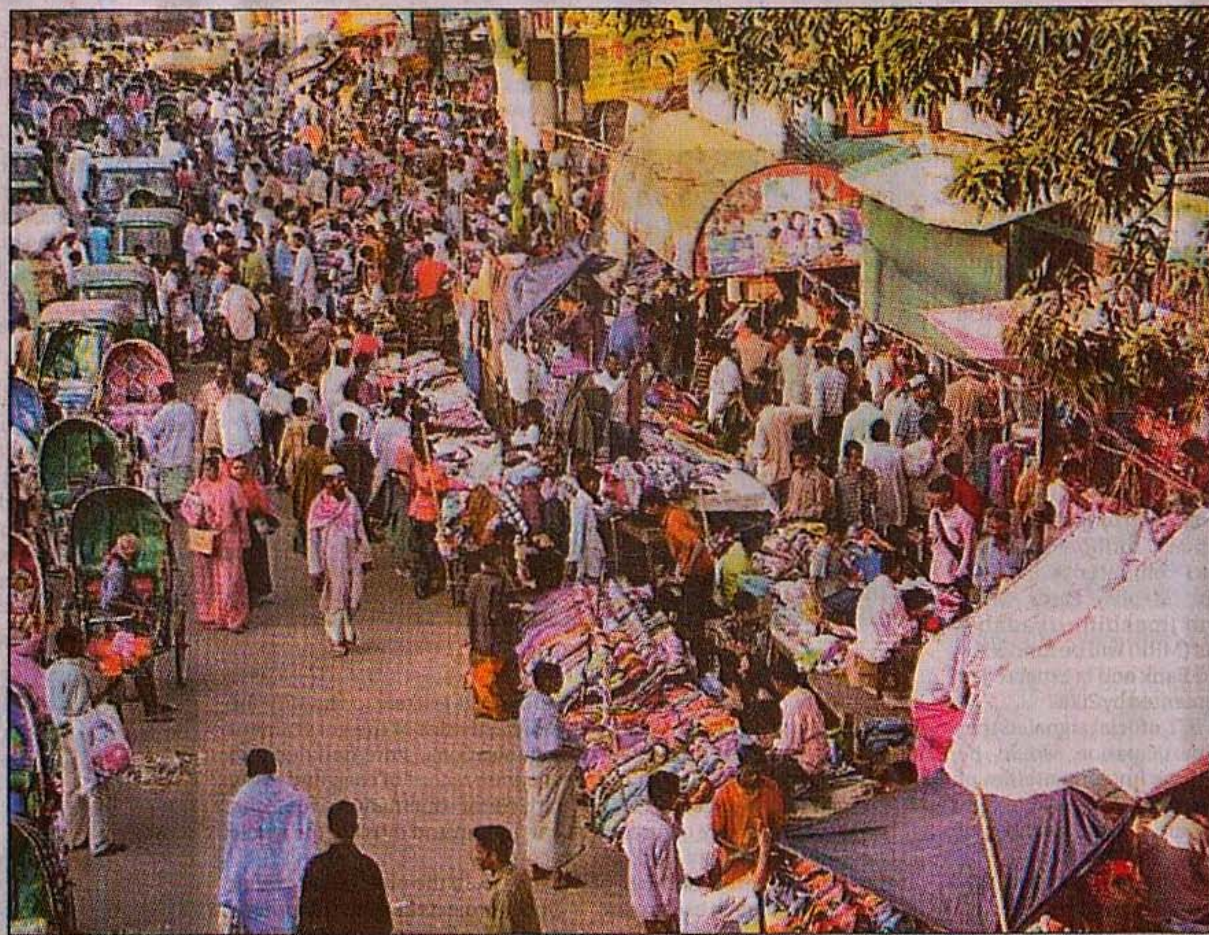
Khatunganj and Chaktai business community to break the stalemate.

CCCI leaders also held a meeting with Rab requesting them not to launch further raid on the kitchen markets without consulting them.

CCCI leaders also assured the businessmen of Khatunganj and Chaktai of no fresh raid by Rab and urged them to resume their business activities to restore normalcy in the markets.

CCCI president told The Daily Star that by launching Rab raids on the markets price spiral of essentials could not be brought under control. He said price hike occurred following mishandling of the imported goods at different levels before reaching the retailers.

"There is a market mechanism to control the prices of essentials," he added.



ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIDKOR

Hawkers occupy most of the roads stretching from New Market to Reazuddin Bazar once again. They were evicted from footpaths of the roads to facilitate traffic and public movement just on the eve of Ramadan. They, however, managed to return reportedly in connivance with a section of dishonest officials. The hawkers now have not only occupied the footpaths but also roads at the very outset of the Eid shopping causing serious traffic jam and immense sufferings to shoppers.

## Eid shoppers are yet to go in full swing



Eid shoppers coming out of a posh shopping mall in the city.

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN RIAD

Eid shopping in the port city is gaining momentum as the buyers have started crowding the markets to purchase their new clothes on the occasion of holy Eid-ul-Fitr, the largest religious festival of Muslims.

The posh shopping malls in the city are being busy day by day, but the markets for middle and lower income groups are yet to gain momentum.

Shopkeepers said that common people would pour into the market after Ramadan 20.

"The number of buyers are not satisfactory till date but I think the scenario will change within days as the employees are likely to get their monthly salary as well as Eid bonus," Sohel, a hawker who sells garments at Agrabad Commercial Area, said on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the shopping malls in the city were illuminated and colourfully decorated with the beginning of Ramadan to attract customers.

Posh city markets and shopping malls already were a busy look and it continues till mid-night as thousands of shoppers are thronging the markets to purchase new dresses and other household materials before Eid.

On the other hand, the shopkeepers are on the final race to enrich their collections to meet the buyers' demand.

Indian garments are available at all the posh markets, including New Market, Amin Centre, Central Plaza, Lucky Plaza, Mimi Super Market and Chittagong Shopping Complex. "Mainly Indian saris, three piece, salwar kameez and clothes for kids are the attraction of the buyers," Mamun, a shopkeeper at Chittagong Shopping complex, said.

Shahnaz Chowdhury Boby, a housewife, at Teribazar market on Saturday told this correspondent that Indian three pieces and saris flooded the market. "But the price is too high for the middle and lower income people this year," she added.

**The shopping malls in the city were illuminated and colourfully decorated at the beginning of Ramadan to attract shoppers. Indian garments are favourite to Eid shoppers**

The Eid dress exhibition and Eid Fair is another attraction for the middle class. 'Bindu', a new fashion house only for the women, has arranged a two-day exhibition on 'women's dress and ornament' on the local Shilpakala academy premises on Saturday.

Designer Suraiya Akhter Ripa, also owner of Bindu, said that the exhibition ended with positive feedback from the middle class people.

On the other hand, a 20-day long WE Eid Fair began at Bangladesh Women Association (BWA) school ground. Women Entrepreneurs, Chittagong organised the fair. Around 50 stalls of clothes and other household materials, including saris, panjabees, bags and ornaments, were set up at the fair valley.

'Eid Pannaay Mela' began at many shopping malls and the markets announced prizes to draw attention of the customers.

Local saris are being sold at the markets for middle class

between Tk 400 and 2000, "Jardashi saree" at Tk 4000 and Devdas saree between Tk 1500 and 2800. Besides, three pieces for young girls are selling between Tk 450 and 1800.

Many crowded the boutique houses that opened at different city points particularly at the residential areas to promote their Eid sale.

Meanwhile, the authorities concerned could not ensure proper security measures to the shopper. Incident of mugging has increased at an alarming rate ahead of the Eid. At least 15 such incidents have so far been reported in the city since the Ramadan began. Many other incidents remained unreported.

Chittagong Metropolitan Police have deployed only 1500 forces at different points in the city to check public hazard. But the number of police inadequate against 40 lakh city dwellers.

## the week that was

### Sit-in for water

The inhabitants of Halishahar Housing Estate, reeling under acute water crisis, took to the streets on Saturday and stage a sit-in in front of the WASA building at Dampara in Chittagong for restoration of water supply.

People with empty pitcher and jug paraded different city streets from Halishahar to Dampara, agitated in front of WASA office and dismantled few earthen pitchers protesting scarcity of water in the area for long.

During four-hour agitation, they also submitted a memorandum to the WASA Chief Engineer demanding immediate supply of water. They withdrew the sit-in after the officials assured them of resolving the problem shortly.

### BGMEA Cell at Shah Amanat Airport

Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) set up a cell at Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport on Thursday to cooperate the garment owners and foreign buyers.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin inaugurated the cell at a simple cere-

mony on the airport premises. BGMEA and Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) leaders and business personalities were present.

BGMEA First Vice President MA Salam presided. CCCI President Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury, Directors SM Nurul Haq, Helaluddin Chowdhury and Chairman of BGMEA Standing Committee on Airport Cell Abdul Gaffar Swapan also spoke.

"The cell will provide foreign buyers with necessary information on readymade garments on their arrival and departure at the airport," the speakers said.

### 3 Wellmart staffs robbed of Tk 3.5 lakh

Three staffs of Wellmart were robbed of Tk 3.5 lakh in broad daylight at the GEC Intersection area in the city on Saturday.

Neither the money recovered nor the culprits were arrested till Monday.

The incident occurred at around 1.15pm when General Manager Badrul Hasan, Chief Accounts Officer Anup Kumar Das and Accounts Officer Biswajit Roy, of Wellmart were going to National Credit and Commerce Bank Limited (NCCCL) near the Super Store to deposit Tk 4 lakh.

Wellmart Chief Executive Officer

(CEO) Shafiqul Alam Jewel said, as soon as account officer Biswajit crossed island of the road, one of the armed miscreants approached him from inside a CNG auto-rickshaw standing on the eastern part of the road. At the same time, three other criminals appeared close to GM Badrul and Chief Account Officer Anup.

"Sensing danger, Biswajit threw the money-laden packet towards Badrul and Anup but the packet tore apart suddenly, and the money got scattered on the road.

"At this stage, the criminals including the CNG driver joined together to pick the scattered money and whisked

away on board the auto-rickshaw. And all these happened in front of the passers-by and commuters but none came forward to aid," Jewel said.

He said Khulshi police arrived the spot just few yards away of my shop after 15 minutes and made a futile chase to another auto-rickshaw.

### New fashion house opens

A two-day colourful exhibition on fashion, dress and ornaments was held on Saturday and Sunday on the Shilpakala

Academy premises in the city.

The exhibition also marked the formal launching of Bindu, a new fashion house, a brainchild of promising designer Suraiya Akhter Ripa.

Ahmed Newaj, former teacher of Chittagong Fine Arts College and convener of Charu-Shilpi Sammilan Parishad, inaugurated the exhibition as chief guest on Saturday.

He lauded the very creative psyche and aesthetic sense of Reepa in designing saree, three-piece and salwar-kameez.

"Her boutique works on cottons and artistry on terracotta ornaments added extra dimension to her forte," Ahmed Newaj said.

The two-day show drew huge visitors.

### NGOs can play vital role in poverty cut

Chittagong University Vice Chancellor Professor AJM Nooruddin Chowdhury said that non-government organisations could play a pivotal role in the social development and poverty eradication of the country.

He was speaking as chief guest at a reception ceremony organised by Chittagong Foundation Trust to its

life members at a city hotel on Saturday.

Trust Chairman Iskander Ali Chowdhury presided over the function. Vice Chancellor of Premier University Prof Anwarul Azim Arif, Trust Secretary General Sirajul Karim Manik and Mohammed Golam Faruk also addressed function.

We have to make best use of our own resources to cope up with the challenges of globalisation, the speakers said.

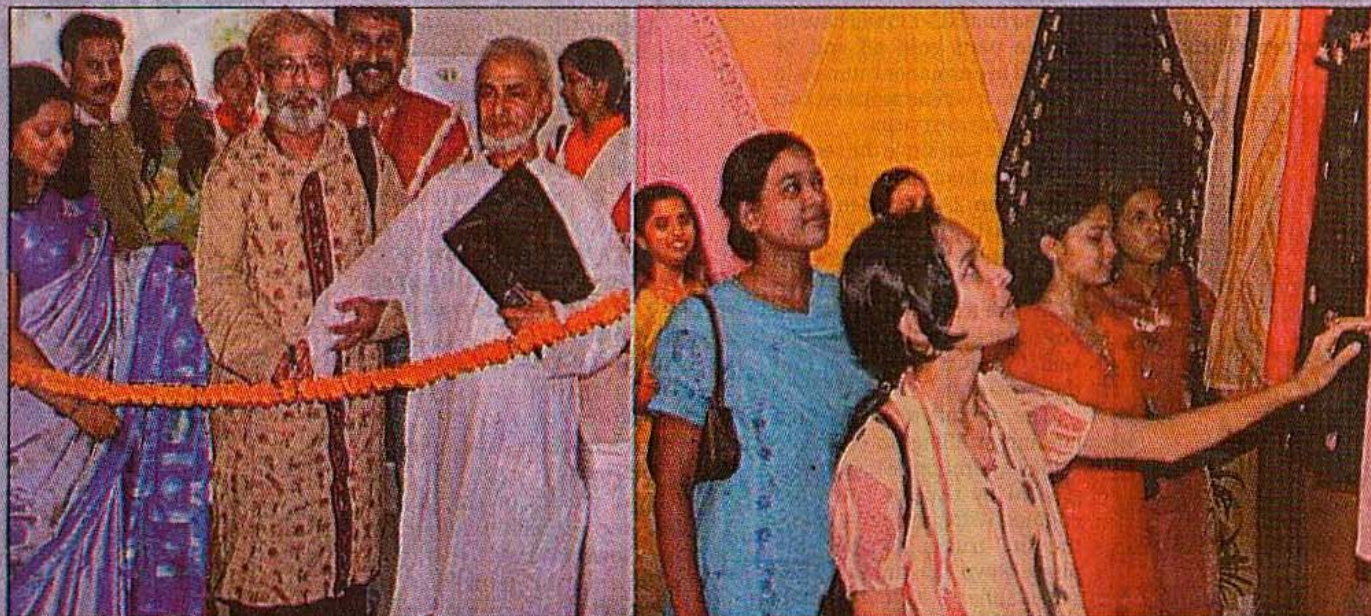
### 36th anniversary of Udichi observed

Udichi Chittagong observed its 36th anniversary on Friday.

To observe the day it organised different programmes including discussion, recitation of poems and cultural function at its office.

Organisation President Prof Abul Mansur chaired the discussion. Central Vice President Dr Chandan Das, noted writer Subhash Dey, artist Joy Sen and Udichi leader Sunil Dhar also spoke at the function.

Imrul Kees, Dipak Datta, Pradip Barua, Shanta Talapatra and Joyatee Ghosh recited poems while singer Irin Saha, Shila Das Gupta, Gargi Sen, Mitali Roy, Antara Dey and Snigdha Chowdhury rendered songs.



STAR PHOTO

Artiste Ahmed Newaj, inaugurated a two-day garments exhibition at Chittagong Shilpakala Academy on Saturday (left). Bindu, a local fashion house, organised the exhibition. Women visitors, at the exhibition (right).