

RISING CRIMES IN CHUADANGA, KUSHTIA AND JHENIDAH

# Fresh drive against 500 criminals, godfathers

AMANUR AMAN, back from Chuadanga

Law enforcing agencies have prepared a fresh list of 500 'criminals' and their 'godfathers' in three southwestern districts of Chuadanga, Kushtia and Jhenidah and started a fresh operation to nab them.

The 'godfathers' include at least 30 leaders of two parties in the ruling coalition, according to top police officials in the districts.

"All out steps have been taken to check criminal activities in the region and we are hoping success," one of them based in Khulna told this correspondent over telephone seeking anonymity.

This is the third major anti-crime drive in the area since the coalition government took over in 2001.

The drive has been launched against the backdrop of slide in law and order in the crime prone zone,

they admitted.

Earlier drives under Operation Clean Heart and Operation Spider Web failed to make any significant improvement in the situation as most of the top criminals and ring leaders of outlaws cut through the dragnets, mainly due to information leak, allegedly by sections of policemen having links with them.

"Some hardened criminals on the lists were killed in encounter with law enforcers, 133 were arrested and 15 firearms recovered in the on-going drive", he said. Of the dead, four were in Chuadanga and one in each Kushtia and Jhenidah.

The anti-crime drive will be successful this time as it is being launched jointly by police, Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) and Cobra, they said.

At least 28 persons were murdered by criminals last month—eight in Kushtia, 13 in Chuadanga and seven in Jhenidah.

The police officials said some leaders of major political parties are involved with various criminal gangs including outlawed parties in the three districts.

These political leaders use criminals to establish supremacy in their areas and in vote rigging. It is an old tradition in the region, they said.

"The situation will not improve overnight," said a high police official in Chuadanga.

According to police sources, at least 10 outlawed parties with 1000 armed cadres grouped in 30 gangs are active in three districts. About 40 lakh people in three districts are hostage to them.

Fifteen ringleaders control the armed cadres who possess about 10,000 illegal firearms, according to sources in intelligence agencies.

The parties are Biplobi Communist Party (BCP), New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP), Banglar

Communist Party (BCP-Laltu) Gono Mukti Foj (GMF), Biplobi Anuragi (BA), Bangladesher Socialist Party (BSP), Jashod Gono Bahini (JGB) and three factions of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML, PBCP-Janajuddho and PBCP-Red Flag).

The three factions of PBCP are active in 10 districts in the region, while activities of BCP and BCP-Laltu are limited to Chuadanga only. BCP, NBCP, GMF and JGB are active in Kushtia.

According to intelligence agencies, 117 'criminals' were killed in encounter with police and Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) in last one year from June 2004 to May 31 this year. Of them, 69 were killed in Kushtia, 36 in Chuadanga and 12 in Jhenidah.

Most of those killed had records of extortion, robbery and abduction for ransom, an official in Khulna said.



PHOTO: RAFIQUE SARKER

PLEASANT PLAY: Children at a pond in Rangpur frisking to have a relief from scorching heat.

## 'Khulna leaders helped 2 top criminals flee country'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two influential local leaders including an MP of a coalition partner helped 'most wanted and notorious criminals' Moyeen Joarder and Wazed Alam flee the country to evade arrest by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

The two criminals never missed any opportunity to establish links with political parties that ruled the country since 1981.

Highly placed sources in police said the two leaders provided them with all support including money to go abroad, which is also known to intelligence agencies.

"Of course, these two top local (political) leaders have been named as godfathers in the fresh list made by police for legal action when time will come", a police official said.

According to the list made by Khulna Metropolitan police, Moyeen Joarder is a 'dreaded extremist' linked with PBCP Janajuddho faction and a 'professional bomber'.

A resident of Sher-e-Bangla Road in Khulna city, Moyeen Joarder came to the limelight after the murder of Chhatra Dal central vice-president Wahiduzzaman Chanchal on the night of October 18, 1998. He was the prime chargesheeted accused in this murder case. Besides, he is a FIR-named accused in six murder cases and some other cases filed under the Explosives Act with Khulna and Sonadanga police stations.

Wazed Alam, hailing from West Baniakhmar area in the city, is wanted in 14 criminal cases including four for murders, three for attempts to murder, two for robbery and one for a case filed under the Explosives Act. The cases were filed with Khulna and Sonadanga thanas.

When contacted, KMP Deputy Commissioner Akbar Ali told this correspondent that both the most wanted terrorists fled the country last year.

"I have information that Moyeen Joarder and Wazed Alam are in Malaysia and South Africa respectively". He further claimed that the two sent abroad under special arrangement could be brought back to Khulna on the eve of next parliamentary election.

4x3

6x3

SNAPS

## Tension mounts as 241 workers fired in Mongla EPZ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Tension mounted in Mongla Export Processing Zone yesterday following retrenchment of 241 workers and imposition of some conditions by BEPZA in importing raw materials. Sources said there are eight betel-nut processing factories in Mongla EPZ, dependent on imported raw materials. Last month, the BEPZA Authority imposed some conditions for raw materials import, which were rejected by owners of betel-nut factories. On Wednesday, 241 workers of Bangladesh Betel-nut Growers' & Processors Private Limited and Golden Agro Products Ltd in were retrenched. The two, along with six others were closed on Thursday for want of raw material. Owners of these factories blamed BEPZA for this. The workers retrenched without any prior notice are planning agitation for reinstatement, sources at the Mongla EPZ said.

## JCD, Shibir close ranks at Barisal medical college

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The Academic Council of Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College held a meeting with leaders Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Islami Chhatra Dal (ICS) yesterday, a day after the two student fronts of ruling coalition partners clashed at Habibur Rahman Hall on the campus, leaving 15 injured. All academic activities were held at the college as usual yesterday. Sources on the campus said the JCD and ICS activists closed their ranks in the interest of retaining the coalition. It also formed a three-member committee headed by Physiology Department Chairman, Dr. Nazmul Hossain to probe the incident. It has been asked to submit a report by ten days, sources said.

## BDR chief visits Rangamati border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Director General Jahangir Alam Choudhury yesterday visited Harina in Borkol upazila, bordering India's Mizoram state, and held talks with BDR commanders and troops. Army sources said the BDR DG asked the law enforcers to check cross-border smuggling and movement of criminals. He left Rangamati in the evening for Bandarban, where he is scheduled to visit Bangladesh frontiers along Myanmar and Bangladesh.



STAR FILE PHOTO

A blowout and fire forced about 10,000 people to leave homes from around Tengratila Gas field in January last year.

TENGRATILA GAS FILED IN SUNAMGANJ

# Villagers leaving area as relief well drilling begins

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Panic gripped the people again in villages around Tengratila Gas Field in Doarabazar upazila in Sunamganj since start of drilling of a relief well there on Wednesday.

Asked reportedly by the drilling company, more 20 families have left homesteads for safety. Earlier, 57 families had to leave homes.

Canadian company Nico this time entrusted a US company Parker-- for drilling the relief well.

Talking to this correspondent during a visit to the area on Friday, local Union Parishad Chairman Amirul Haque said, "We do not know what will happen this time. About 10,000 people had to leave homes all of a sudden on the night

of January 7 when a massive blowout in the gas field caused a disastrous fire.

The authorities this time also marked 37 tube wells in adjacent villages and asked people not to use those. This has been done as gas was oozing out from the tube wells for the last few months without any pressure.

The January 7 blowout and fire forced at least 10,000 people to leave homes for safer places. A high level committee headed by the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Energy & Mineral Resources probed the matter.

"Flaws in drilling plan and negligence by Nico and state-run exploration company Bapex were responsible for the accident", its

probe report said. A Nico official contacted by this correspondent on Saturday however said they do not apprehend any thing wrong this time.

"The relief well is being drilled to seal the main well", he said. The January 7 blowout took place when drilling was going on at a depth of 466 metres, he said. Directional drilling of the relief well is progressing well and we hope to complete the job within the targeted period of 45 to 60 days, the official said.

After sealing the burnt out well, the company will go ahead with its original plan for drilling three production wells in the same gas field, the official said.

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## 'Conserve ecology or face disaster'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The World Environment Day was observed in Rangpur yesterday through various programmes organised by different socio-cultural organisations.

Health Education and Agriculture Development Society (HEADS) and RDSS, both NGOs, jointly organised a seminar at the RDSS auditorium.

The country will face an environmental and ecological disaster if proper attention is not given right now to check pollution and conserve the environment, the seminar was told.

School and college teachers, local environmentalists and cultural activists attended the daylong seminar. Rangpur Nagorik Odhikar Jote, patronised by Nagorik Uddog, also held some programmes in the town. It brought out a colorful rally with a slogan: "Friendly Environment is Human Right."



PHOTO STAR

Rangpur Jubo Nagorik Adhikar Jote brought out a procession in the town yesterday in observance of the World Environment Day, 2005.

NILPHAMARI-3 JS SEAT

# Jaldhaka JP divided over candidature of Ershad's sister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Jatiya Party candidature in Nilphamari-3 constituency in the next parliamentary election was the cause behind Friday's clash between rival JP factions in Jaldhaka, party insiders told this correspondent yesterday.

Ten people were injured in the clash.

Tension is still high as the factions may lock horns any moment over the issue, they said. Initiatives by local leaders in the last two days to close their ranks yielded no result so far, they said.

A party meeting was called on Friday, apparently to form a new upazila committee. But the real motive was to secure support for candidature of former Upazila Chairman Rashidul Alam Chowdhury in the constituency (Jaldhaka and part of Kishoreganj).

Ershad's sister Marina Rahman is also an aspirant there, party sources said.

Jaldhaka Jatiya Party is divided into two groups, one led by Rashidul Alam Chowdhury and the other by Marina.

A new upazila committee was formed at the meeting called by Rashidul. It was rejected by the

faction led Marina.

After the meeting, a procession was brought out in the town. It was led by Rashidul, Abdul Kader Bulu, Dabir Huda and Abdul Gafur, belonging to rashidul's group. It was interrupted by rivals led by Tofael Ahmed Powel, Nural Islam Puti, Azahar and Mizanur belonging to Marina's group.

Police intervened and brought the situation under control. They recovered some lethal weapon from the spot but none was arrested till yesterday.

Local JP leaders belonging to Marina group talking to this correspondent said Rashidul Alam Chowdhury contested from Nilphamari-3 constituency in 1996 and 2001. But he failed though Jaldhaka was a stronghold of the party. Marina could easily bag the seat, they claimed.

Her husband, former Vice-chancellor of Mymensingh Agriculture University Dr Asadur Rahman was elected MP twice from Nilphamari-4 constituency as a JP candidate, they further said.

On the other hand, Rashidul group claims that Rashidul Alam Chowdhury led the party during bad days. So he deserves party nomination in the next parliament poll.

They also said Marina Rahman is an 'outsider' in the area.

6x3