

## 272 fugitives 'control' Khulna underworld

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

Khulna city underworld is being "controlled" by 272 fugitives. All of them are convicted for different offences but they are evading arrest by police and Rab, mostly under political influence.

Most of these fugitives are involved in heinous crimes including murder and extortion being linked with underground parties and blessed by a section of influential politicians and policemen.

According to reliable sources, most of these fugitives were either directly involved in murders of political leaders, policemen and journalists or played vital role from behind the scene.

Network of these fugitives is stronger than that of intelligence agencies to escape action and arrest by law enforcers.

These fugitives include extremists, abductors, smugglers, dacoits, extortionists and rapists, sources said. Search for them by law enforcers is an eyewash as many of them are found at times moving at large under political cover.

Cellphones are enough to contract beneficiaries of underworld in police department and political parties to get rid of ongoing combing operations by Rab, said a ward commissioner who is one of the most wanted criminals in the south-western zone. Money matters much, he said while telling how he moves at large in the city bribing some policemen and two leaders of ruling party.

When asked, a senior office of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) refused to admit that fugitives are moving at large and committing crimes. We are monitoring activities of the officers of all the five police stations of the city giving them no scope to favour any criminal, he said.

### First meeting of CHT Land Commission tomorrow

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati**

The first meeting of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Land Commission will be held at Khagrachhari Circuit House on Wednesday after six years of its formation, according to official sources.

The 9-member commission led by retired judge AM Mahmudur Rahman as its chairman is likely to discuss issues relating to land disputes among Bengalee settlers and indigenous people in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The meeting will be attended by, among others, its members, Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong, CHT Regional Council chairman or its representative, chairman of three hill district councils and three circle chiefs or their representatives from Chakma, Bohmang and Mong circles.

The commission was formed in line with the landmark peace deal signed between the Awami League (AL)-led government and the Parbattya Chattagram Jano Sanghaty Samity (PCJSS) in 1997.

## Ctg three-wheelers' 'no' to meter, fare rate

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg**

Owners and drivers of three-wheelers in the port city staged a massive demonstration yesterday and submitted a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister to press their six-point demand including withdrawal of a government decision to fix meters in vehicles by June 30.

Under the banner of Chittagong Baby Taxi Tempo Chalok Malik Oikya Parishad, they held a rally at the Outer Stadium and brought out an auto-rickshaw procession from there. They then submitted the memorandum to the Prime Minister through the Deputy Commissioner.

The Parishad leaders also called on Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury at his office.

In the memorandum they said introduction of meter with a government-fixed fare rate of Tk 12 for first two kilometres and Tk five for every kilometre more is not acceptable.

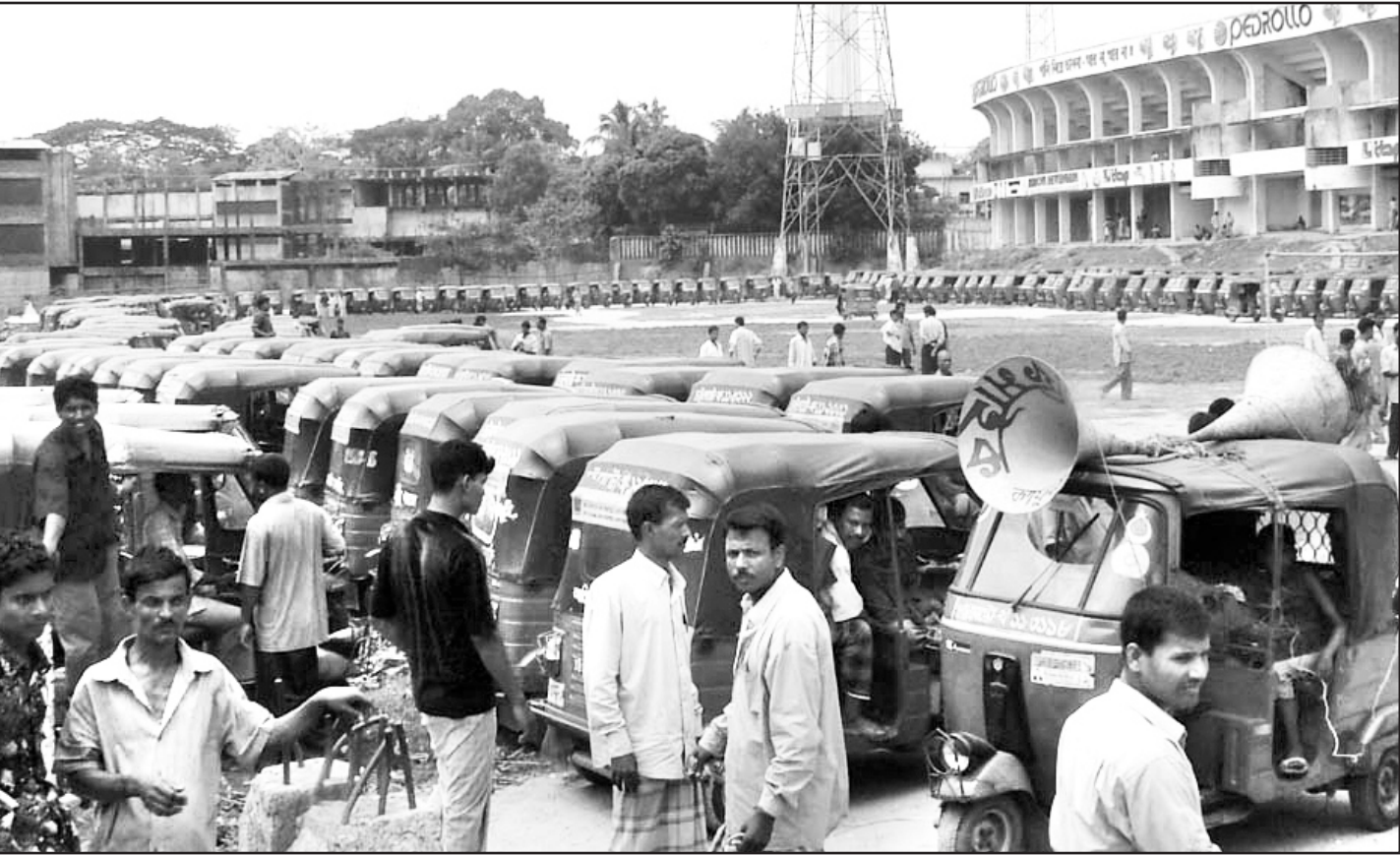
They said Chittagong is a smaller city than Dhaka, also with a lesser population. But the port city has over 13,000 CNG-run and four-stroke auto-rickshaws against some 12,000 in Dhaka city.

Moreover, compared to Dhaka, consumption of fuel is much more in Chittagong because of its hilly topography, they said.

So, introduction of meter with a fixed fare rate here like in Dhaka would make survival of about 40,000 auto-rickshaw drivers at stake, they claimed.

The other demands include reduction of fees for registration, tax-token, fitness and route permit, fixation of penalty for tenure-expired tax-token on daily basis (Tk 1 per day) instead of three-monthly basis, creation of adequate parking spaces for auto-rickshaws, end to illegal toll collection and arrest of vehicle hijackers.

Parishad President Md Abul Kashem Sarker and General Secretary Nazrul Islam Sarker handed over the memorandum while other leaders were also present.



Auto-rickshaws at the Outer Stadium in Chittagong before their owners and drivers held a rally and brought out a procession in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Mongalbaria litchi becoming popular without much care

**A CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj**

A festive mood now prevails at remote Mongalbaria village in Pakundia thana in the district.

Well-off farmers are busy in plucking and selling their special variety of litchi, known as Mongalbaria litchi, acclaimed for its special look and mouth-watering taste.

It is different from litchis produced in other districts. It is larger in size and its pulp is very thick with smaller seed inside.

Many traders, mainly from Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet have flocked to the village.

The fruit has brought about a change in the densely populated village.

But there is no litchi garden worth the name. As land is scarce, farmers have grown litchi trees on courtyards with great care. There is no house in the village without at least a few litchi trees.

The number of trees would be at least 15000, said Upazila Agriculture Officer Azizul Huq in the presence of Deputy Director (DD) of Agriculture Extension Department (AED) Abul Khair when this correspondent visited the village last week.

"They raised small gardens on their own initiative. We now provide advice only for protection against pest attack and disease", he said.

The credit goes to school-teacher Hasim Monshi, who had planted a sapling years back. As the plant yielded good quality litchis, others became interested and grew trees on yards.

Joynal Mia earned about Tk one lakh this year from his 20 small trees grown around his house. Azizul Huq, Assistant Teacher at Narandi Government Primary School, earned about Tk 20,000 from one big tree.

Former Union Parishad member Md Shamsu has 16 litchi trees. "I normally get litchis from these trees

in alternate years.

This year they are selling litchis at Tk 100 per hundred to traders. The price should be higher but we are compelled to sell the fruit at the price offered by traders because the communication is very bad.

The lone kutcha road to the village is unfit for use by truck or pickup.

Nonetheless, life in the village is changing gradually. From profits earned from litchi trees, villagers are now taking to other businesses. Some small poultry and dairy farms have sprang up.



Two litchi growers sorting the plucked fruits.

## 5 expelled from Netrakona Bar

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona**

Five lawyers were expelled from Netrakona Bar Association on various charges including corruption on Sunday.

They are Advocate Arifa Jessmin, former member secretary of the association, Advocate Sharif Khan Milki, Advocate Abdur Razzak, Advocate Abdus Salam and Advocate Mohidur Rahman Khan Liton.

The charges against them included anti-constitutional activities, misappropriation of fund and misuse of power, according to Bar Association president Advocate Safayet Ahmed Khan. He declared their expulsion at a press conference held at the association hall room on the day.

### Rice for the diabetic

**OUR CORRESPNDENT, Bogra**

Multinational seed company Syngenta has innovated paddy seeds which will produce rice suitable for diabetic patients.

This was stated by Janarddan Pal, its Crop Manager Rice for Asia Pacific, at the function marking inauguration of its seed processing plant in Barga on Sunday.

Its Managing Director in Bangladesh Sarwar Ahmed was the chief guest at the function.

20x3

### FIRE IN DINAJPUR, PANCHAGARH

## 2 killed, 90 families homeless

**A CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur**

A newly married couple was burnt to death in a devastating fire that gutted five houses at Chakkabir village in Phulbari upazila in the district in the early hours of Sunday.

The victims are Sayed Abu Raihan, 21 and his wife Dilruba Begum, 19.

Raihan died on the spot. His wife succumbed to fatal burn injuries at Rangpur Medical College Hospital, where she was shifted from Dinajpur Medical College Hospital.

In another fire incident on the previous night, about 40 houses were gutted in Gobindapur village in Biral upazila. Goods worth about Tk 20 lakh were damaged, Fire Brigade sources here said.

At least 50 families, all victims of the incident, are now under the open sky. According to locals, the fire

originated from mosquito coil. Another fire incident at Jolpara village in Debiganj upazila in Thakurgaon district on Friday gutted at least 30 houses and killed some cattle heads. About 40 families have become homeless.

The Fire Brigade sources said they could not reach any of the spots in time due to bad road communication.



PHOTO: STAR

A mother with her child sitting on remains of her gutted house in Gobindapur village in Biral upazila in Dinajpur.

6x2