

Weekly weather forecast for

High: **36° C**

Monday High: 37° C Low: 30° C Mostly cloudy and very hot

Tuesday High: 33° C Low: 28° C Morning thunder

hellodhaka

Wednesda Low: 28° C

Friday Thursday High: **32° C** High: 33° C Low: 28° C Low: 28° C Humid with thunder storms

Saturday High: **34° C** Low: 29° C Humid, thunder Humid, thunde storms possible

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The making of 'stars' in the crime world

MIZANUR KHAN

Sagir Ahmed, alleged criminal and Old Dhaka's ruling party leader was gunned down in broad daylight on June 24. Shaon, a suspect was immediately arrested and shot dead. Law-enforces dug into his background, but found no links with criminal activities.

After Shaon was killed his parents were quizzed. During the interrogation, names of a few of their son's friends were disclosed. Police said these names were unfamiliar and probably new to the crime world.

In another incident, Sulaiman and Kabir Hossain were immediately arrested after a robbery in the Tejgaon area two weeks back. Officer-in-Charge of Tejgaon police station said they did not have any record of crime against

The crime world is expanding with youngsters, and according to the police, criminals like Shaon, Sulaiman and Kabir who were caught recently on charges of extortion, robbery, mugging and kidnapping are new faces in the crime world. Their names do not exist in the present list of criminals.

Killers of Saurav, an Uttara Rajuk College HSC student who was killed on July 21, are his college-mates and they too bear no criminals records. Awami League city leader Khorshed Alam Bachchu and businessman Kamrul Alam were also killed by teenagers, according to police sources. During July, police killed six young robbers in Mirpur and Lalmatia and these too were new

SM Mizanur Rahman, Police Commissioner, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said the absence of a list of 'upcoming criminals' is a big hurdle to clear in curbing crime. "We have no information on them and cannot take immediate action in case of crime." he said.

These rising criminals have links with top felons who control them behind the scenes. "As they cannot appear on the scene they use teenagers as their decoys," said an Abul Khayer of Lalmatia.

"The entire underworld picture has recently changed. These boys are fresh and we cannot trace them even when we receive any complaints. Many of them possess sophisticated, automatic

arms," said a police official asking not to be named.

Sources said leading criminals have left Dhaka for Kolkata in fear of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), teenage hoodlums between 13 to 18 years have now emerged to reign the capital.

"More than 500 teenagers have become very active, with some turning into professional killers and blessed by ruling party leaders and local ward commission ers," sources said, but DMP sources said the figure is about 1,000.

Political parties and leaders use them to extort people. Many residents said they do not file any case against the 'rising stars' because of the political back up they get.

Sources said these youngsters carry arms openly to create their identity. They collect extortion from local markets and if they are not entertained they ransack

Police officials said different slums have become dens of most criminals where arms are hidden and drug businesses run. Each slum is controlled by a group of 15 to 20 youngsters most of them below 16. Slums in Mirpur, Kafrul, Agargaon, Tejgaon and Nakhalpara

have become safe havens

Sources said Pichhi Hannan, Kala Jahangir, Killer Abbas, Freedom Sohel Alauddin and Sweden Aslam entered the underground world when they were below 16 and later became top-notch criminals of the country.

"If we do not nip these teenagers in the bud, they will turn into top criminals later on," said a DMP police official.

He added that it was easy to deploy juveniles in acts of crime for a small amount of money. At the same time they get released easily from police custody because of their age.

DMP and Rab are now busy making two lists of the new faces with their addresses and photographs. "We have asked the officers-in-charge of city's 26 police stations to make a list of the new faces in consultation with the local people.' said DMP commissioner, adding: "We also encourage locals to go for community policing in their areas. The situation in Lalmatia and Monipuripara has improved after the deployment of community police



Shaon, (seated) an alleged newcomer to the crime world and a suspect in the killing of Sagir ied in old Dhaka last month, was gunned down on the spot in broad daylight.

Where terror holds the reins

Notorious criminal Sweden Aslam and is behind bars. Ashik, accused in four Mohammadpur Pisciculture area. murder cases has replaced them. Yusuf, Farog, Osman and Babul, Ashik's disciples control the Karwan Bazar, Farmgate and Green Road areas. The Delu group of 15 to 20 members control Tejgaon and Begunbari

Mohammadpur and Agargaon

Top gangsters Joseph, Haris and Pichchi Helal once controlled Mohammadpur. Joseph and Pichchi Helal now are behind

has now filled this vacuum. He introduces area. Mukul, former associate of top terror Mirpur and Kafrul himself as a leader of the student wing of Pichchi Hannan controlled Tejgaon. Hannan BNP and leads a local gang. Dish Mamun was killed in a 'crossfire' with Rab and Aslam and his associate Mahbub control the

Kanchan, Tapan and Bazlu once controlled the 'drug and arms' trade in Agargaon. They have left the area in fear of Rab and Sayeed, Khokan and Bashar have taken the control of the area.

Maghbazar

Subroto Bain, Hannan, Arman and Mollah Masud once controlled the Maghbazar area. When they were declared 'most wanted' they went into hiding. Arman is in bars and Haris has fled the country. Sohel jail and others in India. Helpers of these

Tikka. who was killed by police, controls Maghbazar. Police sources said his group collects more than Tk 10 lakh from local residential hotels and business offices a month. The Rony group rules Nayatola while the Shimul group has control over Malibagh-Mouchak.

Mohakhali

Imam and Chikna Monir controlled Mohakhali area. Monir was killed in crossfire. Now Tokai Khalegue has become the top terror of the area and wants to take control of the residential hotels. Recently he opened fire in three hotels seriously injuring three managers. Palash group reigns area.

Notorious criminal Kala Jahangir who controlled the area went missing two years back. Killer Abbas was arrested. Teenagers have emerged as criminals who demand extortion from business offices. "They want the same amount that we gave Kala Jahangir and Abbas," said a businessman in the area.

Others

Shahjahanpur and Sabujbag area is controlled by Babu, Sumon, Liton, Alamgir, Babla, Jahir, Sentu and Babul. Shihab and Dibba Rafique reign Uttara and airport areas. Chankharpul is controlled by the Siraj group while Sagar group controls the Motijheel

Supply crisis in timber business

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

Some three lakh workers directly or indirectly involved in timber business in Dhaka are living in anxiety as the price hike of raw timber has put their future at

Timber traders in Dhaka claimed that there has been almost no supply of wood during the last eight months. They pointed out that the supply of Teak, Chapalish, Garjon, Gamari and other types of timber from the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Sylhet has totally stopped.

"We are entirely dependent on timber from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Every month we are incurring a loss of around Tk 45,000 whereas we have to spend Tk 70,000 for paying the monthly rent, bills and wages. We had seven employees and four of them had to be laid off as we could not afford to keep them. We have not paid the rent for four months and if the crisis continues, we may have to close down.

"There are 20-25 timber houses around us and all are in pretty bad shape also." said Monirul Hossain Khan, proprietor of Modern Timber House and Sawmill in Mirpur

The traders alleged that a certain group of timber importers were trying to create an artificial crisis by not allowing the timber from thy Hill Tracts to reach other parts of the country. On the other

hand, they were reportedly making money out of importing timber from China, Malaysia, Myanmar and some other countries. But this is jeopardising the livelihood of thousands of tribal people also. Timber traders said people living in hill areas are furious with the situation and could start a protest movement soon.

Meanwhile, one furniture shop owner said that wood prices have almost doubled. One cft of Teakwood was earlier available at Tk 1400. Now it is Tk 2600. Timber traders from Mirpur said they buy the timber directly and one cft of Teak costs Tk 1500 which was previously Tk 1200, Garjon has gone up to Tk 1100

from Tk 700 and Chapalish now was

available at Tk 1200 although it was Tk 800 per cft not too long ago. SKAwal, chairman of Timber Merchants

& Sawmill Owner's Association for the Begum Rokeva Sarani and Cantonment zone narrated the whole process of timber arrival in Dhaka

"As trees are felled in the leased logging areas, buyers from Dhaka and other areas go there to buy timber from the log area owners. A transit pass from the forest department has to be availed in order to ship those timbers by rail wagons to Dhaka.

"On April 6, the environment and forest ministry in a meeting declared timber stockpiled at the Chittagong Hill Tracts against the logging area permit (known as Jot permit) as illegal. It was also decided at the meeting that if the illegal declared timber was to be shipped, a fine of Tk 50 per cft and royalty had to be paid. We started following that process and timber supply was regular for a month or so. But it has stopped again indefinitely."

Abbas Uddin, chairman of Dhaka Mohanagar Timber Merchant Welfare Federation informed that the High Court on July 5 said that the permit had been kept on hold and no timber could be brought to Dhaka until further notice.

"There are almost 1000 sawmills in Dhaka and each mill requires approximately 200 cft of timber which is not available now. Due to this crisis, cheap and poor quality timber from Jessore, Gaibandha, Dinajpur and other places are being brought to Dhaka. These timber used to cost between Tk 250 to 300 per cft in the past but now they are selling at Tk. 400 per cft," said a mill owner.

"Until the High Court issues a new order, our hands are tied. We have requested the Court to vacate the notice. We know that the situation is worsening. Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council Chairman Santu Larma had called me up and cautioned that if the things do not improve, there could be a protest movement in the Hill Tracts soon," said Minister for forest and environment Tarigul Islam.

Traffic information through SMS, internet and television

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

To provide the commuters with updated traffic information on a daily basis, Nodi Enterprise, a private company is going to launch SMS, internet and television updating system in association with the traffic department.

The traffic department of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has already signed an agreement with Nodi Enterprise and the information in this regard is expected to be available for the public from August 4, 2005.

"By logging on to our website or through Short Massage Service (SMS) or television, people will get the latest information about traffic movements and traffic situation in the city," said Abdullah Al Mamun, managing director of Nodi Enterprise.

According to the agreement Nodi Enterprise will collect current traffic news from the traffic control room and will update that info on their website and other mediums of providing information.

'We have the latest information in our control room and we convey that to the people through the Radio Traffic Channel. To make the service more convenient to all kinds of commuters in the city, we have reached the agreement with Nodi Enterprise," said Anser Uddin Khan Pathan, deputy commissioner (DC) traffic (South).

Nodi Enterprise has divided the city into nine main zones to facilitate the service.

"We will provide information about the major intersections and crossings and the heavily con-

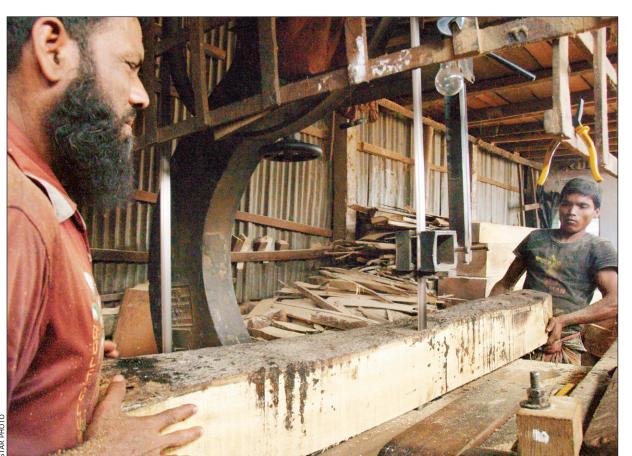
vide suggestions about alternative gested areas. To get information of a particular area people should routes. It will run surveys to find enter the zone or send SMS namout the main causes of traffic ing the zone under which that area congestion in the city or road belongs," said Al Mamun. from the public about the traffic He added that people will also get updated information about any system in the city so that the government can take different meaobstacles like traffic congestion, strikes or public gatherings or road sures to improve the situation," blockages due to accidents or said Al Mamun. digging of any kind, special events

or VIP movement. Nodi Enterprise will also pro-



"Our aim is to get a clear idea

Although many steps were taken to ease the movement of traffic commuters still suffer from continuous congestion.



Timber merchants in the city are running out of business because of the lack of supplies.