

Children replace adults in smuggling

5,000 engaged in the illegal trade in Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga and Jhenidah

AMANUR AMAN, back from Chuadanga

KUSHTIA: Smuggling by children through border points in southwestern districts has increased as adults prefer to keep away now due to increased vigilance by BDR and BSF to check cross-border movement of Islamist militants following a crackdown on them in the country.

Smugglers' syndicates have recruited children to smuggle goods from India, as border guards are not allowing Bangladeshi 'adults' to come closer to the border even during day time since the August 17 serial bomb blasts.

Alongside increased vigilance, BSF has reinforced its strength in all border outposts, sources said. BSF is using searchlight at night to check cross-border illegal movement, they said.

To continue smuggling, smugglers' syndicates are now using children in the illegal trade. There are at least 20 smugglers' syndicates active in Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga and Jhenidah border areas.

At least 5,000 children are now engaged in carrying smuggled goods in different border points in the districts, the sources said.

This correspondent recently visited some border points in Meherpur,



PHOTO: STAR

Three children carrying smuggled goods near a border point in Chuadanga. Children are now being used in smuggling increasingly in borders.

Chuadanga and Jhenidah and found children aged between 10 and 15 carrying smuggled goods. Most of them are from poor families.

Talking to this correspondent, some BDR officials said smuggling has reduced and small quantities are now being carried by children by dodging

borderguards.

Other sources said though use of children for smuggling is not new, it has increased sharply as adults now keep away.

The sources said BSF killed ten people in southwestern border points since August.

They are not allowing any fishing boat to ply in the Bay if the fishermen fail to show tokens containing pictures of Royal Bengal Tiger and the symbolic name of the gang, 'Laban Chora.' They allegedly looted fish, fuel and other goods from 'defaulting' boats.

Five fishermen of a fishing trawler owned by Md Farid of Gangamoti area in Noakhali district informed Patuakhali Sadar police recently that the pirates looted fish worth about Tk one lakh from their trawler in the month of December as they failed to show token to them. The fishermen are Shahed, 30, Elias, 19, Johar, 21 Abu Taher, 20, and Rafiq, 22.

However, Kuakata police

expressed their ignorance about the incident.

A unknown telephone caller man identifying himself as an activist of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Monday night threatened to blow up Kotwali Police Station.

The threat was given to Sub-Inspector (SI) Harun, duty officer of the police station demanding immediate release of JMB area commander Asaduzzaman, police said.

The caller said Asad is being tortured and if the torture goes on we shall take action. 'We have modern weapons and explosives through

which we shall blow up the police station,' the caller threatened.

The unknown caller also threatened the Officer-in-Charge (OC) and Sub-Inspector Mizan who filed two cases against 11 persons arrested in connection with recovery of huge bombs bomb-making materials and explosives from two JMB dens in Akua area of the town on December 17. He claimed there are 392 active members of JMB in Mymensingh.

A General Diary was filed with the Kotwali police in this regard.

Pirates collect toll thru' tokens in Bay

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A gang of pirates of the Sundarbans allegedly introduced token system and collecting illegal toll ranging from Tk 5,000 to 10,000 from each fishing boat in the Bay of Bengal since the first week of December.

The fishermen of coastal areas of Kuakata, Gangamoti, Khajura, Alipur and Mohipur in Patuakhali, Patharghata and Parerhat in Barguna and some parts of Pirojpur, Khulna and Bagerhat districts are being compelled to take tokens in exchange of the big amount of money, according to fishermen in Kuakata area.

The pirates allegedly led by Jalal are set to collect Tk 3 crore from over 10,000 fishing boats till the month of May next year, according to the fishermen.

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PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court in Barisal seized a good quantity of 'Jatka' (young Hilsa) after conducting raids on the Port Road of the city yesterday. A case was also filed against two fish traders in this connection.

130 out of 138 telephones out of order!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

About 130 telephone lines out of 138 in Patkelghata in Satkhira district are out of order for five years.

But the subscribers have to pay line rent every month without avail.

The subscribers told this correspondent.

To get rid of the problem, they submitted several memorandums to the telecommunication minister through the local administration, brought out processions and held rallies demanding restoration of the lines, but to no effect.

to no effect.

Matur Rahman, a retired scientist of Atomic Energy Commission and resident of the area said, "We submitted an application to the Chief Engineer of Khulna Telephone Zone to withdraw the line rent bill. But no action was taken".

On contact, Sub-Assistant engineer Ensan Uddin in Satkhira said, a project to set up a digital telephone exchange at Patkelghata was taken up last year but there has not been any progress due to delay in acquisition of land.

4X3

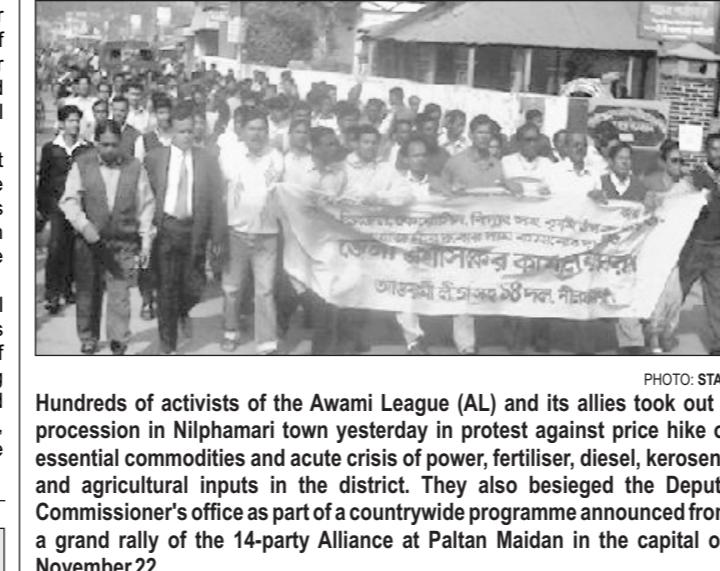


PHOTO: STAR

Hundreds of activists of the Awami League (AL) and its allies took out a procession in Nilphamari town yesterday in protest against price hike of essential commodities and acute crisis of power, fertiliser, diesel, kerosene and agricultural inputs in the district. They also besieged the Deputy Commissioner's office as part of a countrywide programme announced from a grand rally of the 14-party Alliance at Paltan Maidan in the capital on November 22.

3X2

4.5X3

5X3

6X2

8X3