

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 5000 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

border guards.

Other sources said though use 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.

Kalia Chapra Sugar Mill to reopen in March

Imported 'raw sugar' to be used to double production

MOKLESUR RAHMAN LITON, Kishoreganj

Kalia Chapra Sugar Mill in Pakundia will reopen in March under private management with a plan to produce fine quality sugar with imported raw sugar.

Set up in 1969, the state owned mill was laid off in 1994 with an accumulated loss of around Tk 50 crore. It was sold to Nitel Group by the Privatisation Board on March 19, 2000.

Now renamed Nitel Sugar Mill Ltd., the mill is being reopened with a target to double the earlier production, its General Manager Parimal Chakraborty told this correspondent recently.

The manpower will also be less than one third of its earlier strength under government management, he said. There were over 1500 people including

officials earlier. When reopened, it will be run with only around 300 people in three shifts, 100 in each shift, he said.

The mill will run on locally produced sugarcane during crushing season from December to March and on imported raw sugar during rest of the year. Raw sugar to be imported from India and Singapore, the GM said.

He said the manpower requirement will be lesser because modern and sophisticated machines have been installed and the mill will be run more efficiently under private management.

He said the mill will produce 10,000 tonnes of sugar by crushing sugarcane during the crushing season and another 12,000 tonnes from imported raw sugar during rest of the year.

Under the public sector management, the mill used to produce around 8,000 tonnes of sugar. Steps have already been

planned so that sugarcane growers in the mill's command area are not harassed or deprived. These include installation of computerised 'weighing bridge' for sugarcane, spot payment to farmers and keeping all relevant data on farmers in mill computers.

He said a distillery unit would also be set up to produce vamish, engine oil and some other by-products from sugarcane. This year, over 5,000 acres of land have been brought under sugarcane cultivation in the mill area, source said.

Some former employees of the mill and local farmers said the main causes behind the accumulated loss and lay-off were anomaly in disbursing loan among sugarcane farmers, extra benefit and influence by the trade union in the mill, mismanagement and inflated overtime bills.

Threat to blow up police station in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An 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.

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.



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.



PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court in Barisal seized a good quantity of 'Jatka' (young Hilsha) 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 availing telephone facility, many of 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.

They said their business is being greatly hampered. Patkelghata, 13 kilometres from the district town, is an important business centre.

They said the telephone lines went out of order as some cable lines were disconnected when the Satkhira-Khulna road was cut at several points in Binerpota area to flash out flood water in 2000. The cables have not been repaired since then, claimed Sarulia Union Parishad Chairman Matiar Rahman and submitted memorandums to the concerned authorities including the PM to press home their demand but

to no effect. Matiur 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.

4.5X3

5x3

3X2

6X2

4X3

8x3