

# Crimes increase in southwestern dists

34 murders last month against 19 in January

**AMANUR AMAN,** *Kushtia*

Law and order deteriorated in Khulna division with increase in crimes including murder last month.

At least 34 murders were recorded in the 10 districts during the period, up from 19 in the previous month.

Abduction, robbery, rape and other crimes are also on the rise, according to police records and other sources.

The districts are Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Magura, Jessore, Khulna, Bagerhat, Narail and Satkhira.

Jessore topped the list with eight murders, followed by seven each in Kushtia and Khulna, five in Jhenidah, two in Narail, three in Chuadanga, five each in Bagerhat and Meherpur and one in Satkhira district.

According to police, most of the killings were done allegedly by outlaws.

Death of alleged outlaws in crossfire could not dent their activities in the region, police sources said.

According to police records, seven crossfire deaths took place each in January and February in the ten districts, raising the figure to 280 since June 2004.

A total of 158 crossfire killings took place from June to December 2004, 108 in 2005 and the rest 14 in two months this year.

Some high police officials seeking anonymity admitted the slide in law and order, saying this is a 'sudden phenomenon'. The situation will improve soon as vigilance by law enforcers including Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) has increased, they said. They blamed outlaws for the slide.

According to different sources, 12 outlawed parties with about 10,000 cadres and a huge quantity of illegal firearms in their possession are active in the region. The parties

are four factions of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP)– PBCP-ML, PBCP-Janajuddho, PBCP-Red Flag and PBCP-Communist War; Biplobi Communist Party (BCP), New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP), Banglar Communist Party (BCP-Laitu), Gono Mukti Fouj (GMF), Gono Bahini (GB), Socialist Party (SP), Biplobi Anuragi and Chhinnomul Communist Party (CCP).

"All-out steps have been taken to check criminals' activities in the districts and we are hoping success, Noor Mohammad, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of police in Khulna, told this correspondent.

Asked why crimes did not decline despite 'all-out steps', the DIG said, "It is impossible to change the situation overnight in an area where underground parties unleashed a reign of terror for last 30 years".



Trees plundered from reserve forests being carried in rickshaw vans (left) to an illegal timber market at Hatubhanga in Mirzapur district.



PHOTO: STAR

## Reserve forests in Mirzapur, Sakhipur disappearing fast

Illegal timber markets in several areas

**MIRZA SHAKIL,** *Tangail*

Reserve forests in Tangail are shrinking due to indiscriminate cutting of trees and encroachment of forestlands.

On the other hand, several markets have sprang up in different areas Hatubhanga, Mirzapur and Sakhipur where stolen timbers are openly sold.

Abdul Latif, a timber merchant at Battala in Tangail, told this correspondent that everyday, specially at night, more than 20 truckloads of timber leave the forest areas for different destinations.

The looting of trees continues due to ineffective steps by the local administration and the forest department, he alleged.

Some influential quarters having political clout have grabbed vast areas of the forest by felling trees, using 'forged documents', an official of Tangail Forest Department told this correspondent seeking anonymity. "We are virtually helpless", he said.

The reserve forests in Tangail were earlier spread over 1, 22,876 acres in five upazilas-- 45,565 acres in Modhupur; 47,220 in Sakhipur; 21,855 in Ghatail; 7, 576 in Mirzapur and 659 acres in Kalihati, according to sources in Forest Department.

At least 40 per cent of the reserve forests in Mirzapur and Sakhipur have been illegally grabbed. Local influential encroachers have constructed houses and raised orchards and gardens and constructed makeshift structures to strengthen their possession, the sources said.

When contacted, forest officials said about 200 cases were filed against the land grabbers after taking permission from Tangail Deputy Commissioner (DC). But the lands could not be restored to forest department ownership due to shortage of manpower and logistics, they said.

The plunder of trees increased after setting up of numerous brick fields near the forests, most of which are illegal.

In a recent drive, a mobile court led by a first class magistrate fined some of the brick field owners in Ghatail, Mirzapur and Basail. Such action is totally ineffective as burning of firewood continues in brick fields, sources said.

Banshtoil Range office sources said 12 out of 40 posts of officials and employees in the six bit offices under Mirzapur and Sakhipur upazilas are vacant for long. They can not take prompt action due to shortage of manpower and logistics, the sources said.

This correspondent could not contact Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Tangail Abu Hanif Patwari despite repeated attempts.

## SSC, Dakhil

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conference yesterday, the Minister Dr Osman Farruk said the government has taken all-out measures to curb cheating in the examinations.

"Like the previous years, the government will be able to show its success in holding copying free SSC, Dakhil and vocational examinations this year," he said.

About 40,000 SSC examinees were expelled in 2001 while the figure decreased to only 1,746 last year, signifying that the students now prefer study to copying, the minister said.

Expressing hope that the percentage of passed students will significantly increase this year, Osman Farruk said, "The government now focuses on ensuring proper classroom teaching so the students can take the examinations in right earnest."

Asked about the frequent power outages across the country that disturbs the SSC examinees, the minister said he has already urged the authorities concerned to take measures to solve the problem.

Denying the allegation of leaking of question papers, the minister said such allegations are raised only for political reasons.

Education Secretary Momtajul Islam, Director General of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education Prof Dilara Hafiz, Dhaka Education Board Chairman Harun-ur-Rashid and chairmen of different boards, among others, were present at the press conference.

## Students turning away

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business education students increased by nine percent.

However, examinees from humanities group in the HSC also declined by five percent in last 15 years.

"It is really alarming that science students are decreasing in the country while science education is gaining much popularity all over the world for its better opportunities," eminent science teacher of the country Prof Muhammed Zafar Iqbal of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology said.

The government is not giving proper support for spreading science education across the country, whereas it patronises spreading madrasa education, he said.

Zafar Iqbal pointed out lack of quality science teachers in schools and colleges as another reason for decline in the number of science students.

Even if the government takes initiative now to restore science students' previous ratio through ensuring quality teachers for schools and colleges, it will at least take six to eight years to reach the target, he observed.

Prof Dilara Hafiz, director general of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, also attributed the decline in the number of science students to the lack of quality science teachers in schools and colleges.

Besides, ensuring enough job opportunities in future will encourage students to study science at SSC and HSC levels, she said.

The government has taken initiatives to ensure quality science teachers for the schools and colleges, she said, adding that training has been made compulsory for all school and college teachers under a six-year-long project titled 'Teaching Quality Improvement Project' that started from March last year.

Dilara Hafiz hoped the newly formulated law that requires certificate of the Non-government Teachers Registration and Certification Authority for recruiting teachers in the non-government schools and colleges will also help to ensure the quality of science teachers.

## Blasts rock

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Express minutes before it was to set off for New Delhi," Pathak said.

Varanasi - in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh - is a major pilgrimage centre in India.

The city, about 670 km (415 miles) south-east of the capital Delhi, attracts large numbers of Indians as well as foreign tourists.

A second bomb went off at the main railway station just minutes after the first blast, with eyewitnesses saying they saw a number of casualties.

Police said a team of experts were trying to defuse a third bomb on one bank of the River Ganges.



PHOTO: STAR

Several thousand people including school and college teachers brought out a procession in Dinajpur town on Monday demanding creation of a separate education board for northern districts.

## Sec 144 as rival BNP men clash

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,** *Netrakona*

Section 144 was imposed in Kendua municipal area in Netrakona district for 18 hours from 6 am yesterday following clashes between two groups of BNP activists, centring the party's upazila council.

Sources in the upazila administration said rival groups led by local Jubo Dal leader Rafiqul Islam Hilali and lawmaker Khdiza Amin clashed on several occasions in last few days. The council is likely to be held later this month.

Police said a group of BNP activists belonging to Khadiza Amin faction assaulted Abdur Razzak, convener of upazila BNP, Monday evening. This created tension between the two rival factions.

## Arrest of JMB kingpins a drama, says Inu

**OUR CORRESPONDENT,** *Kushtia*

Jatyia Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu Monday said JMB chief and Sheikh Abdur Rahman and JMJB chief Bangla Bhai are creations of the government and their arrest is a 'drama'.

He also criticised the government for saying that militants were creations of the media.

"BNP-Jamaat coalition bashed media when it carried report on rise of Islamist militants. The government even denied the existence of militants kingpins Sahekh Rahman and Bangla Bhai. What they will say now after their arrest?"

Inu was addressed a JSD rally at

Bheramara before submission of a memorandum to the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) demanding adequate supply of fertiliser and diesel at fair prices.

Inu claimed that the government staged the 'arrest drama' to divert public attention from power outage, fertiliser crisis and price hike of essential.

The government did not take any action against militants earlier despite newspaper reports. Rather, it tried to cover up their activities and protect them, Inu alleged.

Arrest of Abdur rahman and Bangala Bhai will not stop activities of militants because their patron and protector is in the government.

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