

10 top outlaws still run parties in southwestern region

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Law enforcing agencies are yet to arrest any of the 10 'top' listed leaders of outlawed parties and gang groups active in southwestern districts. They are still active in Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Pabna, Rajbari and Jhenidah districts collecting toll and doing other crimes, sources said.

The cadres, listed with police as 'hardcore criminals', are evading arrest despite all out attempts by law enforcers including Rapid Action battalion (Rab) in last three years to nab them.

Six of them are leaders of outlawed parties and four are of gang groups. The outlawed leaders are Gono Bahini (GB) chief Azibor Rahman and his 'second-in-command' Mandar; Gono Mukti Fouz (GMF) chief Shahin and three 'regional commander' Mukul, Tikka and Bakhtiar; and New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP) chief Akdil Hossain alias Buro Leaders of gang groups include Lalchad Bahini chief Lalchad; Mukti Bahini chief Mukti and Hamdul and Rashidul who lead the Hara Bahini.

All of them hail from different

areas of Kushtia district and conduct criminal activities in Kushtia and adjacent Meherpur, Chuadanga, Pabna, Rajbari and Jhenidah districts.

Sources said GMF leader Tikka demanded Tk.2 lakh from a businessman at Totamtola in Sailkupa upazila in Jhenidah several days ago. The businessman is also an employee at Islamic University.

Sources close to the businessman said they informed police about the incident.

According to law enforcing agencies, some cadres of GB and NBCP recently held several meetings with a plan to capture some water bodies including Nandia, Uzangram and Chapaygachi in Kushtia Sadar upazila.

They also threatened some of the lessees of the water bodies to leave those, sources said.

The Hara Bahini still runs drug trade in eastern areas of Kushtia including Aruapara, Char Amlapara, Cheuri, Haripur, Raini, Kaya.

Lalchad runs a smuggling ring operating in Daultapur in Kushtia, the sources said.

At least 10 special anti-crime

drives including much talked about Operation Clean Heart and Operation Spider Web were launched in the southwestern region, country's most outlaw infested zone, in last four years. But the hardened criminals remained out of the dragnet.

During the period, law enforcers however arrested a good number of cadres of the outlawed parties and gang groups. A good number of them were killed in 'crossfire' with police. But there has not been any let up in activities by their top brasses.

Sources claimed that some of the top outlaws are at large in their areas, while others are out of the country.

They are doing party activities and collecting toll through grass-roots cadres. Some of them are controlling party activities from a neighbouring country through cell phones, the sources claimed. According to police records and newspaper reports, at least 166 'crossfire' incidents took place in Kushtia district alone in three years since June 2004. Of those killed, at least 100 were outlaws. They included at least 50 of GMF, 35 of

GB, four of NBCP, 13 of alias Hara Bahini and nine of Lal Chad Bahini. It is the highest figure for a district in southwestern region. The sources said some outlawed parties and gang groups in the region have closed ranks and are trying to reorganise their parties. The sources however said the rival parties who earlier fought over supremacy in their respective areas and toll collection have sunk differences only to save them.

Leaders of the parties held several meetings in last one and a half months, they claimed. On August 1, police arrested two cadres of outlawed GMF and Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) when they were holding a secret meeting. They are Basir Ahmed and Zamarat.

Police said both were killed in 'crossfire' when they were taken out for arms recovery.

Kushtia Police Superintendent Gazi Jasim Uddin, when contacted, said "We are always alert about the criminals and are trying to net them. We hope to succeed. He said the law and order is now under control.



PHOTO: STAR

A cluster of houses built by cutting hills in Sabubagh area in Khagrachhari Sadar upazila.

No step yet to re-settle 140 families living on hill slopes

35 acre govt lands grabbed in Khagrachhari by the settlers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khagrachhari*

Khagrachhari Hill District Council (KHDC) is yet to take any initiative to re-settle the 140 families identified as vulnerable to landslides. They live on slopes of hills by building houses on grabbed government lands in at least 10 areas in Khagrachhari Sadar upazila.

Khagrachhari District Administration and police jointly identified the families who have grabbed at least 35 acres of land. Some of the lands are in areas covered by the KHDC master plan for development work, sources said. The report was submitted to

the KHDC last month.

Most of the lands were allotted to the families by Khagrachhari Bazar Fund (BF), allegedly in exchange of money, according to the report jointly submitted by the district administration and special branch police, the sources said.

The areas are Sabuzbug, Shalbagan, Rashider Gap, Harinathpara, ADC Hill, Garugari Tilla, Nenchhi Bazar, Kadamtala, Islampur and Kalabagan.

This correspondent visited some of the areas and talked to the land grabbers. They said they took allotment of lands from the Bazar Fund.

But they failed to show any allotment document and said

Bazar Fund authorities assured them that documents would be provided later, they said.

The district administration and police in their report urged KHDC to rehabilitate the 140 families as they live in risky hill slopes, the sources said.

Khagrachhari Police Superintendent Khandaker Lutful Kabir said the list was prepared last month after landslides killed many people in Chittagong "I think the authorities concerned will take proper action to re-settle them in safer places", he said.

At least 1,000 people will be saved if KHDC authorities take proper steps considering the plight

of the poor people, he said.

When contacted, an official of the district administration however said the administration wants to re-settle the vulnerable families in suitable places, he said.

"An investigation is necessary to find how the Bazar Fund allotted the lands", he said. The Bazar Fund is a body of KHDC.

KHDC Chairman Monindra Lal Tripura, when asked, refuted the allegation of involvement of Bazar Fund in allowing the families build houses on grabbed government lands. "Action will be taken if the allegation is found correct", he said.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

National flower water lily that symbolises picturesque Bangladesh in rainy season attracts tiny tots in rural areas. Its food value has made it a saleable item now. The photo was taken from Belai Beel (water body) in Gazipur.

Media role vital to check AIDS

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Speakers at a workshop here yesterday underscored the role of media in creating mass awareness about the deadly disease of AIDS/HIV.

Held at Satkhira Old Bar Association auditorium, the workshop on 'Reports on HIV/AIDS' was jointly organised by Panos and Change Makers.

The Country Representative of Panos SM Moyeen Ahmed was in the chair while Satkhira civil surgeon (CS) Dr Abu Aziz-Al-Mansur was present as chief guest.

Speakers urged the government to provide youths with adequate information on the deadly disease. They suggested for introducing HIV/AIDS issues at syllabus in SSC and HSC classes.

They expressed great concern over detection of a large number of HIV positive cases in the neighbouring countries of India, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand although such cases are fewer in Bangladesh.

They stressed on preventive measures to protect lives of people from negative impact of the deadly disease.

They called for raising awareness among the intravenous drug users (IDUS) to prevent spread of the disease although the government took various measures to create awareness among people to check its spread.

Among others, The Daily Star correspondent Abu Ahmed, Dr Mamunur Rashid, Change Maker president Advocate Tanbirul Siddique, Subhas Chowdhury, Altaf Hossain and Ruhul Quddus addressed.

Youths for patients

Blood donation club at a remote village in Jhinadah

ABIZOR RAHMAN, *Jhenidah*

An initiative by a youth at a remote village in Jhenidah now saves life. The blood donation club set up by Amirul Islam at Monohorpur village donates over 200 bags of blood to patients in different areas.

Any critical patient at Shailkupa Upazila Health Complex or anywhere in the upazila needing blood contacts Bandhan (the club). Amirul said he donated 73 bags of blood since setting up of the club in 2001. Starting with 50 youths, it has over 200 members now, he said.

Talking to this correspondent, Amirul said he decided to do something for patients when his sister Rokeya khatun was fighting for life at Kushtia Sadar Hospital for want of blood. Amirul could not collect blood for his sister due to poverty. Since then, he provided blood three times a year to patients and became known in the area.

He then organised some youths and formed the Bandhan at Monohorpur village. The club is now run by a managing committee headed by its president Swapan Kumar Bakchi. Amirul, a rural medical practitioner (RMP) is its advisor.

Rezu Ahmed a pathologist at Mohila and Shihu Clinic at Sailkupa upazila headquarters said, he screens the blood donated by members of Bandhan free of cost.

Sabina Khatun, wife of Mukh Chand Sheikh of Harihora village said, she needed blood for her uterus operation. Her husband contacted Bandhan and its member Bazul Rahman of Siddi village donated her blood.

Contacted, Swapan Kumar Bakchi said his club members donated 76 bags of blood so far this month. "We get good response from youths and our membership is increasing", he said.

Selim Reza, chairman-in-charge of Sailkupa Poroshava said Bandhan has set up a unique example in the area by voluntarily helping critical patients.

Md. Rafikul Islam, residential medical officer of Sailkupa Health Complex said, members of Bandhan provide blood to patient at the hospital for free.

Amirul said, a little help would expand their service and help more people. The club needs an office, a refrigerator, a virus test machine to preserve blood.

He said if any patient need blood of any group he can contract at cell phone 01716 745407.

Shailkupa Civil Surgeon Shamsul Haq said, "This is a very good initiative by some youths in Shailkupa. Patients from other areas of Shailkupa also collect blood from Bandhan".

He said he will try to give logistic support to the club and train its members.

Transport leader held in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Tangail Bus Owners' Association general secretary Abdur Rouf Khan Sondesh has been arrested from his house here on charge of extortion.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police, in a joint drive, conducted in Polashtoly area here, arrested him on Saturday night.

Earlier, former vice-president of

Tangail Bus Owners' Association Harunur Rashid filed an extortion case against him Saturday evening, said Tangail officer-in-charge (OC) Ashraf Hossain.

Later, Sadar police produced the arrestee before a court here yesterday.

On contact, Captain Shams of Rab-12 told this correspondent that there had been an allegation of collecting illegal toll against Sondesh from the bus terminal.

Sondesh is the brother-in-law of former state minister for expatriate welfare and overseas employment Lutfar Rahman Khan Azad.

Two women rescued from traffickers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Two young women have been rescued from the traffickers while being trafficked to India, police said.

Members of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) rescued the two from Goalpara, a border village, in Kalaroa upazila yesterday. But the traffickers managed to escape, BDR said.

The rescued women are Rabeya Khatun, 27, daughter of Eman Ali of Tailkupi village and Sabina Khatun, 25, daughter of Samsuddin of Mahmudpur village in the upazila.

Promising lucrative job abroad, a gang of traffickers were trafficking them to India, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, BDR members chased the traffickers and rescued the women at the village, police said.

Later, BDR handed over them to police.

On contact, Kalaroa officer-in-charge (OC) Farid Uddin confirmed the report.

BNP leader held in Kishoreganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kishoreganj*

A BNP leader has been arrested from Goital area here on various charges.

Md. Alaaddin Sabery, former secretary of Kotiadi upazila BNP was arrested by the detective branch (DB) of police on charge of various allegations, said sub-inspector (SI) Mosharaf Hossain. But, he denied to elaborate.

2 drown in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*

Two people including a child drowned in floodwaters as a boat capsized in Bashkhali area here yesterday.

The victims are Sabuj, 26, and his nephew Sabir, 7, of Enayetpur village.

Police said, an engine boat loaded with about 20 passengers was coming from Shahzadpur capsized in floodwaters when it collided head-on with another engine boat.

After a frantic search, the two bodies were recovered.



PHOTO: STAR

Erosion by Karatoa river at Tarafmanu in Gobindaganj upazila in Gaibandha district now threatens Dinajpur-Dhaka highway. WDB erected bamboo spars at the point to stop the erosion but those were washed away.

Ruet founding day observed

RU CORRESPONDENT

The fourth founding anniversary of Rajshahi Engineering and Technology University (Ruet) was celebrated in Rajshahi yesterday.

The day began with hoisting of national and university flags atop the administrative building.

Acting Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Dr Tahir Ahmed inaugurated the programme on the Ruet campus.

Students' welfare director Prof Dr Sayed Abdur Mafiz and Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Hall provost Prof Dr Rafiqul-Al-Beg were also present.

This was followed by a march-past by ansars. The VC took salute from a dais erected on the occasion on the campus.

Later, the VC launched a tree plantation campaign by planting saplings on the compound of the administrative building.

A special prayer was held at the central mosque after Zohar prayer. At that time, the VC urged the teachers, students and university employees to create a congenial academic atmosphere on the campus.

The university was set up on 150 acres of land in 1964.

7 opera artistes arrested at Bagmara

RU CORRESPONDENT

Bagmara police have arrested seven opera artistes on charge of staging opera without prior permission of police during a period of the state of emergency.

The arrestees are Nurul Islam, Saidur Rahman, Aminul Islam, Khaleda Khatun, Sabina Yasmin, Beauty Khatun and Abdur Rashid.

Police sources said an opera was held at the house Nurul Islam, a villager at Maria under Bagmara thana at about 3pm on Saturday. But the organisers did not take permission of police or local administration for the purpose.

On information, police rushed to the spot and arrested Nurul Islam and others.

When contacted, Bagmara police station officer-in-charge (OC) Mirza Golam Sarwar confirmed the report.

"The arrestees were produced before a court yesterday", he said.