

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 Aklil Hossain alias Buro. Leaders of gang groups include Lalchad Bahini chief Lalchad; Mukti Bahini chief Mukti and Hamidul 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 Sajlupka 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, Haripuri, 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 grassroots 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 Zamara.

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.

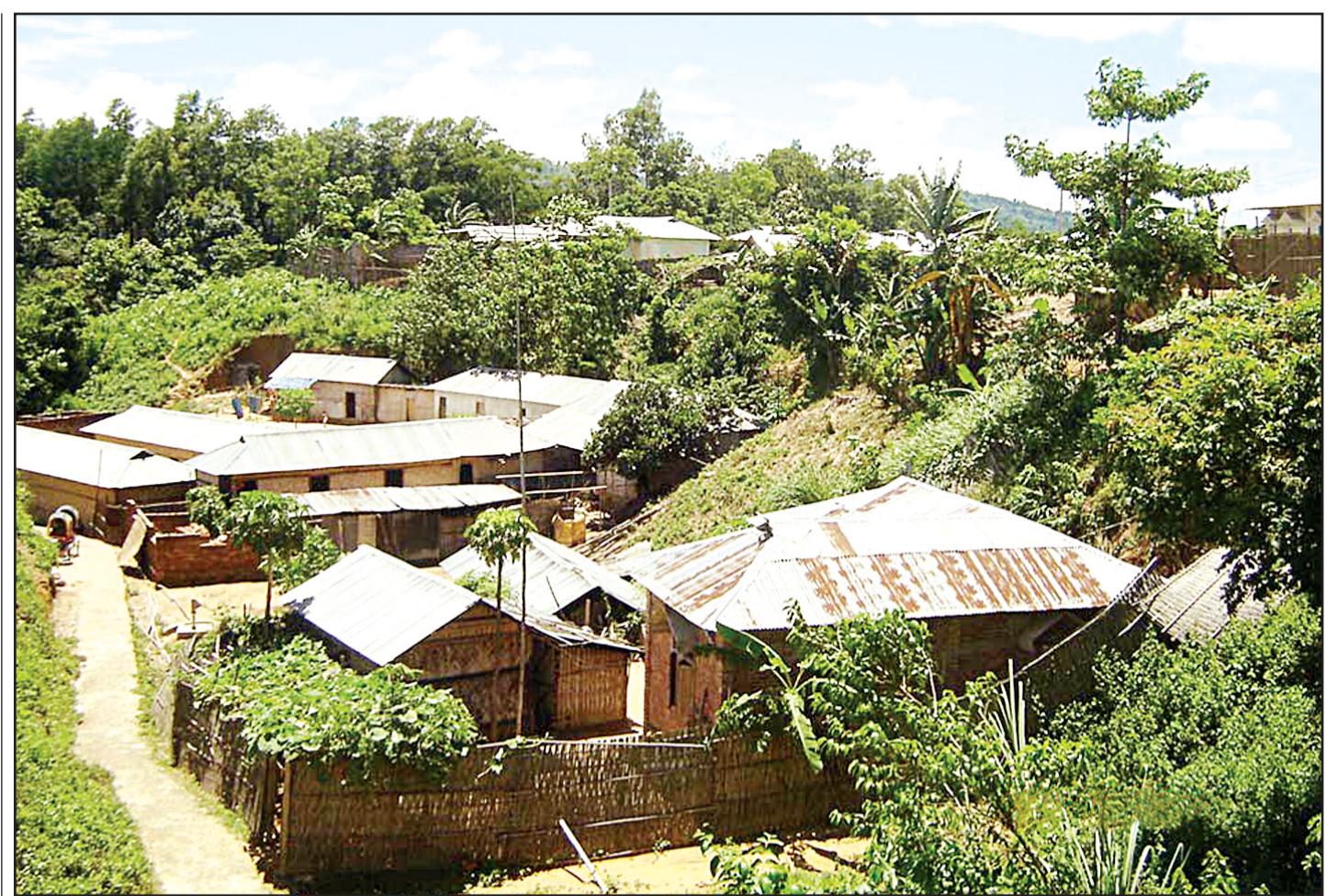


PHOTO: STAR

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



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.

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 Polasholtoly 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) Ahsan 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 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 Taikupi 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 Alauddin 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 Bashkali area here yesterday.

The victims are Sabuj, 26, and his nephew Sabbir, 7, of Enayetur 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.

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

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 Sabujbug, Shalbagun, Rashider Gap, Harinathpara, ADC Hill, Garugari Tilla, Nenchi 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 Lutfur 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.

Two national highways threatened by Karatoa erosion in Gaibandha

Dhaka-Rangpur and Dhaka-Dinajpur highways only few yards from erosion points

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

water level of Karatoa rises, they said.

At times, flood water overflows three to four kilometre stretches of the roads at the two points, they added.

In about a fortnight, the river devoured vast croplands and many houses in Tarafmanu, Chalk Rahimpur, Goshaipur, Shahebganj and Kairaganj villages, displacing about 3,000 people, the locals said.

Five years ago, the river was about one and half kilometers off the highways. The river took a U shape due to unabated erosion, locals said.

As in every year, Water Development Board (WDB) dumped brickbats and sand bags at the vulnerable points this year

also to stop erosion, but the measure is almost temporary, said an official of WDB.

It needs a loop cutting of one and half kilometers to straighten the U-shaped river to stop erosion, WDB Executive Engineer Babul Chandra Shill said.

"We submitted a proposal for loop cutting involving Tk one crore but the plan is yet to be approved by higher authorities", he said.

If the plan is implemented, the national highways together with crop lands, houses, educational institutes worth over Tk 50 crore will be saved, he added.

"This year, we erected bamboo spars at Tarafmanu on emergency basis to save the highway. This is purely a temporary measure", he said.

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 Tahur 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.

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.



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.

PHOTO: STAR