

OUTLAWS CONTINUE TO REIN OVER SOUTH-WESTERN REGION

111 arms out of 121 looted in 17 yrs remain without trace

QUAZI AMANULLAH, *Khulna*

Law enforcers failed to recover a staggering 111 out of 121 firearms looted by outlaws from law enforcers and a malkhana (government store-room) in the south-western region during 1990 to 2007.

Law enforcers could recover only 10 arms that were looted from Rarhuli police camp in Paikgachha upazila of Khulna district during this period.

Outlaws killed at least nine law enforcers while looting these firearms.

But the killers could not be detected and dockets of these cases are still gathering dust as investigations of those were abandoned due to lack of proper evidence.

Outlaws looted these arms from police outposts, patrol police, on duty law enforcers in running trains, fish processing factories and jute mills.

Seven rifles were looted in 1990 from on-duty police in a train when it was crossing Kotchandpur of

Jhenidah district.

One rifle was looted from police at Halsha station in 1991.

Criminals looted two rifles after stabbing patrol police at Bablatala of Jessore town in 1992.

Outlaws stabbed a policeman to death at Charabhitia Bazar of Jessore town and looted a rifle from him in 1994 while another rifle was looted from railway police in a moving train at Sundarpur of Jhenidah district the same year.

They looted a rifle from Dobra branch of Krishi Bank, three guns and a rifle from a gun shop in Jessore, four rifles from on-duty police at Uthali of Chuadanga in 1995.

Outlaws killed a policeman during their arms looting at Uthali.

In 1996, they looted ten rifles from Rarhuli police camp in Paikgachha upazila of Khulna district.

Outlaws looted a revolver after stabbing a police officer at Bagharpara of Jessore district in 1997 and five rifles

from Rupsha Sea Foods in Khulna in December the same year.

They looted three rifles from on-duty Ansars in a passenger launch in Koiria upazila of Khulna district in 1998, four rifles and six guns from the storeroom of Khulna Cable Factory, a sub machine gun killing an on-duty Ansar commander in an inter-city express train at Barobazar of Jessore, two rifles, 12 guns, five revolvers, five pistols from the malkhana (storeroom) of Khulna Collectorate Building, a double barrel gun from a house at Bagmara in Khulna city and four rifles from patrol police at Bashkhali under Rupsha upazila the same year.

Outlaws looted 12 rifles from Ansars on duty at Akij Jute Mills in January 1999, a rifle from a Sonali Bank branch in Kushtia in 2000, a double barrel gun from a shop in Rupsha upazila in 2001, a shotgun from patrol police at Khulna Customs Ghat in 2002, a rifle from a security guard at Keshabpur branch of Janata

Bank, a pistol after killing a sub-inspector of police at Jhenidah, a double barrel gun from a fish trader's house at Majhigati village under Digholia upazila of Khulna district, a double barrel gun from the house of a businessman in Kalia upazila of Narail in the same year.

In 2003, they looted two guns from on-duty security guards at Kushtia Textile Mills, a shotgun killing two on-duty policemen at Sheikhpara in Khulna city, 19 rifles from Ansars on duty at Daulatpur Jute Mills, a rifle and two SLRs killing two patrol policemen on road at Fakirhat of Bagerhat district.

When asked, Khulna Range DIG of police Md Himayetuddin said efforts are going on to recover the remaining arms looted by outlaws in the south-western region during last 17 years.

It is very difficult to recover those looted arms by detecting the outlaws who were involved in the looting, he added.



PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOIKH

As winter approaches, poachers start hunting and selling birds, including rare and endangered ones. The photo shows a youth displaying hunted birds for sale at Teknaf in Cox's Bazar district.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Dew drops on a spider web herald the advent of winter. The photo was taken from Bogra.

All for a morsel of food

Tale of 28,000 hapless husking mill workers in B'baria

SK SHAHIDUL ISLAM, *B'baria*

At least 28,000 workers, mostly women and children, of boiler and rice husking mills in the district are leading a miserable life as they work hard all the day for bare minimum wages.

They boil paddy, dry it in the sun and take it to rice husking machine. Then they winnow out husk from the grain, pack rice in large sacks and carry them from mill premises to the vehicles waiting for transportation.

When all the jobs are done, workers of a boiler mill get only Tk5 for each maund of rice. They together get only 220 kilograms of broken bits of rice for husking 700 maunds of rice. But it is too meagre for them as around 100 people work in a mill on an average.

Mill owners make payment to the entire group of workers after husking 700 maunds of rice each time. The male workers get more payment than female workers just because of 'gender discrimination'.

Every mill has 15/20 male workers and all of them work as group leaders or foremen. The female and child workers again face discrimination when they receive their wages from the male workers. The 'foremen' get 'percentage' from the wages of female and child workers, as it is 'the system' in the boiler mills, sources said.

The female workers rarely earn more than Tk900 a month while the child workers are ill paid and even not paid.

"I work at a boiler mill in Shuhilpur village but I earn only Tk800 each month although I work hard all the day," said Husna Begum.

Rahela, 30, of Lakhai village in Sylhet work at a mill with her four children but all of them are ill paid.

Kashem, 8, a child labourer at a mill, said, he gets only a morsel of broken rice. "Sometimes I get Tk15 to 20," he said.

Sources said, female workers who receive wages in advance are ill paid. The low-paid workers cannot say any-

thing against all these discriminations in absence of the labour law.

Jitendra Pal of Shahbajpur village said, he gets around Tk100 a day on 'no work no pay' basis.

Foreman Sayed Mia of Khandura village said he works for Shuhilpur Rice Husking Mill and gets over Tk 400 as 'commission' for each 700 maunds of rice.

When asked, Amrito Lal Saha, a mill owner, said they strictly follow the rules of their mill council. Everything, including production cost and level of wages, depend on market situation, he added.

There are around 280 boilers and rice husking mills in the district. On an average, around 100 people work in a mill.



PHOTO: STAR



Woman workers drying paddy on the yard of a husking mill in Brahmanbaria, inset, workers including children gather for being photographed as they see this correspondent there.

Transport strike in Habiganj

UNB, *Habiganj*

District Bus Owners' Association and Transport Workers' Union yesterday morning enforced an indefinite strike on nine routes of the district demanding withdrawal of a new bus service on Habiganj-Sylhet route.

The routes on which the wildcat strike was enforced include Habiganj-Sylhet, Habiganj-Lakhai, Lakhai-Sylhet, Habiganj-Nabiganj, Habiganj-Madhabpur and Habiganj-Asampara.

Locals said, two groups of transport workers locked in a clash on Tuesday over introduction of a new bus service 'Super Express' on Habiganj-Sylhet route.

The rowdy workers also damaged 20 vehicles at Habiganj bus stand during the melee.

The bus owners and transport workers later decided to enforce the strike on the routes today to realise their demand.

SHOP LOOTING Kalaroa Jubo League chief, 8 others sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Kalaroa upazila Jubo League (JL) President Golam Morshed and eight others have been sued on charge of looting Tk 1.5 lakh from a fertiliser shop at Kazirhat Bazar under the upazila.

Shop owner Alamgir Hossain, son of Abdus Sattar of village Nakila, filed the case with Kalaroa Police Station on Tuesday night.

The other accused are Ketab Ali, Abdul Malek, Ruhul Amin, Ekramul Haque, Emam Hossain, Anisur, Mithu and Rahman of village Kazirhat in the upazila.

In the case statement, the complainant said a group people led by Kalaroa upazila Jubo League (JL) President Golam Morshed attacked local Awami League worker Sultan Ahmed as a sequel to previous enmity at Kazirhat bazar on November 10.

He stated that the attackers entered his shop as Sultan took shelter in it. They beat up Sultan, ransacked the shop and took away Tk 1.5 lakh from cash box, the complainant said.

When contacted, Jubo League leader Golam Morshed denied his involvement in the incident.

25 hurt as rival BNP men clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*

At least 25 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups of BNP at Belkuchi upazila headquarters yesterday over formation of the upazila committee.

Police and party sources said the activists of the two groups--one led by Golam Mowla Bablu and another by Major (retd) Monzur Quader--attacked each other at noon, leaving 25 from both sides injured.

The injured were admitted to Belkuchi Upazila Health Complex and Sirajganj Sadar Hospital. Additional police have been deployed at the upazila headquarters.

Task becomes easy when govt, people join hands

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

A dying Marichap River, flowing through Satkhira district, will now be saved, thanks to the initiative of local administration and spontaneous participation of local people.

On Sunday, a large number of villagers, irrespective of social status, began work with spades and baskets to re-excavate the river along its 24 kilometre stretch in Debhata, Sadar and Assasuni upazilas, which will enable the river to join Ichamati River and get enough flow.

Health and Family Planning Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque inaugurated the re-excavation at a simple ceremony at Char Balitha in Debhata upazila.

"The initiative will help to develop agriculture and trade in the area and contribute to improving the local environment. The Marichap River, lifeline for lakhs of people in

the district, should not be allowed to die to serve the interests of a few people," he said.

As Marichap River's capacity to hold water drastically reduced due to massive siltation, flooding during the rainy season and lack of flow during the dry season became a yearly affair.

Silt gathers in the riverbed when nearby areas are stripped of vegetation, making the soil vulnerable to erosion by wind and water.

Satkhira Deputy Commissioner Abdus Samad, Sadar upazila Chairman Nazrul Islam, former Awami League lawmakers Monsur Ahmed and Dr Mokhlesur Rahman, Debhata upazila Chairman Golam Mostafa, Assasuni upazila Chairman ABM Mustakim and Satkhira Press Club President Abu Ahmed attended the ceremony, among others.

The re-excavation of Marichap River in three upazilas will complete by January 2010.



PHOTO: STAR

Locals join voluntary work at Char Balitha in Debhata upazila of Satkhira district as the local administration initiated a grand task of re-excavating Marichap River.

BCL men stab pro-JSD leader, activist at RU

Withdrawal of ban on students' activities demanded

A RU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) cadres at Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday severely stabbed two pro-JSD Chhatra League leaders near the fine arts department.

Publicity secretary of the student body Mahmudul Hasan Mukut and activist Raju who is also a student of fine arts, were admitted to university medical centre with stab injuries in hands and heads. Mahmudul was later shifted to Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital (RMCH) as his condition deteriorated.

Sources said, a group of BCL activists led by Tipu, a third year student of fine arts beat up Raju at around 3 pm as a sequel to previous enmity.

In a bid to settle the matter, BCL and pro-JSD student leaders met at the same place in presence of two assistant proctors. But at one stage of the meeting, the BCL activists attacked the pro-JSD leaders and activists leaving Mukut

and Raju critically injured.

Mukut alleged that the BCL cadres led by their law affairs secretary Arifuzzaman Rony, Dipayan Sarkar Dip of marketing department and activist Tipu all of a sudden attacked them with iron rods, hockey sticks and knives in presence of assistant proctors Jannatul Ferdous and Probas Kumer Karmaker.

"We shall lodge a case with Motihar police station against the BCL cadres," Mukut said.

RU proctor Chowdhury Zakaria said he will take legal steps after investigating the matter.

Meanwhile, the leaders and activists of different left-leaning political organisations at RU yesterday demanded immediate withdrawal of restriction on students' activities on the campus.

They also demanded a congenial atmosphere on campus to revive Rajshahi University Central Students' Union (RUCSU), ineffective for the last 19 years.

They criticised the university authorities for imposing indefinite restriction on rallies, processions and political activities of the student bodies on the campus.

RU imposed the restrictions on April 28 for an indefinite period following the bloody clash between Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) that left Shibir secretary Sharifuzzaman Noman killed on March 13.

The leaders alleged that the university authorities do not take any action against the BCL men committing crimes including extortion on the campus.

They said, Shibir is continuing their political activities at RU in the name of religious programmes under the nose of the university authorities.

Leaders and activists of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Jasod Chhatra League, Chhatra Union and Chhatra Moitree yesterday raised the aforesaid demands at a protest meeting.