

Drug smuggling rampant thru' C'nawabganj border

Poor women, children hired as cheap carriers

RABIUL HASAN DOLLAR,
Chapainawabganj

Chapainawabganj border has become a safe route for drug smuggling and their dispatch to Dhaka and other areas of the country while the smugglers use poor people, mostly women and children, as low cost carriers.

An organised gang of smugglers, mostly from Alatuli, Shahjahanpur, Charbagdanga unions of Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila, dispatch drugs via Godagari upazila of Rajshahi to different places of the country, said locals and law enforcers.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) recovered 5.5 kg of heroin, 500 grams of cocaine, 100 kg of hemp, 2,532 bottles containing 1,658 litres of liquor, 32,879 bottles of phenisidyl and 4,795 contraband injections and arrested 169 drug traders in the area in last one year, said sources of BGB Chapainawabganj 39 Battalion.

The seized amount would be only a small fraction of

smuggled drugs, said officials of BGB and other law enforcement agencies.

Most of the smuggled drugs are carried to different areas of the country by buses, goods-laden trucks and other transports from areas close to the border, they said.

Heroin traders mostly use bordering Alatuli, Shahjahanpur and Charbagdanga unions of Sadar upazila as they are virtually isolated from the district headquarters by the Padma River in absence of any road links.

Phenisidyl traders use Monaksha, Binodpur and Shabujpur unions of Shibganj upazila in Chapainawabganj.

Drug traders also carry phenisidyl in imported goods-laden trucks at Sonamsjid land port area.

Poor people, mostly women and children, are used as carriers of the smuggled drugs, BGB sources said.

BGB members of Diar Manik Char camp arrested

Joystsna, a housewife of Diar Manik Char area, and Taskira Khatun, a class eight student of Kodalkati High School in Sadar upazila, and recovered 500 grams of heroin from their possession at Godagari Rail Bazar on October 9 last year.

That time arrested Joystsna and Taskira told this correspondent at BGB Battalion headquarters in Chapainawabganj town that one Saiful Islam of Kodalkati village gave them four packets of heroin to hand it to one Kalu of Mohishalbari under Godagari upazila in Rajshahi.

They carried the heroin for Tk 800, they said.

Joystsna said her husband died four years ago and she with her two sons has to struggle for survival amid extreme poverty.

With easy availability of different kinds of drugs, drug abuse has spread to villages in most border areas of Chapainawabganj district.

"People of the border areas are poor and so, traf-

ickers can easily hire them as carriers. Mass awareness, strengthening security in the border areas and joint drives are needed to tackle the situation," said Lt Col Jahangir Hossain, commanding officer of 39 BGB Battalion.

"Every day 300 to 350 imported goods-laden trucks enter Sonamsjid land port from India. But we have no equipment for quickly detecting drugs in trucks. We need modern equipment for checking the goods-laden trucks," he said.

He also suggested launching a campaign by the administration, socio-cultural organisations and NGOs against the menace of drug abuse.

When contacted, officials in the Department of Narcotics Control in Chapainawabganj said their prime duty is to detect drugs and check their use inside the country but they have nothing to do with checking smuggling, which is the duty of law enforcers.



PHOTO: STAR

Passengers and pedestrians remain highly vulnerable to accidents as the signal bar at Mazampur level crossing in Kushtia town is not lowered during the passage of a train in the absence of any gateman there. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

150 out of 242 West Zone level crossings unmanned

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

A staggering 150 out of 242 level crossings under the West Zone of Bangladesh Railway are running without gatemen.

Besides, only 36 of the working gatemen are permanent staff of Bangladesh Railway while the rest 56 are temporarily employees working for a daily wage of Tk 80.

The poorly paid people, hardly getting any motivation for their work, do not regularly attend their duty at respective rail crossings to control traffic movement, said passengers and locals.

Collision between moving trains and road transports often leads to casualties and damage of vehicles as in absence of gatemen, drivers of buses and other vehicles tend to hastily

pass level crossings even when they see a fast approaching train at a near distance.

Two people were killed and 40 others injured when a running passenger bus collided with the engine of a Dhaka to Kolkata train at Uthli in Damurhuda upazila of Chuadanga district on Tuesday.

There was no gateman at the crossing to signal arrival of the moving train, passengers said, adding that ignoring their repeated request, the bus driver ran the vehicle on the level crossing.

The level crossing is not an authorised one, said Divisional Engineer of Bangladesh Railway (West Zone) Masudur Rahman.

Railway sources said 29 level crossings from Khulna rail station to Darshana in

Chuadanga district are under direct control of the Traffic Division of Bangladesh Railway but there are no gatemen in 14 of these crossings.

Besides, of the 108 level crossings under direct supervision of the Engineering Division of Bangladesh Railway, 68 crossings do not have any gateman, they said.

"There are 179 authorised level crossings under my jurisdiction from Khulna to Bheramara and Poradaha to Goalundo. Besides, there are 63 unauthorised level crossings, raising the total number of level crossings to 242," said Divisional Engineer Masudur Rahman.

"When a road is linked across the railway track, it is mandatory that the departments concerned

arrange a meeting with the railway department about coordination of the matter. But the provision is hardly followed," he said. The higher authorities of Bangladesh Railway have been informed of the acute shortage of gatemen, but to no effect.

Expressing resentment over the low pay for their risky job, several temporary gatemen said they get punishment for any accident while drivers of passenger and goods carrying vehicles who pass level crossings in defiance of rules always go unpunished.

Sometimes unruly drivers, eager to pass level crossings in haste, even attack gatemen when they put barriers at level crossings, they said.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers wash potatoes to make them look fresh before taking them to the market at Shakaria in Bogra Sadar upazila on Tuesday. Consumers prefer newly harvested categories of the winter vegetable but the prices, Tk 250 to 300 per maund, are still insufficient to bring profit for the growers.

3 child abductors arrested in two districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A battalion commander level flag meeting between BGB and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on Tuesday agreed to maintain peace on border.

The meeting discussed different border related problems, including curbing of smuggling.

Lt Col Jahangir Hossain, commander of 39 battalion of BGB, led the 10-member delegation while Sanjay Sharma, commander of 151 Battalion of BSF, led his country's team at the meeting held at a BSF camp.

BGB commander Jahangir Hossain termed the meeting 'fruitful'.

At a press briefing at his office on Tuesday, Jamil Hasan, additional

superintendent of police (ASP) of Tangail said Hosne Ara Jhuma, 20, introducing herself as a schoolteacher

Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested three child abductors from different places of Mymensingh and Gazipur districts on Tuesday.

Earlier on December 18, they arrested a female member of the gang and rescued an abducted child from her possession. The abductor, Hosne Ara Jhuma, 20, was arrested in Bhaluka upazila of Mymensingh district. She hails from Chhoto Baraigram village in Gafargaon upazila of the district.

On the same day, police with the help of local people caught the abductor, Jhuma, and rescued Nion from Batajore area in Bhaluka upazila of Mymensingh.

Arrested Jhuma hailed from Chhoto Baraigram village of Gafargaon upazila in Mymensingh district.

During investigation, DB police took Jhuma on two days' remand for quizzing.

As per her confession, detectives raided different places of Bhaluka upazila in Mymensingh and Sreepur upazila of Gazipur on Tuesday and arrested Jhuma's mother Nazma Khatun, 40, Lutfar Rahman, 23, and Ariful Islam Joj Miah, 25.

Tangail DB police officer in-charge Humayun Kabir said all the four arrestees are active members of a gang of child abductors. The abductors went to different villages and abducted children in guise of development workers of insurance companies, he said.

Outlaw demands toll from 2 Khulna UP chairmen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A leader of a newly floated outlawed party named New Purbo Bangla Communist Party (NPBCP) has demanded Tk 30 lakh as toll from two union parishad (UP) chairmen of Paikgachha upazila.

Godaipur UP chairman Kazi Abdus Salam Bachchu and Kapilmuni UP chairman Shahadat Hossain Dablu, in his GD, mentioned that the outlawed party leader has demanded Tk 10 lakh from him as toll.

We have been given death threats for failure in payment of toll as demanded by the outlawed party within a week of receiving the letters, the UP chairmen said.

Contacted, Paikgachha police station OC Inamul Haque admitted the facts.

member Rafiqul Islam Rafiq and the other by municipality unit general secretary Jobayer Bishwas--at the rally organised by the upazila unit on the occasion of the 64th founding anniversary of the Awami League backed student body at around 11:00am.

Local BCL sources said the two groups attacked each other following an altercation over holding of BCL upazila unit conference scheduled for January 15. Rafiq and Jobayer are the candidates for the post of upazila unit president, sources added.

Kazi Haniful Islam, officer in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station, said an internal feud has surfaced in the BCL upazila unit over the

upcoming council.

However, BCL anniversary programme was later held in Ishwardi upazila unit AL office. Additional police have been deployed in the area to avert any further trouble.

Pabna district unit BCL president Ahmed Sharif Dablu said they will investigate the matter and take necessary actions against the persons involved.

In Jhenidah, two factions of BCL Kaliganj upazila unit yesterday observed the anniversary programme separately.

One faction is backed by local AL lawmaker Abdul Mannan while the other by Upazila Parishad Chairman Anwarul Azim Anar.

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