

Two gangs abduct 105 fishermen

Loot trawlers, demand Tk 1 lakh ransom per victim



PHOTO: STAR
Rapid Action Battalion and coastguard arrest Golam Rasul, member of criminal gang Gama Bahini, and seize arms, bullets and mobiles from his possession during a joint drive in the Sundarbans yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Armed robbers kidnapped at least 105 fishermen for ransom in 48 hours till Friday afternoon, from Harbaria and Gangrail areas adjacent to Sundarbans, near the Bay of Bengal.

None of the kidnapped fishermen could be rescued till 3pm yesterday, said Md. Abul Hossain, general secretary of Sharankhola Fishermen's Association.

The first incident of kidnapping at gunpoint took place on Thursday at Harbaria of the Bay of Bengal as the gang belonging to notorious Al Amin Bahini and Jihad Bahini kidnapped 55 fishermen for ransom of Tk one lakh per victim.

The armed members of the two gangs attacked fishermen, beat them mercilessly and looted all fishes and their personal belongings including money from 39 fishing trawlers.

Again on Friday, the same notorious gangs kidnapped 50 fishermen demanding same amount of ransom per head in Gangrail area of the Bay of Bengal.

They also took away money, fishes and personal belongings from the fishing trawlers.

The two gangs also threatened to kill all kidnapped fishermen in case of failure to pay ransom by Monday, said Md.

Abul Hossain.

He alleged that because of indifference of civil administration and law enforcing agencies, rampant robberies and kidnapping of fishermen are on in the sea, rivers and forests. As a result, the country is facing an adverse impact on fish resources and supply.

Coastguard authorities of Mongla West Zone could not be contacted over phone for their comments despite several attempts yesterday.

However, OC Azizul Islam of Sharankhola PS admitted to sudden rise in such incidents of robberies and kidnapping of fishermen for ransom.

Joint forces of coastguards, Rab and police recovered 15 firearms and arrested four robbers during special operation early this month, the OC said.

According to a report from Bagerhat, Rab members on Friday evening arrested an armed robber and rescued three kidnapped fishermen from a trawler at Boleshwar in Patharghata upazila of the district.

The elite force also recovered a gun, 163 bullets and six mobile sets from the trawler, reports our correspondent.

The arrestee was identified as Golam Rasul, 30, a member of notorious 'Gama Bahini' of the Sundarbans and son of Ramzan Ali Fakir of Sonailtola village in Bagerhat.

Chanmuni's 'foreteller' caught

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police arrested the ethnic foreteller, whose declaration of a woman as witch led to her merciless torture by superstitious villagers, from Chandipur village under Bochaganj upazila in Dinajpur district early Friday.

A few days ago, the foreteller, Keitha Hasda alias Pelua Hasda identified Chanmuni Tudu, 30, wife of Laxmi Murmu, 42, of Madhabpur village under Pirganj upazila in Thakurgaon, as a witch and said she was responsible for prolonged illness of Lalmoni Tudu, 22, wife of Chunu Murmu, and several other villagers.

On Sunday night Chanmuni Tudu was sleeping with her husband Laxmi Murmu when she put a hand on his chest. He got scared and started crying, saying that his wife caught him to take his life.

Then the ethnic people of the village gathered at the house and started beating Chanmuni, said the victim and her parents.

The villagers said Chanmuni, as she was witch, had been sucking blood from the villagers, resulting in their illness.

When Chanmuni's

father Baburam Tudu, mother Champa Hasda and their four relatives went to Madhabpur village on Monday night the villagers beat them up and confined them there.

Hearing about the

Follow-up



PHOTO: STAR
Ethnic foreteller Keitha Hasda after his arrest yesterday, and right, torture victim Chanmuni Tudu being treated at Nababganj Upazila Health Complex in Dinajpur district.

incident, reporters of different print and electronic media and lawyers went to the village on Tuesday night, organised a meeting there and explained to the villagers that their idea about the so-called 'witch' was wrong.

Chanmuni's parents



PHOTO: STAR

brought her to their house at Burimandop village in Gopalganj union under Nababganj upazila in Dinajpur on Wednesday morning and admitted her to Nobabganj Health Complex.

Now Chanmuni is undergoing treatment there.

On Wednesday afternoon Lalmoni Tudu was admitted to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital where Dr Khairul Kabir, senior consultant of chest disease, identified her problem as complications in the lungs.

Lalmoni died at the hospital early Friday.

Boro farmers suffer for want of a transformer

UNB, Panchagarh

More than 1,000 Tentulia farmers are sitting idle for about five weeks as they could not irrigate their land for boro farming on time for want of a transformer.

Farmers of Chhopagachh, Barodalugachh and Mahigachh villages of Shalbahan union of the upazila alleged that Panchagarh PDB employees demanded Tk 30,000 from them as bribe to repair and reinstall a transformer which went out of order in December last, the time when farmlands and seedbeds were being irrigated with power-propelled pumps to prepare them for boro transplantation.

They said they used to irrigate their croplands with the help of 100 irrigation machines run by power.

Scores of farmers of the union along with dried up boro seedlings staged demonstration in front of the upazila parishad and Upazila Nirbahi Officer's offices protesting 'dillydallying' by local Power Development Board employees to repair and reinstall the 200 kv transformer. The transformer was removed from the power pole and taken away from the area over one month ago with assurance of early repair and re-installing.

Instead of timely repair and re-installing, the PDB officials allegedly demanded Tk 30,000 as 'reinstallation charge' and another Tk 5,000 as 'conveyance money' for carrying the transformer from Dinajpur to the union.

Over 50 farmers went to upazila chairman Muktarul Haque Muku and UNO Priyasindhu Talukdar seeking Tk 3 lakh as compensation from the local administration to offset the loss they incurred due to alleged corruption and negligence by PDB men.

They also submitted a complaint to them blaming a few local PDB employees and demanding early payment of compensation.

Contacted, Panchagarh PDB officials concerned denied the allegation claiming they took the transformer to Dinajpur which will take some more time for repair.



PHOTO: STAR

A child receives his first lesson on letters as Ramkrishna Mission in Barisal city observes traditional hate khori (initiation to writing) ritual marking Swaraswati Puja dedicated to the Hindu deity of wisdom yesterday.

THE DAILY STAR-ROBI ENGLISH FAIRS



PHOTO: STAR

Two schoolgirls take part in role-play during English language fair at Brother Andres High School in Noakhali yesterday. Over 100 kids of Noyanni High School and Brother Andres High School spent the eventful day through participating in joyful activities at the fair.

Kids of 3 more schools learn thru' fun

STAR NATIONAL DESK

School kids in Noakhali and Bagerhat spent an eventful day through participating in joyful activities to develop language skills as they took part in English language fairs at two schools in the districts yesterday.

Under English in Schools (EIS) programme, The Daily Star and mobile operator Robi jointly organised the fairs in coordination with the education ministry to encourage development of English language proficiency among secondary school students.

Adcomm Ltd is the creative and event partner of the fair.

Students of Noyanni High School and Brother Andres High School in Noakhali joined the fair at Andres High School auditorium while students of Bagerhat Government Girls' High School on their school premises, reports our



correspondents.

Each of the fair venues saw screening of Lion King, a globally renowned movie, followed by students' participation in spot quiz, vocabulary test, one word question and quick questions—all based on the movie. Selected students also took part in extempore speech on different topics and role play.

In Noakhali, more than 100 students of Noyanni High School and Brother Andres High School and their teachers took part in the festival at Andres High School auditorium. Headmistress Sister Agress Rozario inaugurated the fair in the morning.

The students also entertained the audience by singing songs. Prizes were

distributed among the winners of different events at the end of the programme.

Md Kamal Uddin and Kabir Ahmed, English teachers of Brother Andrej High school and Noyanni High school were present.

Two Robi representatives--Md Mehjab Uddin Shaon and Kazi Jahangir Alam Rashed--co-ordinated and conducted the programme.

In Bagerhat, around 100 students of Government Girls' High School took part in spot quiz, vocabulary test, one word question, quick questions, extempore speech on different topics and role play at the fair.

Prizes were distributed among the winners of different events at the end of the programme.

English teachers Probr Kumar and Mizanur Rahman Khan of the school were present at the festival.



PHOTO: STAR

Winners of different events at English Language fair at Bagerhat Government Girls' High School along with their teachers pose for camera on the school premises yesterday.

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