



Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal receives arms from surrendering robbers at a programme arranged on Moheshkhali Ideal High School ground in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

43 robbers surrender, pledge normal life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Forty-three people belonging to six armed gangs active in coastal upazilas Moheshkhali and Kutubdia under the district yesterday surrendered to Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

They also handed 94 firearms and 8,000 bullets to Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal at a function on Moheshkhali Ideal High School ground at 11:30am.

Rab and police have long been encouraging the criminals to return to normal life and some media persons mediated in the process.

At one stage, many armed criminals in the coastal areas expressed their willingness to return to normal life and 43 of them surrendered in the first phase yesterday.

"There are more criminals including sea robbers still at large. Attempts will be made to bring them back to normal life," said local lawmaker Asheq Ullah Rafiq.

Earlier about 250 robbers in the Sundarbans surrendered following persuasion with the help of media people, which helped to restore peace in the large forest area, Rab officials said.

Inspired by the success, the elite force took the initiative for surrender of the criminals in coastal upazilas Moheshkhali, Kutubdia, Pekua, Banskhal and Anwara.

The 43 criminals who surrendered yesterday are from Nonachhari, Jahpua, Adharghona, Hoanker Kalagazirpara, Keruntoli of Moheshkhali upazila and Debengapara, Chhoto Moheshkhali, Kutubjom and Sonadia in Baro Moheshkhali.

Major Mehedi Hasan, company commander of Cox's Bazar camp under Rab-7, expressed hope that fishermen as well as local residents will now feel safe as surrender of the criminals will help the law enforcers to ensure security in the coastal areas with ease.

"With improvement of overall law and order situation in the area, Moheshkhali island and the sea coast will also become safe for the tourists, he said.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, Saimum Sarwar Komol MP, Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed, DIG (Police) of Chattogram Range Khandaker Golam Faruque, Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner Md Kamal Hossain, district Superintendent of Police ABM Masud Hossain, district Awami League President Sirajul Mostafa and General Secretary Mujibur Rahman spoke at the function.

Govt rice for fishermen seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A trader was arrested with 22 sacks of rice meant for Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme in Ramgati upazila of Laxmipur yesterday.

Ramgati Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Rafiqul Haque said he in cooperation with a police team, acting on a tip-off, raided trader Jamal's godown and seized the rice, meant for distributing among local fishermen during the ongoing ban on hilsa netting. They also detained Jamal for interrogation, the UNO said.

25 injured as Kushtia AL factions clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

At least 25 activists of ruling Awami League (AL) and Jubo League were injured during a clash between themselves at Bharol village in Mirpur upazila yesterday.

The clash took place over establishing supremacy between the men of Chaitan union unit Jubo League President Zohurul Islam and the men of the president of the same union unit of AL Abdur Rahim.

Mirpur Police Station Officer-In-Charge (OC) Rafiqul Islam said people of both groups locked in altercation over various previous issues. It turned into a clash at about 2:30pm.

Both the factions pelted stones at each other and used sticks and iron

rods indiscriminately, leaving at least 25 people of both groups injured during the hour-long fight.

The injured included Saidul Islam, 30, Akramul Haq, 34, Abdul Kuddus Gazi, 48, Nazrul Islam, 60, Nazmul Islam, 36, Dablu, 24, Mojnur Rahman, 36, Litu Hossain, 35, Jony, 17, Abdul Gaffar of Zohurul group, and Golhar Ali, 50, Josim Uddin, 38, Mogol Ali, 48, of Rahim group.

They were admitted to Kushtia General Hospital and Mirpur Upazila Health Complex, while the others took primary treatment.

The situation is under control and additional police have been deployed to avert any untoward situation, the OC said.

Love for a squirrel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

It's a different kind of love of two youths for a flying squirrel (Bangla term urukku). Locally urukku is called solok.

A rare species of flying squirrel was caught by villagers at Harinath Para in Khagrachhari town on Thursday.

However, on Friday, it was released to the forest with the help of two onlookers -- Animesh Chakma and Shubhashish Chakma. Shubhashish bought the flying squirrel for Tk 1,000.

After the flying squirrel was caught on Thursday noon, onlookers gathered around it. Many said they had seen the rare species animal for the first time.

Samar Chakma, who caught the squirrel, said they saw two flying squirrels on a coconut tree and tried to drive them away. The two squirrels jumped off the tree and fell on the ground. He caught one of the squirrels and kept it

in an iron cage. A dog bit another to death.

Hearing the news of flying squirrel being caught, Animesh and Shubhashish of the town came to see it. They expressed their interest to buy the flying squirrel for Tk 1,000. After buying the squirrel, they released it to Rangapanichhara Bon Kutir area (a Buddhist religious organisation) adjacent to Harinath Para.

"After seeing the flying squirrel, I Google searched to learn about it. From Google search, I learnt that it was a rare species animal. So I bought it and arranged its release," Shubhashish said.

District Livestock Officer Dr Abdul Mannan said there are three kinds of species of flying squirrel in Bangladesh. Urukku is one of them. Its scientific name is Hylopetes Alboniger.



This flying squirrel, caught by locals at Harinath Para in Khagrachhari town on Thursday, was released to the wild on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR

IU student kills self

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A student of Kushtia Islamic University (IU) committed suicide in his dormitory room on Friday night.

The victim was Nazmul Hasan, a third year student at the Department of Law. Hailing from Barat village in Tala upazila of Satkhira, Nazmul was a resident of room No 229 in Saddam Hossain Hall.

Nazmul's friend Nadim Hossain said Nazmul called him over his cellphone at about 7:15pm and asked him to come to his room at 7:30pm. Nadim went to Nazmul's room at the stipulated time and found that the room was locked from inside.

Getting no response despite repeated calls, Nadim informed other students about the matter.

The students broke open the door and found Nazmul hanging from a ceiling fan.

The reason why Nazmul committed suicide could not be known. A number of residents of the dormitory said Nazmul was very cool by nature and was a heavy smoker.

IU Police Station Officer-in-Charge Ratan Sheikh said police primarily assumed it to be suicide.

20 shops gutted in Bakerganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A devastating fire gutted around 20 shops and two houses at Bakerganj upazila early Saturday.

Bakerganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Masuduzzaman said the fire may have started from a short circuit in one of the shops.

Most of the shops are grocery, cosmetics, stationary and medicine shops, and the damage is initially estimated to be around Tk 2 crore.

Three firefighting units put out the fire in two hours.

Bakerganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Saleh Muntanjir said they have made a list of the victims, who will be given compensation.

Vegetable farming on sandy land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Farmers of char (landmass emerging from riverbed) areas along the Teesta river basin in Sundarganj upazila are improving their economic condition by growing vegetables on unused land and their homesteads.

The sandy lands adjacent to dwelling houses in char areas used to remain abandoned round the year and were often used as grazing fields for cattle. Farmers started growing vegetables on the lands as instructed by officials of the upazila agriculture department, locals said.

The trend of vegetable farming in such lands spread to different char lands along the river basin.

On a visit to Dahabandh char area, this corre-

spondent saw that the fallow lands had turned green with ginger, garlic, turmeric, bean, papaya, pumpkin and other vegetables.

Raju Mia, a bean grower of the village, said he cultivated beans on one bigha of abandoned land last year and earned Tk a profit of Tk 20,000 after covering the production cost. This year, he planted different kinds of bean on one and a half bighas of land and expects to get better yield.

Faizur Rahman, a marginal farmer of Santiram village, said he cultivated turmeric on 20 decimals of land adjacent to his house last year and got 25 maunds of green turmeric, which he sold at Tk 2,000 per maund.

Local farmers pointed out that over 50 small

farmers of Ramjibon union cultivated different kinds of vegetables in their homesteads and adjacent abandoned lands this year and earned additional income.

Vegetable farming is more profitable than farming crops like paddy and jute, so farmers want to cultivate the produce in their homesteads and fallow lands, said Ramjan Ali, a sharecropper.

Sundarganj Upazila Agriculture Officer Rashedul Islam said farmers are very interested in vegetable farming as they can get additional profit with a little investment.

"We encourage farmers to use abandoned lands for vegetable cultivation, and the number of growers is increasing gradually every year," he added.



PHOTO: STAR

What was abandoned land has been turned into a turmeric field by farmers in Ramjibon char along the Teesta river basin in Sundarganj upazila of Gaibandha. Right, a papaya tree laden with fruits on an earlier unused land beside a homestead at Dahabandh char in the upazila.

Puja mandap furniture vandalised

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A group of youths vandalised furniture of a puja mandap at Nihanda village in Shibhalaya upazila on Friday, on the day of Dashami.

Villager Rathin Saha, general secretary of upazila unit Bangladesh Puja Uddjapon Parishad, said Najmul Islam Jony, 26, son of Shamsul Haque, and Md Ariful Islam Ayan, 25, son of Md Abdul Alim of Dash Hira village, and two others went to the mandap at his home compound around 8:30pm.

They hit his daughter Chaiti and nephew Prioti with their motorcycles at the time. When his younger brother Liton Kumar protested the incident, they got angry and gave them threat, said Rathin.

They left the spot and returned to the mandap with 25/30 unidentified people after 10 minutes. They broke chairs on the mandap premises. They also hit the windows of houses to create panic. After the incident, the celebration programme was closed as the devotees fled the venue due to the attack, said Rathin.

On information, police rushed to the spot and the criminals fled the scene immediately, leaving a motorcycle, he said.

A case was filed against the attackers, said Officer-in-Charge of Shibhalaya Police Station Khondaker Imam Hossain.

Bring culprits to book

Pabna citizens' body demands

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

People from all walks of life yesterday staged a demonstration in front of Pabna Press Club, demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the culprits who attacked journalist Habibur Rahman Swapan on October 13.

They also blamed police for inaction and not arresting any of the attackers even a week after the incident.

Cross section of people, including local businessmen, social workers, journalists, authors and teachers took part in the two-hour-long programme, organised under the banner of 'Pabna Sachetan Nagarik Somaj,' a citizens' platform, with Pabna Diabetic Association President Baby Islam in the chair.

Freedom fighter Robiul Islam, left leaning party leaders Sultan Ahmed Buro, Jakir Hossain and Rejaul Karim Moni, journalist Akhinur Islam, businessmen Kafi Sarkar and Muktar Hossain and author Sayed Hossain Dara, spoke among others.

Alongside criticising police for inaction, the speakers urged the authorities concerned to shift the investigation to Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) or Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

"The attack on journalist Habibur is a threat to free thinking people in the society. No one, who tries to build a better society, is safe if the attackers and the masterminds behind the attack are not punished," Baby Islam said.

Unidentified criminals attacked Habibur, staff reporter of Bangla daily Sangbad, in Pathartola area when he was on his way to home on a rickshaw on October 13.

Locals rushed him to Pabna General Hospital, from where he was later shifted to Dhaka as he needed an urgent orthopaedic surgery after the attackers badly fractured his left hand.

'Resist BNP-Jamaat politics'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

District Workers' Party leaders yesterday called upon the people to resist terrorism-based politics of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

They said this at a rally in the town.

They also warned about the conspiracy to foil the upcoming general elections. They said a vested quarter is trying to create obstacle to holding the elections smoothly.

They urged the people to elect AL-led 14-party alliance candidates to establish a secular democratic country with the spirit of the War of Liberation to continue the present development trend and increasing economic growth.

Local lawmaker and also Workers Party of Bangladesh district unit President Yasin Ali and General Secretary Foyjul Islam spoke, among others, at the rally.

They said during the BNP-Jamaat alliance government (2001-2006), the criminals unleashed a reign of terror in the country with state patronisation, resulting in the August 21 grenade attack, Shah SM Kibria killing, ten trucks arms smuggling and others.