

They abducted 300 children in last 6 years

Police arrest 3 members of a kidnapping gang

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Uttara division claimed to have arrested three members of a kidnapping gang who allegedly abducted over 300 children in Dhaka and adjoining Gazipur district in the last six years.

The arrestees are Milton Masud, 45, the mastermind, and his associates Sahinur Rahman, 38, and Sufia Begum, 48.

Police said the abductors used to demand ransom between Tk 10,000 and Tk 50,000 for the children's release depending on the financial status of their parents. The children were released and returned to their families after the ransoms were paid.

According to police, the kidnapping gang members used to keep close watch of schools, markets, coaching centres, or madrasas in search of targets aged between eight and 16 years.

After observing for a few days, they targeted children who usually travel alone to the institutions.

The syndicate members then struck a "friendship" with the victim, identifying them as relatives or friends of their parents. While talking to the child, the gang members would try to get an idea about the child's family solvency and collect contact details.

Police said unlike most kidnapping

cases, the abductors' strategy of demanding low ransom and quick release of abductees paid off, since parents who were mostly concerned about the quick return of their children, usually didn't file complaints with police stations.

"The gang's strategy compelled the families of the victims to remain silent. This helped them to keep off the police radar for such a long time," said Tohidul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of Uttara Division of DMP, yesterday.

Police said they got a trace of the syndicate after a general diary was filed over the missing of a six-year-old with the Uttara East Police Station on March 24.

Police arrested the three kidnapers on Friday from different areas of the capital. Two cell phones and five SIM cards were recovered from the arrestees, said police.

In primary interrogation, police said, the arrestees admitted to their crimes. Masud, a drug dealer, was the mastermind, while Shahinur, a so-called journalist of an online news portal, used to collect the ransom money via mobile financial services (MFS), said police.

"Police could have taken action against this gang long ago if the parents were responsible," said Morshed Alam, deputy commissioner of Uttara Division of DMP, urging victims' families to come forward to report such incidents without any delay.



With her grandson by her side, a woman collects fallen Krishnachura leaves from her backyard, delicately balancing them on the folds of her saree. With every step, she imparts her wisdom and love to the young boy, teaching him the beauty of nature. This photo was taken in Barishal city recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Implement Teesta master plan with own funding

Demand speakers at event

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The government should implement the Teesta master plan by raising local funds to save people around the Teesta basin, demanded leaders of Teesta Bachao Nadi Bachao Sangram Parishad in Rangpur yesterday.

They urged the government to take immediate steps to solve the Teesta issue with India, as the problem has caused floods, river erosion, and left many jobless.

A mass gathering was organised in Rangpur in this regard.

They also suggested the government seek the help of river experts from different countries and allocate funds in the upcoming budget, as it did for the Padma bridge.

The Teesta project, if implemented, would help boost the local economy, they added.

The speakers emphasised that millions of people in several northern districts have been affected by the Teesta river, and untimely floods have become a common problem around the Teesta basin.

Although discussions about the Teesta issue have been going on for several decades, no solution has been found. Among others, former ministers Rashed Khan Menon,

Millions of people in several northern districts have been affected by the river, and untimely floods have become a common problem around the Teesta basin.

Hasanul Haq Inu, lawmaker Shamim Haidar Patwari, and Jasad general secretary Nazmul Haq Prodhan were present at the programme.

Mostafizur Rahman Mostafa, mayor of Rangpur City Corporation and leader of Jatiya Party, inaugurated the event, while Narzul Islam Hakkani, president of Teesta Bachao Nodi Bachao Sangram Parishad, chaired the gathering.

The Teesta master plan aims to ensure the sustainable and equitable use of water resources between Bangladesh and India, promote irrigation, and reduce flood risks. It also aims to address the issue of water sharing between the two countries.

Heavy vehicles putting 2nd Teesta Bridge in danger

Despite alternative route, they continue to ply the vulnerable bridge, causing damage



S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

The Sheikh Hasina Teesta Bridge, also known as the second Teesta Bridge, over the Teesta in Mahipur area on the Kakina Mahipur route in Kaliganj is in a vulnerable condition due to heavy vehicles, especially stone-laden trucks, plying over it every day.

The bridge was constructed in 2018 at a cost of Tk 121 crore for light vehicles, but hundreds of heavy vehicles go over it each day, causing damage to the bridge and the approach roads.

The 15km connecting road on both sides of the bridge is getting destroyed, and locals are concerned that the bridge may collapse at any moment.

According to Mohor Ali, a local businessman near the bridge, 1,500-1,600 trucks carrying stones

from Burimari land port ply the bridge daily, and the bridge vibrates when they pass over it.

Heavy vehicles are allowed to move through the first Teesta bridge established at Lalmonirhat upazila, but many drivers opt to avoid the first bridge to save time and fuel costs.

Burimari land port's truck driver, Nabir Hossain, informed The Daily Star that almost all of the 1,900 trucks registered in the area are using the Sheikh Hasina Teesta Bridge. It saves them 13-15 liters of fuel and 55km of travel, as there is no toll when traveling over this bridge.

Although barricades were initially put in place in October 2018 to stop the movement of heavy vehicles, they were removed last February, and now all types of vehicles are moving over the bridge, said locals.

Manjur Kader Islam, Lalmonirhat

LGED executive engineer, said plying of such vehicles is harmful to the bridge and connecting roads, and the local administration has been requested to take action in this regard.

However, no order has been received by the authorities to stop the movement of stone-laden heavy vehicles over the bridge, according to Kaliganj Police Station OC Golam Rasul.

Jahir Imam, UNO of Kaliganj, said the issue was discussed in the law and order meeting.

Lalmonirhat Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Ullah stated police must take strict measures to prevent overloaded heavy vehicles from crossing the bridge. Regular mobile courts will be conducted by the district administration to ensure that as well, he added.

Elephant 'electrocuted' to death in Sherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The forest officials and police yesterday recovered the body of an elephant from Bakakura area of Garo Hills in Sherpur's Jhenaigati upazila.

A herd of elephants entered the area from across the Indian border and raided paddy fields, causing a lot of damage to the crops, said Monirul Alam Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Jhenaigati Police Station, quoting locals.

"Locals found the male elephant, aged around four years, dead in the muddy boro field and informed forest officials and police. On information, police recovered the body around 10:00am," added the OC.

The elephant might have been electrocuted by traps set up by farmers to save their produce from such attacks, said Makrul Islam Akanda, Rangtia range officer in Jhenaigati.

Some galvanised iron and electric wires have also been seized from the area, the official added.

Necessary actions will be taken after receiving the post-mortem report, said Faruk Al Masud, upazila



Must protect Old Brahmaputra

Locals claim dredging project has turned the river into narrow canal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Eminent Mymensingh citizens have urged the authorities to save the Old Brahmaputra river, which is the longest river flowing into the region.

Under the banner of "Media Campaign" organised by Jonoudyogh, a citizens' forum, they expressed their dissatisfaction with the ongoing dredging work, which they claim has turned the river into a channel at various points.

The dredging work, which began in 2019 with a cost of Tk 2,763 crore, is scheduled to be completed next year. However, the citizens claimed that there is no visible navigation in the river.

They alleged that the river has been turned into a canal in the name of dredging.

Advocate Nazrul Islam Chhunu, the convener of the forum, lamented that the river has taken its shape like a pond, and people can easily cross its knee-deep water at various points.

The organisers demanded proper dredging of the river to restore it.

Meanwhile, a group of youths, under the banner "Mriter Chitkar," staged a protest rally in Kachari Ferry Ghat area to save the river.



Two girls perform at the second national conference of Bangladesh Adivasi Union in Gaibandha yesterday. A rally was also held on Gobindaganj-Dinajpur regional highway on the occasion.

PHOTO: STAR

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Ensure their basic rights

Speakers tell event on indigenous people

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

The government should ensure the fundamental rights and constitutional recognition of indigenous people of hills and plain land area, demanded speakers at the second national conference of Bangladesh Adivasi Union in Gaibandha yesterday.

They also sought a separate land commission for the indigenous people living in the plain land, speedy and full implementation of Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, enactment of indigenous protection laws to ensure the livelihood and security of their lives, and a stop to eviction of the