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Army leading joint operation against KNF

Rab arrests 'key KNF leader'

MONG SING HAI MARMA and MOKAMMEL SHUVO

In the wake of recent bank robberies, abduction and attacks on security personnel, Army Chief General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed yesterday said a coordinated operation had been launched in Bandarban against regional armed group Kuki-Chin National Front.

"The intelligence agencies, Border Guard Bangladesh, Rab, police, Ansar and army are doing what they should do in their respective fields. The approach is holistic. Bangladesh Army is leading the operation... The operation will continue until the terrorists are eliminated," he told reporters at Bandarban Cantonment.

Several suspects have been arrested and two firearms recovered, the army chief told reporters in Bandarban.

"We are not declaring a war against any group. We are moving strategically. Whether or not there will be direct confrontation will depend on the situation. The criminals have left their firearms [somewhere] and mingled with the common people."

Meanwhile, Rab arrested Cheusim Bawm, one of the chief coordinators of Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF) central committee, on Saturday night, said Rab-15 Commanding Officer Lt Col HM Sajjad Hossain.

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Army Chief General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed

The joint forces surrounded Sharanpara area in Bandarban Sadar before Rab raided Cheusim's house and found him hiding in a locked cupboard, he told reporters at Bandarban Zilla Parishad office.

An airgun was recovered from the house, he added. Cheusim, a relative of KNF Chief Nathan Bawm, is a founding member of KNF, he said.

He used to coordinate with the KNF leadership and militant leader Shamim Mahfuz of Jamaatul Ansar Fil Indal Sharqiya, Lt Col Sajjad said.

A contract between KNF and the militant organisation was signed at his house, said the officer.

On April 2 night, a group of armed men broke into the Ruma upazila parishad office and snatched the firearms from security personnel before robbing Sonali Bank and abducting its manager. In less than 16 hours after the incident, groups of armed men robbed Sonali Bank and Krishi Bank in Thanchi.

Then on April 4, gunfights took place between police and an armed group that attacked Thanchi Police Station. The government says the attack and the three bank robberies were carried out by the KNF.

The KNF, thought to be formed by people from the Bawm community in Bandarban, emerged in 2022.

KNF's media and intelligence wing chief known as Colonel Solomon wrote on the group's verified Facebook page on Friday that KNF launched the attacks because a committee to restore peace in the region violated an agreement signed between KNF and the committee.

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DESTINATION: 'WANABARI'! ... Ahona captures her little girls' palpable excitement in a photograph just minutes before they board the train to Rajshahi from Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday afternoon. She was on her way to her parents' house with her husband, two daughters and niece for the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Road crashes, fatalities rise steeply from January

Shows BRTA data; experts point at the authorities' failure to enforce measures

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The numbers of road accidents and deaths saw a sharp rise in the first three months of this year compared to the corresponding period last year.

Experts blamed the spike on the authorities' failure to implement specific measures and a lack of commitment to ensure road safety.

Crashes rose by 43.95 percent and deaths by 30 percent, according to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority data.

At least 1,367 people were killed and 1,778 injured in 1,464 road accidents from January to March this year, the data shows.

In the first three months of 2023, the number of accidents was 1,017, that of deaths was 1,051 and injured 1,440.

BRTA first began publishing accident data in January last year based on road crashes data collected by its divisional offices.

The transport regulator started collecting the data after top officials of the road transport and bridges ministry on several occasions sharply criticised different non-government organisations for publishing "fabricated" reports on road accidents and fatalities.

Those organisations, however, regularly published data based on media reports. They have termed the BRTA data "a very conservative

	Jan-March 2023	Jan-March 2024
Crashes	1,017	1,464
Deaths	1,051	1,367
Injuries	1,440	1,778



estimation".

BRTA data also differs from the data collected by police in this regard, they said.

According to BRTA, at least 404 people were killed in 437 road crashes in January this year, while the numbers of deaths and crashes were 333 and 322 last January.

At least 523 people died in 569 road crashes in February this year while 303 were killed in 308 crashes in February last year.

In March this year, the numbers of deaths and crashes were 440 and 458 respectively while in March last year, 415 people died in 387 crashes.

The BRTA data said that throughout 2023 at

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UPAZILA POLLS AL in for bitter infighting

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

In the wake of Awami League's decision not to back any candidate and allow anyone to use the party's electoral symbol in the upcoming upazila elections, many grassroots and central leaders are throwing their weight behind the candidates of their liking.

Ultimately, a political power struggle will likely ensue in the coming weeks among grassroots leaders, incumbent ministers and MPs, defeated MP candidates and the so-called AL independent lawmakers who won the January election race.

Grassroots leaders are making desperate efforts to win the election already, while AL big shots, ministers and parliament members are seeking to retain control over upazila parishes.

Take some examples.

AL Central Working Committee Member and Barishal-1 MP Abul Hasnat Abdullah on March 31 announced the "AL candidates" for all 10 upazilas of the district without any discussion with the respective MPs in those areas, sources said.

Most MPs from the district, which has six constituencies, are also trying hard to field candidates loyal to them.

Noakhali district AL President and Subarnachar upazila Chairman AHM Khairul Anam Chowdhury, 75, at an extended meeting of the upazila on Thursday said Noakhali-4 MP Ekramul Karim Chowdhury named his son Atahar Ishrak Sabab Chowdhury as chairman candidate

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Man, his son found dead in a city flat

Injured daughter rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday recovered the bodies of a man and his teenage son from their flat in the capital's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

Moshiur Rahman, 50, was a former assistant engineer at a real estate company, and his son Sadab, 18, was a college student, said Imran Hossain, assistant commissioner (Tejgaon) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Moshiur's 13-year-old daughter Synthia, 13, a seventh-grader, was found unconscious on the floor of the second-floor flat, he said.

Imran said it appeared that Moshiur strangled his children and then died by suicide.

"Moshiur's wife, who teaches at a coaching centre, was not home at the time. She returned home and rang the bell for a long time, but there was no answer. With the help of the landlord and neighbours, she broke in and saw Moshiur's body hanging from a ceiling fan. Sadab was found dead and Synthia was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition."

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Members of the Armed Police Battalion stand guard outside the Ruma Upazila Parishad office in Bandarban. Armed men attacked the facility on the night of April 2 and snatched the firearms from security personnel. Law enforcers and security forces members patrolled the streets in the district yesterday.

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA

BUSINESS

Govt asks ministries to tighten belt

The finance ministry has instructed ministries and divisions not to seek any block allocation in the upcoming budget to avoid misuse of the hard-earned money since the government's capacity to spend has been constrained by lower tax collections.

Last week, the finance division issued a circular asking all ministries and divisions to send by April 29 their budget proposals for 2024-2025 and their expenditure plans for the following two financial years to help prepare the midterm budgetary framework.

The further belt-tightening by the government comes as the country continues to struggle to raise enough taxes to maintain its expenses and bankroll development projects on its own.

Bangladesh's revenue as a share of GDP is among the lowest in the world and significantly below the peers.

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