

Masked men in morning blitz rob city bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a commando style operation unprecedented in recent memory in the country, masked armed bandits looted money and prize bonds from a bank vault and its counter yesterday.

After the dacoity, the bandits forced all the employees including the manager and the customers into the vault at gunpoint, locked it and fled away safely.

Coming in two autorickshaws and a taxi cab, 12 bandits held the employees and customers at gunpoint, looted over Tk. 17.5 lakh and prize bonds for Tk. 5000 and sped away in the same vehicles.

They did the 'operation' in about 15 minutes at the Sonali Bank branch at Jute Research Institute at Manik Miah Avenue during the busy morning hours.

The bank is housed on the first floor of a two-storied building.

Witnesses said the bandits appeared on the premises of the building at about 9:05 am, posing as customers.

Three of them entered the first floor at first. In less than a minute, five others followed them. They fanned out inside the bank, wore masks and brought out their firearms in no time, and warned all not to move or cry for help.

Two of them went straight to the cash counter and snatched Tk. 5.5 lakh which was drawn from the vault, an employee told journalists later.

"Entering into the bank, the gang spread inside and took total control

of the office. Five of them had revolvers and another had a rifle", he said.

Some of them then went to manager Ayebur Rahman and cashier Amirul Islam and took the

keys of the vault at gunpoint.

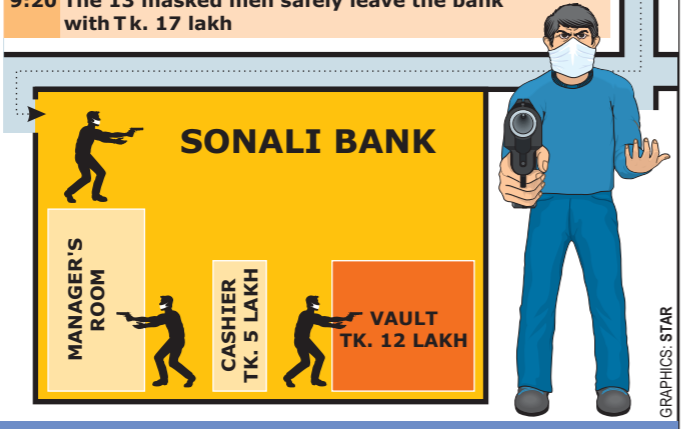
They opened the lock of the vault

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15 MINUTES WITH DARING CAPERS

PARLIAMENT BUILDING

- 9:00 Bank opens as usual--without a guard
- 9:05 Two masked men enter & loot at gunpoint Tk. 5.5 lakh from the cashier
- 9:07 The masked men obtain the keys to the vault from the manager & the cashier
- 9:10 More masked men appear and go inside the vault
- 9:15 They clean the vault & drag bank officials inside it
- 9:20 The 13 masked men safely leave the bank with Tk. 17 lakh



Another girl takes her life to escape stigma

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another teenager has taken her life following gangrape.

Thirteen-year-old Fahima Akhtar took her life by hanging herself from the ceiling at their house at Tollabagh in Mirpur thana of the city on Sunday night after three local youths raped her.

The alleged rapists were identified as Sumon, Nasir and Halim. They took her to an almost abandoned five-storey building nearby and violated her, family members said.

The youngest among three sisters and one brother, Fahima read up to class five.

The victim's mother, Sobura, told this correspondent Fahima was helping her brother in selling chatpati just outside their house at around 11 pm. When her brother

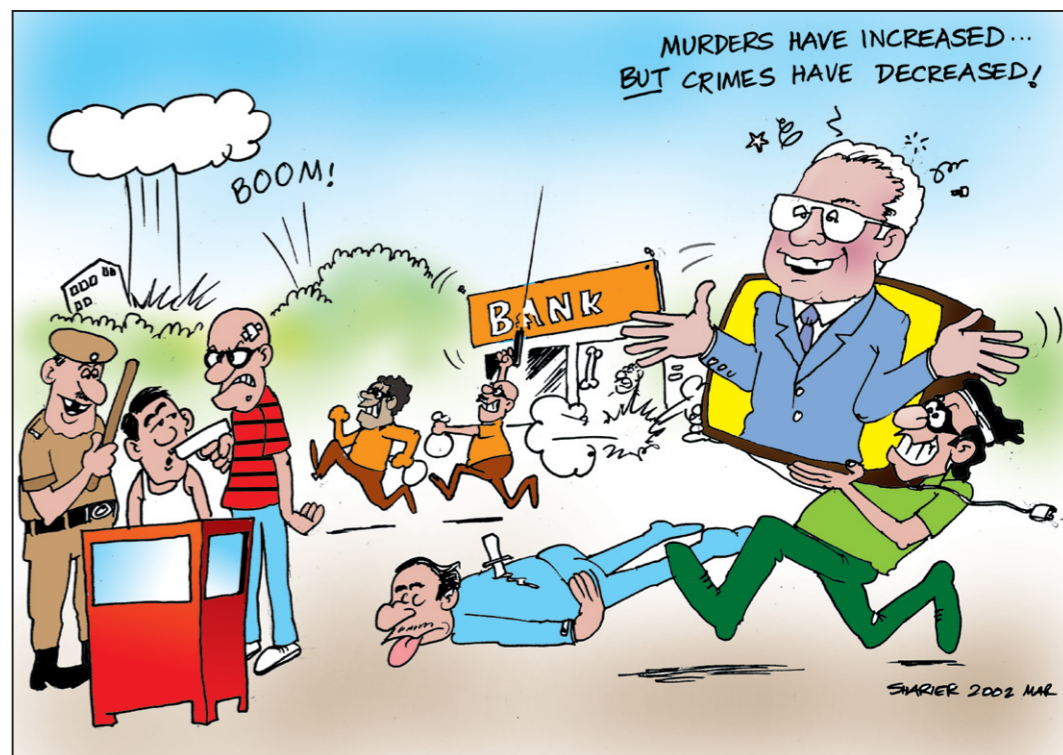
went inside the house to bring some spices, three youths standing in front of the five-storey building called her saying, "Come here, some one wants to talk to you."

She went on, "The building is almost abandoned. Only a young garment worker named Mukul stays in one room on the ground floor. The three youths took my daughter there."

A sobbing Sobura said they were looking for Fahima since her brother could not trace her after coming out of the house. A neighbour named Ripon informed us that she was in a room at the nearby building.

Some other neighbours said the three youths forcibly ousted Mukul from his room and took its lock and key. On the previous day, the youths had kept a stolen motorbike in that room and warned Mukul not to say

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Gujarat calm

Death toll rises to 540

REUTERS, Ahmedabad

Indian police shot dead two rioters in the bloodied western state of Gujarat yesterday but the situation was generally calm as the toll from the country's worst religious violence in a decade climbed to 540.

Police opened fire to control a violent mob in a remote rural area, killing two, the Press Trust of India reported.

State officials said most areas were peaceful and there were no major clashes.

"The worst is over," senior state government official Ashok Narayan told Reuters. "I wouldn't say it is normal but we're slowly moving towards it."

Although there was no major trouble, there were isolated clashes in rural areas, he said, adding the toll continued to rise mainly as more bodies were found.

The toll rose to 540, including 58 Hindus burned to death in last Wednesday's train attack by a suspected Muslim bomb that triggered the wave of revenge killings.

But the main opposition Congress party said the death toll was more than 800, citing figures gathered by its offices across Gujarat, India's second-most industrialised state.

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C'wealth won't suspend Zimbabwe before polls

AASHA MEHREEN AMIN, from Coolom, Australia

The Commonwealth summit yesterday turned down the British-led calls to suspend Zimbabwe's membership before this week's presidential election.

However, it warned Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe that he could face punitive measures if the election is rigged.

In a compromise deal after three days of talks, which split the Commonwealth summit in Coolom, Australia, along racial lines, the Commonwealth leaders formed a three-nation taskforce empowered to impose penalties ranging from

collective disapproval to complete suspension from the group.

Britain, former colonial master of Zimbabwe, regretted that the group had once again failed to punish Mugabe for his political violence, but African leaders insisted that it would be wrong to act before the elections scheduled for March 9 and 10.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government yesterday released a statement on the current situation in Zimbabwe, referring to the report by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) on the Harare Declaration.

At a press briefing at the media centre near the Commonwealth

Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) venue, Australian Prime Minister John Howard said the heads of government have decided to wait until the completion of the report by the observer group on the presidential elections in Zimbabwe.

"We will respond to the report in keeping with the Harare Declaration and the Millbrook Plan of Action which ranges from collective disapproval to complete suspension."

According to the CHOGM statement, during the discussions, the heads of government expressed their deep concern at the violence and intimidation surrounding the election campaign.

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Law on access to information may be framed

UNB, Dhaka

The government is contemplating enacting a new law to ensure citizens' right to access to official information.

Making a thorough study of the related laws of different neighbouring and developed countries, the Law Commission has submitted a report that is now being reviewed by the Law Ministry.

Talking to a group of journalists, Law Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed yesterday said it is a new law to allow people to have right to

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INSIDE TODAY

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They lay dead because they reported facts
Column: Straight from the heart
Afsan Chowdhury

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Dhaka welcomes Parisian haute couture

Main accused arrested Autopsy finally sees no sign of rape or murder of Sabina

NAZRUL ISLAM AND ANWAR ALI, Gurudaspur, Natore

Police yesterday arrested Sayem Uddin, 28, the main accused in the sensational Sabina 'murder' case from his village hideout in the early hours of yesterday.

Fifteen-year-old Sabina of the remote Poalshura Daripara village in Gurudaspur was allegedly gang-raped and murdered on the night of February 28, and her body was found hanging from a mango tree in front of Sayem's house.

Investigating authorities placed the main accused before the Gurudaspur Magistrate Court and sought a seven-day remand for interrogation. The court will hear the remand prayer today.

Meanwhile, an influential section of the ruling BNP has been trying to save its local leaders and activists who were also arrested in connection with the murder case, local

people said. Earlier, police arrested village BNP leaders Rabbel, Javed Ali Pramanik, Tustu Mia and Karfu Bibi on the night of March 2.

A murder case was recorded with the Gurudaspur police station and police said it would carry out further investigation based on Sabina's post-mortem report.

Meanwhile, in a surprising twist of event, a member of the three-member medical board who had previously indicated rape and murder in a preliminary report declined yesterday, saying that Sabina had committed suicide.

In its post-mortem report submitted yesterday, the board said no evidence of rape or murder was found on Sabina's body.

After she was allegedly raped by Sayem in an earlier incident on the night of February 9, Sabina herself

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Hasina's car attacked in Naogaon: One held

UNB, Naogaon

An enraged man pounced on opposition leader Sheikh Hasina's motorcade and her car was damaged in the attack on her way from here to Gobindaganj yesterday. She was unhurt.

Hasina's security men caught the attacker named Dewan Khaled Bin Hedayatullah, aged about 26.

"It's a well-planned attack ... He is planted," Hasina told reporters who are accompanying her from Dhaka on her political trip to the north.

After being caught, Dewan Khaled shouted out claiming to be a brother of Col (Rtd) Farooq, one of the condemned convicts in the Bangabandhu murder case.

The incident happened near Naogaon BMC Women College at Chakdebpara at about 2:30 pm as Hasina was leaving Naogaon town for Gobindaganj public meeting on her way to Rangpur.

Police said Dewan Khaled, wear

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Cadet college admission test results on page -10

Jamaat proposes change in JS rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Delwar Hossain Saidee yesterday placed a proposal in the parliament seeking to change the age-old rule of bowing to honour the chair.

He suggested that the MPs follow their respective religious customs in honouring the speaker during their entrance to and exit from the House instead of the current rule of bowing to the chair.

"The Muslim lawmakers should say Assalamu Alaikum and the non-Muslims should follow their respective religious customs to honour the speaker," Saidee said, seeking an amendment to the relevant parliamentary rule.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar sent the proposed amendment to the parliamentary standing committee on the rules of procedure for scrutiny. The amendment was moved unopposed.