

NUR HOSSAIN

From trucker's helper to mafia don

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Born at Simrail of Siddhirganj upazila in Narayanganj, Nur Hossain used to be a helper to a trucker in late 70's.

But since the late 80's, Nur, now convicted of the abduction and killing of Narayanganj City panel mayor Nazrul Islam and six others, amassed huge wealth at home and abroad with blessings from major political parties.

Nur was the vice-president of Siddhirganj AL unit and had businesses and assets in India and Malaysia, said locals and people who knew him. They said Nur was ruthless in making money through illegal means.

In the 70's, he became a truck driver from a truck helper within a few years. He then joined Narayanganj Truck Drivers' Union and became its president.

He indulged in extortion in the transport sector, drug peddling, tender manipulation, river encroachment, and illegal sand trade in Siddhirganj and Fatullah of Narayanganj.

He had a rivalry with Nazrul over the control of these illegal businesses

since the late 80's. Their rivalry reached its peak when Nazrul defeated Nur in the panel mayor election of 2011 by a single vote.

After the gruesome seven-murder, Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam alleged that some officials of Rab-11 had killed Nazrul in exchange for Tk 6 crore from councillor Nur and his accomplices.

In 2013, Nur organised indecent stage shows in the name of jatra, a traditional form of theatre, at Simrail Truck Terminal in Siddhirganj, said locals.

It drew huge flak from locals but he continued with the show under the nose of the police and the administration.

The chief executive officer of Narayanganj City Corporation on April 16, 2014, served a notice on Nur, asking him to stop the anti-social activities.

Earlier in April 2013, the High Court in response to a petition asked the authorities concerned to immediately stop all anti-social and illegal activities at the truck terminal.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



People gather near the Narayanganj court while it was delivering the verdict in the seven-murder case yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

VICTIMS OF THE GRISLY MURDER



Nazrul Islam

Chandan Sarker

Moniruzzaman

Tajul

Ibrahim

Liton

Jahangir

26 get death for 7 murders

FROM PAGE 1

After the Pilkhana carnage case, this is the largest one in terms of the number of accused getting capital punishment. Over the Pilkhana carnage in 2009, 152 people were awarded death penalty in November 2013.

Of the 26 sentenced to death over the seven murders, 16 are former Rab members who include the then commanding officer of Rab-11 in Narayanganj Lt Col Tareque Sayeed Mohammad and the then company commanders of Rab-11 Maj Arif

Hossain and Lt Commander Masud Rana.

Tareque is the son-in-law of Disaster Management and Relief Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

Tareque, Arif and Masud have been withdrawn from Rab and forced into retirement from the defence services.

The rest of the 26 include prime accused Nur Hossain, sacked vice-president of Siddhirganj Awami League and Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC) councillor, and his cohorts.

Of the 35 convicts, 23 are in jail while 12 are on the run.

Seven people, including the then NCC panel mayor Nazrul Islam and senior lawyer Chandan Sarker, were abducted from Dhaka-Narayanganj link road on April 27, 2014. Later, their bodies were found floating in the Shitalakkhya river.

The nation stood aghast at the extent of the brutality. The family members and relatives of the victims mobilised public support and waged a movement demanding justice.

Following a petition, the High Court ordered arrest of the three officials and probe without Rab involvement.

The families yesterday said they are happy but they demand quick execution of the verdict and arrest of the fugitives.

"I am happy but I will not show V sign until the verdict is executed," Nazrul's wife Selina Islam, a plaintiff of one of the two cases filed over the incident, told The Daily Star in her instant reaction.

Susmita Sarkar, daughter of Chandan, said, "We are happy with the verdict and waiting for quick execution of the judgment."

After appearing before a Narayanganj court in a criminal case on April 27, 2014, Nazrul along with Moniruzzaman Swapan, Tajul Islam, Liton and his driver Jahangir Alam was returning to Dhaka in a microbus.

As they reached Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium at Fatullah, another microbus waylaid them. The five were abducted.

Chandan and his driver Ibrahim were also abducted and killed apparently because they witnessed the abduction of Nazrul and others.

The murderers cut open the victims' bellies and tied the bodies to sacks full of bricks before throwing them into the river. They were blindfolded, and their hands and legs were tied, police say.

According to a charge sheet, Nur Hossain had previous enmity with Nazrul Islam over issues related to the city corporation. He paid the Rab officials to abduct and kill Nazrul.

Being the commander of the force, Tareque ordered his subordinates to abduct and kill the persons and hide the bodies with the intention of getting financial benefits by breaching the discipline of the force.

Arif and Masud directly took part in the crime, and the other members of the force, whose names were mentioned in the charge sheet, participated in the offence at different stages.

Charge sheets in the two cases were submitted in April 2015.

Following the charge framing on February 8 last year, the court recorded testimonies of 106 witnesses and heard arguments from both the prosecution and the defence before fixing January 16 for delivering the verdict.

Both the cases were tried simultaneously as they were filed over one incident.

Since the morning yesterday, a huge number of people started gathering before the court amid tight security on and around the court premises.

Five accused, including Nur Hossain, were taken to the court from Kashimpur jail in Gazipur around 9:40am while 18 other accused were brought from Narayanganj jail around 9:00am.

They were later produced at the jam-packed courtroom.

As the court clock struck 10:00am, the judge, Syed Enayet Hossain, took seat.

A total of 23 accused were put on the dock. A court official started pronouncing the names of the accused.

Soon the judge read out the sentence and left the courtroom at 10:06am.

The court awarded death penalty to 26 accused as the "charges of abduction, killing and hiding bodies" were proved against them beyond reasonable doubt.

Tareque, Arif and Masud were kept outside the caged dock while Nur

Hossain and all the other accused were inside. The accused were split in two groups fearing that the three former Rab officials could come under attack by others, said court sources.

When the verdict was pronounced, Nur Hossain looked disheartened while Tareque stood silent. A few of the accused cried out while some others were seen trying to talk to their lawyers.

Nur Hossain, however, tried to comfort some accused in tears, saying still there will be proceedings at the High Court and the Supreme Court, a police official who was near the dock told The Daily Star.

After the preparation of necessary documents, the convicts were taken to Kashimpur and Narayanganj jails around 1:45pm.

As soon as the news of the verdict broke, locals including supporters of Nazrul, who had gathered outside the court premises, started cheering. Lawyers brought out processions hailing the verdict.

Public Prosecutor Wazed Ali Khokon said the Rab officials misused power and committed the crime while being in official uniform. "This judgment proves that the court can try any criminal. Nobody is above the law," he said.

Sakhawat Hossain, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, said, "We would have been happier had all the accused been awarded death penalty."

Expressing dissatisfaction, Md Sultanuzzaman, lawyer for Tareque, said, "The evidence produced before the court against my client was not enough to prove him guilty."

"We will appeal to the higher court against the verdict."

Family members of Tareque and Rana did not give any reaction to journalists.

The convicts will get a time specified by the court to file appeal with the High Court.

Both the Awami League and the BNP expressed satisfaction over the verdict.

Narayanganj Mayor Selina Hayat Ivy said justice has been done and for this she thanked the government.

[Shaheen Mollah also contributed to this report]

When law enforcers turn law breakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The seven-murder incident in Narayanganj clearly shows how dangerous a disciplined force can be if one of its unit chiefs and his deputies with some force members get involved in a crime.

Cool-headed planning and execution of the gruesome murders by three top former Rab-11 officials and their 22 subordinates not only tarnished the image of the law enforcement agency, but also devastated the seven families.

With directives from then Rab-11 commanding officer Lt Col (sacked) Tareque Sayeed Mohammad, his deputies Major (sacked) Arif Hossain and Lt Commander (sacked) SM Masud Rana with their team members picked up the seven, including then Narayanganj city panel mayor Nazrul Islam and senior lawyer Chandan Sarker, on April 27, 2014.

Later, Rab members led by Arif killed all the seven by injecting an anesthetic into them and subsequently

smothering them with plastic bags. Early next day, they dumped the bodies at the confluence of the Meghna, tying those with sacks full of bricks.

Six bodies were found floating in the Shitalakkhya on April 30 and the other the following day.

On May 4 that year, Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam made the stunning revelation that some Rab personnel abducted and killed the panel mayor in exchange for Tk 6 crore from then ward councillor Nur Hossain and his aides.

The Rab's role in the murders attracted a wave of criticism from home and abroad. Tareque had assigned Arif to kill Nazrul during an officers' conference in March and ordered Narayanganj camp commander Rana to assist him.

Nur Hossain provided the then Rab officials with necessary information for their abductions. He also ensured that there was no gathering at

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

TIMELINE: SEVEN-MURDER

2014

APRIL 27

Nazrul Islam and his four aides and Chandan Sarker and his driver are kidnapped separately around the same time and place.

Nazrul's wife Selina Islam claims that Nur Hossain and Mohammad Yasin are behind the abduction and that some Rab-11 men picked up Nazrul and others.

APRIL 28

Selina files an abduction case with Fatullah police.

APRIL 29

The home ministry recommends withdrawal of four law enforcers, including Rab-11 commanding officer.

APRIL 30

The bodies of Nazrul, Chandan and four others are found in the Shitalakkhya.

MAY 1

A seventh body is found floating in the same river.

MAY 3

Police raid Nur Hossain's house but do not find him.

MAY 4

Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam alleges that Rab personnel killed Nazrul getting Tk 6 crore from Nur and other accused.

AL lawmaker Shamim Osman claims Nur indeed committed the crimes.

Police seize a car of Nur's younger brother on suspicion, from a glass factory owned by a relative of Shamim Osman.

Locals observe a daylong hartal in Narayanganj demanding arrests of the accused.

The case is handed over to the DB.

MAY 5

Shahidul claims a son of an AL lawmaker brokered the Tk 6 crore deal with Rab personnel.

The High Court orders the govt to form a probe committee with no Rab men in it. The home ministry issues a red alert on the borders so that Nur cannot flee the country.

MAY 6

Shahidul and Selina give statements to police.

MAY 11

The High Court orders the arrest of sacked

Rab officials.

MAY 17

Law enforcers arrest sacked Rab officials Lt Col Tareque Sayeed and Maj Arif Hossain.

MAY 18

Law enforcers detain another sacked Rab official, MM Rana, from Dhaka Cantonment area and hand him over to Narayanganj police.

JUNE 14

Indian law enforcers arrest Nur in Kolkata.

Indian investigators press charges against Nur for intruding into the country.

2015

APRIL 8

Investigators submit two charge-sheets against 35 people including Nur and the fired Rab officials.

JULY 8

A Narayanganj court issues arrest warrant against 13 fugitive accused, including eight Rab men.

NOVEMBER 12

Nur is brought back from India.

NOVEMBER 13

Nur is produced before a Narayanganj court and sent to jail.

The High Court observes that the perpetrators may benefit if the trial proceedings were delayed for a long time.

2016

JANUARY 3

Tareque is moved to Dhaka Medical College Hospital from Dhaka Central Jail as he felt pain in the legs, waist, and spinal cord.

FEBRUARY 8

A Narayanganj court indicted 35 people including Nur and the three sacked Rab officials.

FEBRUARY 29

Recording of witness testimonies begins keeping journalists out of the courtroom.

MARCH 13

Nur file two petitions with the HC seeking scrapping of his trial.

The High Court clears the way for a lower court to run trial proceedings of Tareque.

Verdict ends their wait

FROM PAGE 1

death and nine others to imprisonment for different terms.

Morsheda learnt about the verdict through a news report on her mobile phone.

"This verdict doesn't mean much to me until it is executed. I have been passing my days in utter misery since my husband was killed around three years ago," said Morsheda, a mother of two girls aged 10 and three.

"No one from the party [the Awami League] came forward to help us," she said with tearful eyes.

She was worried that her elder daughter, a student of class-VII, would have to face a volley of questions from her classmates and teachers about her father's murder.

The family members of Ibrahim, another victim of the seven-murder, had to borrow Tk 1,000 from a neigh-

bour to come to the court from their village in Sonargaon upazila.

"I wanted to see the murderers of my son, and ask them why they did it," Ibrahim's 65-year-old mother Noor Jahan told this correspondent outside the court premises.

However, none of Ibrahim's 11 family members was allowed to enter the court building.

Ibrahim was the driver of senior lawyer Chandan Sarker, who also was brutally killed.

"Chandan used to pay my son well, and the whole family depended on his income," said Noor Jahan.

Ibrahim's wife Hanufa Begum said, "I can barely afford to feed my children properly. It gives me some solace that the killers, despite being rich and powerful, have been convicted. I hope the fugitive convicts would be caught and

punished too."

Chandan's daughter Sushmita Sarkar, a physician, hoped the convicts would be executed soon.

Selina Islam, wife of slain Nazrul Islam and a complainant of the case, was hopeful that the verdict would be upheld when the case goes to the higher court.

No matter what the verdict is, these families are ruined forever. "Will the children get back their fathers or the wives their husbands?" asked Selina, a mother of three.

Her father Shahidul Islam, popularly known as Shahid Chairman, said he was "not fully happy with the verdict."

He accused Narayanganj AL lawmaker Shamim Osman of playing "a role in having the names of the plotters and financiers of the murders dropped from the charge sheet of the case, as they are his men".