

Two children save train from accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A couple of quick-thinking little boys have saved a freight train from a possible accident yesterday.

Both Shihab Hossain, 6, and Titon Islam, 7, are from Jhina village in Rajshahi's Bagha upazila.

Around 9:00am, when the boys were playing in their village neighbourhood, they heard a strange noise as the Dhaka-bound Silkcity Express went past Jhina Railgate.

Out of curiosity, they went to the track after the train was gone and saw that there was a gap in one of the lines, the boys told reporters.

Within minutes, they saw another Rajshahi-bound train approaching and realised that this train might not be as lucky as the last one.

Standing on the tracks, they started waving their red mufflers in the air, signalling the locomotive driver to stop.

The freight of 32 fuel oil tankers from Khulna slowed down and stopped.

Driver Mohiul Alam said at first he thought the boys were playing.

"I decided not to stop. But I changed my mind as the children did not leave the tracks and kept waving desperately," he said.

The freight train resumed its journey to Rajshahi after the track was repaired two hours later.

Ashim Kumar Talukdar, divisional railway manager, said, "Some top

slippers of the track broke after metal components holding them failed."

He added that such damages on the tracks in winter were quite common.

"It sometimes occurs when temperature drops. Inferior materials and old tracks get more affected by the shrinking of metal objects in winter."

He added that there are chances of



Shihab and Titon

an accident in such a situation.

"What the boys did is remarkable."

He said railway authorities were yet to decide whether to officially recognise their act.

Shihab is a first grader and Titon is in class-II at Jhina Government Primary School.

Their parents said they were proud of their boys for acting responsibly.

Offences aplenty, punishment rare

FROM PAGE 1

couple of months, denting people's trust in the force.

Officials at the police headquarters recently admitted that the "ICP complaint cell" received about 45 allegations against policemen a day. Most of those detail how some law enforcers have become downright criminals.

Before November 14, when the cell received only written complaints and that too during office hours, the number of allegations recorded was just a handful. Now the cell receives grievances online round the clock.

The allegations are aplenty. The list goes on from mugging on the streets to framing youths with yaba pills to abducting businessmen for ransom to torturing suspects in custody and relaying their screams over mobile phone to families for collecting hefty sums, according to officials at the Discipline and Professional Standard wing of the police headquarters.

Crimes like extorting street hawkers and collecting tolls from rickshaw-pullers on streets off-limit to slow-moving vehicles are apparently not even reported.

A number of constables, SIs and inspectors wishing anonymity said one of the main reasons for corruption at the lower-tier of the police force is that many of them get their jobs by paying bribes of huge amounts. The job of a constable could be had for Tk 6-7 lakh and an SI for Tk-15 lakh, they said.

They believe the money they paid as bribe is an investment and need to resort to corruption to recoup, the policemen said.

Even the ones who got their job without bribing anyone have to "spend a lot to keep their higher authorities appeased and to get promotion and desired postings", the law enforcers claimed.

For promotions and lucrative postings, there were instances in which field-level policemen created common funds to grease the palms of high-ups.

"Some indulge in corruption just because or to have a more comfortable life," said an inspector seeking anonymity.

The money obtained illegally by the low-tier policemen is shared among high ups, said the former and incumbent policemen who talked to this paper.

Worried about the corruption and criminal activities, chief Javed Patwari of Special Branch of police raised the issue at a quarterly crime conference

RECENT CRIMES



B'Baria Victim Zakir Hossain



DB officials arrested in Cox's Bazar

NOVEMBER 30

DMP suspended three DB men for picking up several Moghbazar-based businessmen and torturing them until the families paid hefty sums for their release.

NOVEMBER 23

A police headquarters probe found 11 CID officials took Tk 45 lakh from a businessman in Fakirapool and recommended stern departmental actions.

NOVEMBER 21

Two policemen of Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Police Station and a woman were arrested for their alleged involvement in the kidnapping of a man and taking ransom for his release.

OCTOBER 25

Seven DB officials were arrested in Cox's Bazar on charge of abducting a blanket trader from Teknaf upazila in the district and collecting Tk 17 lakh in ransom from his family.

OCTOBER 18

An ASI and one of his accomplices were caught red-handed while trying to "mug" a trader in Khamarbari area of the capital.

AUGUST 26

An SI of Halishahar Police Station in Chittagong City was arrested with two others with 4,000 yaba in Double Mooring area.

APRIL 26

A DMP probe found 11 detectives involved in snatching money and valuables from a Kafrul club in the capital on April 18 and recommended punitive actions against them.

Math exams halted

FROM PAGE 1

Ali Ashraf, Sadar upazila primary education officer, said he rushed to Agdigha Government Primary School yesterday morning after he was informed that the questions papers were leaked from the school.

President of the school managing committee, who was present at that time, handed over two sets of handwritten leaked question papers to him.

He then asked the headmaster of the school to give him two sets of original question papers of the tests. While comparing a set of original question paper with the leaked one, he saw that questions of two papers were the same.

Ibrahim Khalil, a guardian, said four college students told him that the question papers had been leaked from Agdigha Government Primary School and they collected those from a student of that school.

Teachers of the school often leak the question papers in collusion with tutors and earn extra money, he alleged.

Khalil also demanded punishment of those involved.

Deputy Commissioner Shaheena Khatun of Natore said a probe committee had been formed to investigate the incident, and that they would take stern action against those involved after the probe.

Sipra Rani Datta, headmaster of Agdigha Government Primary School, denied the allegation of her school teachers' involvement in the incident.

On Wednesday, the question papers of class-I and IV in the school final examinations were leaked in Barguna Sadar, prompting the authorities concerned to postpone examinations in all 248 primary schools.

A day before, exams of class-II and -IV were postponed in all the 119 primary schools of Munshiganj Sadar upazila as question papers were leaked.

The question papers are usually prepared by teachers union at upazila levels.

Boy saved from jaws of death

ARUN BIKASH DEY and AMIR HASAN SHAHRIAR, Chittagong

A hand reached out of nowhere and pulled 11-year old Anmoy Barua to his feet, saving him from the stampede that cost 10 men their lives in Chittagong's Asghar Dighir Par.

Anmoy had gone to the qulqwhani programme with his father Ashish Barua, a security guard in the area.

"When baba (Ashish) was about to fall, I pushed me aside. Even after that I fell down. I could not breathe and someone stepped on my leg. Suddenly someone pulled me up - I don't know who he was," said Anmoy.

Anmoy never saw his guardian angel; a faceless stranger in a swarm of panicking bodies.

When asked where he got hurt, Anmoy said he was okay. He seemed to be surprised at his fate.

His father, Ashish is now in Chittagong Medical College Hospital

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

10 killed in stampede

FROM PAGE 1

gathering, they were told to cook for another 2,000 around 1:00pm, he said.

"Around 7,000 people had already taken meals," he added.

Debashish Palit, organising secretary of Chittagong Awami League (north), said the feast was organised for Hindus only but the crowd got bigger as people from other religions joined it.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shoibal Das Suman, a Chittagong City Corporation ward councillor, alleged that hardly 4,000 people could be fed at Rima Convention Centre. But organisers arranged feast for 10,000 people there, he said.

"There were other community centres in the area," he said, blaming the organisers' inability to control such a big gathering for the stampede.

Uttam Chakraborty, another witness, held law enforcers responsible for the accident. "There were some policemen but they acted as silent

observers."

Contacted, Mostain Hossain, deputy commissioner (south zone) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, said 20 police officials were deployed near the scene.

The law enforcers did not baton-charge the crowd as it was a mourning programme, he said, adding that they did their best to control the situation.

"Sensing the huge presence of people, we had called for additional law enforcers but the accident happened before they could arrive."

Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel, son of Mohiuddin, said 80 volunteers were engaged at each of the 14 community centres.

"We had expected around one lakh people but the crowd was way beyond our expectation," he said, adding that "We had not done any publicity over the feast fearing the rush. Despite that, the accident took place."

He said the accident happened

due to the mad rush of people.

CMP Commissioner Iqbal Bahar and CMP Deputy Commissioner Mostain echoed Mohibul's view.

Mohibul said ABM Fajle Karim Chowdhury, AL lawmaker from Raozan and also a relative of Mohiuddin, would give Tk one lakh to the injured, said Zillur Rahman Chowdhury, deputy commissioner of Chittagong.

The district administration last night formed an eight-member committee, led by Additional District Magistrate Mashudul Haque, to probe the incident.

THE DECEASED

The deceased were identified as Krishnapad Das, 35, son of late Roycharan Das of Uttar Kattali area in

the port city, Sudhir Das, 50, son of Laal Das from Maddham Noapara in Kotwali, Dipankar Das Rahul, 23, a student of History at Chittagong University, Pradip Talukdar, 55, son of Monoranjan Talukdar from Goshail Danga area in the city, Ashish Barua from Noapara in Raozan upazila, Jhontu Das, 45, son of Binod Bihari Das from Jamal Khan by-lane in the city, Dhona Shil, 50, son of Manindra Shil from Boilchari area of Banskhal, Titu Das, 30, Liton Deb, 50, son of Prakriti Ranjan Deb from Mohsen Awlia area of Anwara upazila, and Alak Bhoomik, 36, son of Chandra Mohan Bhoomik from Choto Kumira area under Sitakund upazila.

The injured were taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

[FM Mizanur Rahman and Amir Hasan Shahriar contributed to this report]

Another woman 'raped' at a Banani hotel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 32-year-old woman has accused a man of raping her at a hotel in the city's Banani about a month ago.

She filed a case against the accused, brother of a well-known singer, with Banani Police Station on December 13, police said yesterday.

The alleged incident harks back to the rape of two female university students at Raintree Hotel in Banani earlier in the year.

In her case statement, the woman alleged that her lover, 38, raped her at Sweet Dream Hotel on November 20 after promising her of marriage.

Abdul Matin, officer-in-charge (investigation) of the police station, said the accused was on the run and they were trying to arrest him.

The Daily Star could neither reach the accused nor his family members

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

Infant dies during act of mugging

FROM PAGE 1

the fall. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Aklima said she and her husband, with their two sons, -- Arafat and four-year-old Al Amin -- were going to her sister's Sanirakhra residence in the city from Sadarghat.

"Arafat was on his mother's lap while Al-Amin was on my lap," said Arafat's father Shah Alam.

"Soon after we passed Doyaganj intersection at 6:10am, a man, aged around 22 to 25, in a t-shirt and a pant, crossed the road from the opposite side," he said.

"The youth suddenly pulled at the bag hanging from my wife's shoulder and she fell down with Arafat," Shah Alam said.

"My son cried out once and then fainted. I jumped off the rickshaw and picked up Arafat's unconscious body," he told The Daily Star, tears streaming down his face.

The family had come to Dhaka by

launch from their home in Shariatpur for Al-Amin's treatment, who has been suffering from rheumatic fever for the last two years.

Aklima's hands and legs were bruised.

The mugger escaped with the bag that had Tk 18,000, for Al-Amin's treatment, some clothes and medicine, said Shah Alam.

"We could not find anyone, not even any policemen on the street but were able to hail a CNG-run auto rickshaw and rush to the hospital. But it was too late," Shah Alam, a farmer by profession, added.

Talking to this correspondent at DMC morgue, Shah Alam, showing some pictures of Arafat on his mobile phone, said, "These pictures are now my only memories of him. Although, I am a farmer but my dream was to educate my sons so that they can get a government job but now it cannot be fulfilled."

Morgue sources said Arafat died of a brain hemorrhage from the fall.

With a vacant look on her face, Aklima was found sitting beside the morgue gate. She kept asking, "How did my son die falling from my lap?"

Shah Alam filed a murder case accusing one unidentified person with Jatrabari police station.

Iftekhairul Islam, assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Demra Zone, said they are investigating the case with top priority and are hopeful of arresting the suspect.

While visiting the area, this correspondent found a slum on both sides of Doyaganj rail tracks. A police box was found situated at Doyaganj intersection and there were police check posts of Gendaria and Jatrabari police station within 150 meters on both sides of the spot.

Inspector Rahat Khan of Jatrabari Police Station said there were check posts and a patrol team but the area often remains unprotected as there was a slum nearby and floating drug peddlers, who take shelter there, were responsible for the

crime.

Babul Hossain, a local businessman, said mugging is not a new incident in the area and that police activity takes place only after any major incident occurs.

Amirullah, another businessman, alleged that while there were police patrol teams, they only visited when they were in need of money. They just identify some people using their sources and leave after collecting "toll", threatening to entrap them in a drug case, he said.

Nurul Amin, additional deputy commissioner of Wari Division, told The Daily Star that there is a number of floating drug peddlers in the area and they keep returning even after repeated police drives.

After the Doyaganj incident, several teams of the three police stations -- Gendaria, Jatrabari and Wari-- will be conducting special drives to arrest the drug peddlers to make the area secure, he added.

He insisted that violation of law by law enforcers could not be contained if the offenders were let go with meaningless punishment.

Nur Mohammad, former inspector general of police, said, "The force has an intelligence wing, the Police Internal Oversight (PIO), to keep watch on field-level officials and policemen. It sends reports regularly but hardly any action is taken."

"Had there been action taken based on PIO reports, there would be a fear among the field-level policemen," he added.

The problems within the police force are deep rooted, starting with recruitment, promotions to postings said some serving and ex-police officials while talking to The Daily Star.

Asked why police members indulge in corruption and crime, they said one reason is that they have to pay hefty sums to get the jobs and good posts. Besides, political backing and hobnobbing with senior police officials also give them a sense of invincibility.

"We often hear that lower-tier policemen are being recruited in exchange for money ... Coming out of training [it's only natural that] he would push yaba or arms in the pockets of people to recover the money," said ex-IGP Nur Mohammad.

In July 2015, Zillur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Barisal Metropolitan Police (BMP), made headlines by setting up a common bribe fund to speed up promotion of 230 policemen of Barisal, who each contributed between Tk 30,000 and Tk 50,000 to the fund.

He along with 10 other lower-level Barisal Policemen was suspended after a probe found them guilty.

Zillur, who was attached to the office of the Deputy Inspector General of Sylhet Range following his suspension, is now serving as the Superintendent of Police of Tourism Police.

Nur Mohammad believes transparency in hiring, training, posting and promotion could greatly help the force. To improve the situation, the supervising officers should also keep an eye on subordinates and take account of their daily activities.

Graft watchdog leader Iftekhazaman sees the constant political exploitation of police in every step as the prime reason for their professionalism getting ruined. "Moral turpitude, irregularity and corruption did not appear suddenly."

DIAZ MURDER Former CU asst proctor sent to jail

CU CORRESPONDENT

Former assistant proctor of Chittagong University Anwar Hossain Chowdhury was sent to jail after he surrendered before a court yesterday in connection with murder of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) central leader Diaz Irfan Chowdhury.

Hearing the news, a faction of BCL CU unit has meanwhile called an indefinite strike on the campus.

The Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate Munshi M Mashiar Rahman passed the order after rejecting Anwar Hossain's bail petition, said Diaz's lawyer advocate Mohammad Abu Monsur.

Anwar was earlier granted an ad interim bail by the High Court for six weeks which was non extendable, said the plaintiff lawyer, adding that the HC had also asked him to surrender before a judicial court in Chittagong.

As his six-week bail expired yesterday, he surrendered before the court and sought bail, the lawyer said.

Eyewitnesses said during hearing of the bail petition, a faction of BCL activists led by former CU unit president Mohammad Alamgir Tipu, who is also an accused of the case, chanted slogans outside the court premises.

CU STRIKE Immediate after Anwar Hossain was sent to Chittagong Central Jail, a faction of BCL CU unit loyal to several accused of the case called an indefinite strike on the campus demanding withdrawal of the case and immediate release of the former assistant proctor.

The agitating BCL men padlocked the university's main entrance around 11:50am and took position there blocking the road.

They also blocked the shuttle train service plying between the campus and the city till 4:00pm and put barricade on the Chittagong-Hathazari road at 2:30pm causing immense sufferings to the general students returning to the city.

Police removed the blockade around 3:30pm, said Additional Superintendent of Police of Hathazari (Circle) Abdullah Al Masum.

The agitating BCL men also burned tyres in front of the main gate creating panic among the students.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1