

Two drug dealers

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2:00am.

Sensing the presence of law enforcers, the criminals opened fire, to which the police retaliated. This prompted a "gunfight" that lasted about 15 minutes, he claimed.

Mostafa sustained bullet injuries in the "gunfight" and died on the spot, OC Kawshik said, adding that police arrested five suspected drug peddlers from the spot.

He was accused in 11 drug cases, police claimed.

The OC further claimed that 97 yaba pills and 20 bottles of Phensidyl were seized from the spot.

The arrestees are Sanjib Kumar Saha, 25, Sadhan Chandra Saha, 20, Sony Ahmed, 35, Selim Reza, 24, and Shafikul Islam, 20. A local court sent them to jail yesterday.

In Cox's Bazar, Teknaf Model Police Station's Inspector (operation) Rakibul Islam Khan said on information about a gunfight between two groups of drug dealers, a police team reached Kanjarpura area early yesterday.

Sensing police presence, the armed criminals fled the area, he claimed.

Police recovered the bullet-hit body of Shahab from the area around 5:00am, he said, adding that they also seized two firearms, seven bullets, nine bullet shells and 2,400 yaba pills from the spot.

Police filed arms and drugs related cases over the incident, he said, adding Shahab was a listed drug dealer and an accused in a case.

In Chapainawabganj, police recovered a bullet-hit body from Tarapur village of Shibganj upazila yesterday morning.

The victim, Bisharat, was a resident of Tarapur-Chokrapur village in Shibganj, said Sub-Inspector (SI) Mukul Chandra of Shibganj Police Station.

Locals said they spotted the body in a paddy field around 7:30am, he added.

Shibganj police later recovered the body and sent it to Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The body bore injury mark on the shoulder which looked like a bullet wound, SI Mukul said.

BGB Battalion-53 Commander Lt Col Sajjad Sarwar said the area where the body was found was about two kilometres from the zero line.

BGB spoke to Indian Border Security Force in this regard, but it dismissed its involvement in any such incident, he said, adding that they were investigating it.

[Our Pabna, Cox's Bazar and Chapainawabganj correspondents contributed to this report]

Another held

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gleaned from Zubayer, who is now on a seven-day remand, said PBI Inspector Shah Alam, investigation officer of the case.

Another suspect Kamrun Nahar Moni, who has also been arrested, had purchased three burqas, including the one found yesterday, from a shop in Sonagazi before the murder, he said.

Three key accused -- Shahadat Hossain Shamim, Zubayer and Jaber Hossain -- wore the burqas on April 6 while setting Nusrat on fire on the rooftop of a three-storey building at Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa, he added.

Alim examinee Nusrat lost her battle for life on April 10, five days after she was set afire for refusing to withdraw a sexual harassment case against the madrasa's principal, Siraj Ud Doula.

RUHUL'S LINKS

Although Ruhul denied his involvement in the incident, PBI officials yesterday said they found his links after analysing his call records.

Seeking anonymity, a PBI official told The Daily Star that they found Shahadat made two phone calls to Ruhul on April 6 right after Nusrat was set on fire.

"This clearly indicates that Ruhul knew everything about the crime," he added.

The law enforcers will also investigate if any illegal money was transacted to execute the murder, Molla Nazrul Islam, special superintendent of Organised Crime Division of Criminal Investigation Department, said yesterday.

DEMO CONTINUE

Students and teachers of different educational institutions in Feni yesterday took to the streets demanding immediate arrest of those involved in the murder.

The protesters also demanded necessary steps be taken for the speedy trial of the gruesome murder.

Over a hundred students of Feni GA Academy High School formed a human chain on Feni-Porshuram road around 10:00am. Holding banner and festoons, they chanted slogans demanding justice for Nusrat.

"JABED, MONI CONFESS TO CRIME"

Jabed and Moni, two Alim examinees, yesterday confessed that they directly took part in the murder, Mohammad Iqbal, special superintendent of police of PBI, told reporters.

The duo made the confessions after they had been produced before a senior judicial magistrate yesterday afternoon, he said.

On the day of the incident, Moni held Nusrat against the ground while Jabed sprayed kerosene on the victim, he said. Jabed was allegedly wearing a burqa at the time.

PBI Inspector Shah Alam said Moni was arrested on April 16 and placed on a five-day remand the next day. She allegedly supplied three burqas used in the killing mission.

Jabed was arrested on April 13. A Feni court placed him on a three-day remand on Friday.



Carcass of a huge billboard dangles over Mirpur-Ashulia road. The billboard, left in this state by a storm a few days ago, could fall and damage vehicles or injure pedestrians.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Pesticides still being applied on mangoes

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orchards, this correspondent found that mango grower Abdul Jabbar was preparing chemicals for spraying on his trees.

Jabbar said most of his trees were not bearing fruits this year. Besides, his fruits came under attack from pests.

"Mangoes are falling from the trees and leaves are drying up due to pest attack," he said, adding that spraying pesticides was essential to save the fruits.

The grower of the juicy fruit claimed that he was using the pesticides on the advice of agriculturists. "Police are frequently visiting the orchards and we are finding it difficult to make them understand that chemicals are necessary."

He said rain during flowering and fruiting damaged fruits. Some fruits were also destroyed by storms. "Now we are trying to protect what we have."

Md Alauddin, who looks after a part of a mango orchard on 70 bighas of land in the area, said most of his 200 trees were not having fruits this year. "Good varieties of mango trees -- Gopalbhog, Khirsapat and Langra -- barely bear any fruit. The fruits have been attacked by pests. It has become mandatory for us to use the pesticides."

Deb Dusal Dhali, Rajshahi regional additional director at the Department of Agricultural Extension, said those

chemicals were highly toxic.

Effects of some of the pesticides remain active for two weeks and the others for a month. Consuming the fruits on which the pesticides are used before the stipulated time is harmful for humans, he said.

Mangoes will start ripening at the end of the ongoing Baisakh, the first month of the Bangla calendar.

Sorof Uddin, senior scientific officer at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute, who has been transferred to Moulvibazar from Chapainawabganj, said mangoes faced several natural calamities this season. The unusual rain during fruiting in late February and early March damaged many buds and then nor'wester and hailstorm struck, he added.

At that time, some pests attacked mangoes and we advised the growers to use the prescribed pesticides only. But in case of no attacks, they don't need to worry about it."

"If mango farmers go for organic farming, including fruit bagging, they will not have to use harmful chemicals," he added.

Local administrations and agriculture officials said any kind of chemical use would be illegal after the HC order. But when the officials were going to visit the mango orchards, they were barely able to take actions against the pesticide users, witnessing the condition of

fruits.

"We asked them [mango growers] to stop using chemicals after the court order," said Deb Dusal Dhali.

On April 9, the HC ordered the Rajshahi divisional commissioner and the deputy inspector general of police of Rajshahi range to deploy magistrates and police to the region's mango orchards to check the use of chemicals on the summer juicy fruit.

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal filed by the state, seeking stay on the HC order.

Rajshahi range police DIG AKM Hafiz Akhter told The Daily Star that they began taking actions as per the HC order.

He said the issue was discussed at Monday's divisional coordination meeting with the divisional commissioner in the chair. Police and civil administrations of the districts producing mangoes, especially Chapainawabganj and Rajshahi, were asked to deploy vigilance teams to mango orchards with immediate effect.

"We must follow the directives of the country's top court. We asked the police to work under magistrates to prevent the chemical use on mango orchards. And we have learnt that the vigilance has already begun," the DIG Hafiz said.

Asked how the administration would keep watch on the mango

orchards spreading over vast areas, the DIG said the local administration and police would jointly find out a strategy. "The main focus of the HC order is to prevent the use of hazardous chemicals on mangoes and we are determined to comply with it."

Contacted, Rajshahi district's Deputy Commissioner SM Abdul Kader said he had already assigned magistrates in every upazila to monitor the orchards. He said police teams under a magistrate would watch the orchards regularly.

"Mangoes are still small in size. Magistrates and police began working together in every upazila," he said.

The Department of Agricultural Extension increases the target of mango cultivation and production every year, but following the natural calamities this year, it kept the target the same as last year's.

Last year, 8,66,361 tonnes of mangoes were produced on 70,361 hectares of land in four districts -- Chapainawabganj, Rajshahi, Natore and Naogaon.

Officials said the use of chemicals in that region had been rampant before and it has been reducing since 2015 when the export of mangoes began.

Those who are still using chemicals need proper counselling and awareness, they added.

Time to be wary of waste

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Documents show a 21.93 percent rise of waste in 2017-18 compared to the previous fiscal in the DNCC area.

In 2016-17, total waste generated was 8,52,390 tonnes.

The DSCC alone dumped about 10 lakh tonnes of waste last year, filling up seven acres of its landfill, whereas the DNCC's Aminbazar landfill is absorbing 6,000 tonnes per day.

In last year's report on waste management, the DNCC identified three reasons behind the increase of waste -- change in lifestyle due to economic development, growth of population in Dhaka and increase in the number of shopping malls, shops, kitchen markets, restaurants and hawkers.

Besides, in 2016, the government extended the city corporations' areas by including 16 unions in the DSCC and DNCC, leading to a rise in the volume of waste to be dealt with.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Dhaka North City Corporation's Chief Waste Management Officer (CWMO) Commodore MA Razzak said, "In the upcoming days, better waste management will be the biggest challenge."

"Right now, 70 percent of our waste is organic. The situation will reverse in the future due to ongoing development projects," said Razzak, underscoring the need for a planned waste management system.

"If we continue to dump this way, we will need more land. But in the city corporation area, how do you manage such huge [tracts of] land? Who will give you land?" he said.

Worryingly, the near-full capacity landfills may already be an environmental worry.

Dr Shahriar Hossain, secretary general, Environment and Social Development Organisation, said air and water pollution would be created if the authorities failed to adopt a modern waste management system.

"The disadvantage of the existing landfill system is that not only are they adjacent to water bodies, but the ground water is also getting polluted."

He said once the landfills reach their capacity, the pollution would spread to different parts of the city due to random dumping.

PLANS APLENTY, IMPLEMENTATION NONE

The situation at hand may largely be a result of the two city corporations still using age-old methods of waste management.

Both dump the waste without any proper segregation at source and are yet to initiate any system at the landfills for efficient waste management such as sorting out economically viable waste, finding source of biogas or even having basic recycling facilities.

To cope with the increasing waste, DNCC last year sent a proposal for acquiring an additional 81 acres of land adjacent to Aminbazar Landfill, a year after expiry of its lease.

The proposal is still lying with the land ministry.

On the other hand, more than five years ago its counterpart DSCC took initiatives to expand Matuail Landfill and acquired another 81 acre land.

Some officials, however, say land acquisition would hardly solve the problem.

They fear that the additional land too would be filled up within five years unless an appropriate waste management system was adopted.

Meanwhile, both the city corporations have planned to keep 31 acres separate from additional land for waste management, but only so in paper.

"We've got many proposals from different local and international organisations. We're examining them," said DSCC's CWMO Md Zahid Hossain.

CWMO Razzak said several plants including waste sorting, biogas, compost, waste incineration power, electronic waste recycling, construction waste, plastic, paper and glass recycling could be set up on the additional land.

"Separate plots will be kept at the 31-acre land for different plants. Organisations will be facilitated to set up plants there," he said.

Iqbal Habib, member-secretary,

Urbanisation and Governance Programme, Bangladesh Poribesh Andolok (Bapa), said waste could also be turned into wealth through proper segregation at source and structural management.

"It's sad that what could have turned into wealth becomes a social, economic and environmental burden."

Abu Hasnat Md Maqsood Sinha, co-founder and executive director of Waste Concern, said a policy could be formulated for proper waste management at source.

The government could give subsidy to the entrepreneurs who recycle and reuse waste.

Asked about the delay in adopting specific waste management methods, DSCC Mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon, said, "We're scrutinising all possibilities. I hope within a year the city dwellers will see a change in waste management."

REDUCE, RECYCLE, REUSE

Meanwhile, Mayor Khokon has been emphasising the 3Rs (Reduce, Recycle and Reuse) method.

DNCC's Commodore Razzak said the 3Rs method relied on only using what was essential: the lesser consumed, the lesser the amount of waste produced.

"But to implement it, awareness building is essential," he said.

Recycling is a complex issue, said DSCC's CWMO Zahid, adding there could have been bio-gas, compost fertiliser and incinerator plants at the landfills.

"After recycling, there will remain some residue and dust which will be dumped in the landfill," Zahid said.

According to the waste management department, the DSCC will first construct boundary walls around the landfill area and take other steps for setting up the recycling plants.

It will take at least two years even if the works begin immediately, sources said.

"Segregating waste at source is certainly a good method... but we face difficulties. In Dhanmondi, it's easy to segregate but in old town or periphery

areas we face difficulties," Khokon had said in an interview early this year, stressing the need for creating awareness among city dwellers.

Khokon's five-year term as mayor will end on April 2020.

Wasa

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say how many do so.

"The water supplied by Wasa is 100 percent pure and safe from the source to consumers' private reservoirs," he insisted, and termed the TIB report "hypothetical".

Contacted yesterday, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said they stood by their findings.

Taqsem said they tested 243 water samples collected from their 360sqkm service area in November last year.