

Five 'robbers' killed in 'gunfights'

STAR REPORT

Five suspected robbers, including four members of a robbery gang in the Sundarbans, were killed in two separate "gunfights" with law enforcers at Khulna and Habiganj early yesterday.

In Khulna, the four members of a robbery gang named "Aminur Bahini" were killed in an alleged gunfight with Rab-6 during a raid in Koyra upazila's Koyra Khal area.

The dead were identified as Aminur Rahman, 33, the gang's leader, Rafiqul Islam, 24, its second-in-command, Monish Saha, 26, and Akhtarul Islam, 36, Rab said.

Tofazzal Hossain, Rab-6 special company commander, said they conducted the raid around 2:00am following information that the leader of "Aminur Bahini" was staying there.

"Sensing our presence, the robbers entered the jungles of the Sundarbans and took position with arms. Then, they opened fire on the Rab team, forcing us to retaliate," said Tofazzal, also an assistant superintendent of police.

The gunfight continued in several phases until today [yesterday] morning. Some members of the gang fled the scene when day broke, leaving behind the four injured," he told our Khulna correspondent.

The four were rushed to Koyra Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared them dead, he added.

The bodies were sent to Khulna Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Tofazzal also said that two Rab members were also injured during the "gunfight". They were also admitted to the health complex.

Rab claimed to have recovered three

firearms from the scene.

However, Mithun Saha, brother of Monish Saha, told The Daily Star that some plainclothes policemen "picked up" his brother from their residence at Aichgati in Khulna's Rupsha upazila on October 1.

"On October 10, we informed Rab-6 about it. We came to know about his death as a robber of the Sundarbans' today [yesterday]. But he was a small businessman," said Mithun.

In Habiganj, suspected robber Kudrat Ali, 40, was killed in a "gunfight" with the detective branch (DB) of police around 3:00am, in Purasundha Bagan area adjacent to the Dhaka-Sylhet highway, in the district's Shayestaganj upazila.

Rabiul Islam, assistant superintendent of Habiganj police, said that Kudrat, a member of an inter-district robbery gang, was accused in 13 robbery cases filed with different police stations in Habiganj and Sylhet.

Acting on a tip-off about a robbery gang, of which Kudrat was a member, active in the area, a joint team comprising DB and police officials conducted a raid there.

Mozammel Haque, officer-in-charge of Shayestaganj police station, said that criminals opened fire on police after sensing their presence, which forced the law enforcers to retaliate.

"At one point, Kudrat Ali was shot," he told our Moulvibazar correspondent.

The team claimed to have recovered one pipegun, two sharp weapons and five bullets from the spot.

The OC also said that six policemen were injured during the incident. They received treatment at Habiganj Adhunik Sadar Hospital, he added.



Suspended Jubo League leader Samrat being taken to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court in Dhaka yesterday. Inset, supporters of Samrat chant slogans as police take him away from the court in a microbus.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Samrat placed on 10-day remand

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lawyers said.

They also said Samrat was suffering from different ailments, including heart disease.

The former Jubo League leader was produced before the court around 1:00pm.

Meanwhile, walls of the chief metropolitan magistrate's court and its surrounding area were found plastered with posters demanding Samrat's release.

Activists of Jubo League and Samrat's supporters also gathered around the court premises and chanted slogans claiming their leader's innocence.

They demonstrated under the banner of "Ismail Hossain Samrat Mukti Parishad" until 1:40pm.

On October 6, Rab members arrested Samrat, former president of Dhaka South Jubo League, and his close aide Enamul Haque Arman, former vice-president of the same unit, in Cumilla after raiding a house near Indian border.

He came under the spotlight after Rab busted his illegal casino business at different sporting clubs in Dhaka. He was expelled from the Jubo League following his arrest.

Samrat was then brought to the capital, and the elite force conducted operations at various establishments where the Jubo League leader either lived or carried out political and business activities.

Rab also took Samrat to his political office in Kakrila where he had been reportedly staying since the crackdown

began on September 18.

Rab members at a press briefing said they had seized two torture devices, a pistol with five bullets, two hides of Kangaroo, 1,160 pieces of Yaba and 19 bottles of foreign liquor from there.

A Rab mobile court, led by Executive Magistrate Sarwoor Alam, sentenced Samrat to six months' imprisonment for possessing wild animal hides and another six months for possessing illegal liquor.

Rab filed the two cases against him with Ramna police station the next day.

On September 24, the government imposed a travel ban on Samrat. Earlier on October 13, Samrat's mother Sayera Khatun Chowdhury said her son was implicated in the cases due to personal and political vengeance.

Where is my failure?

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exclusive interview with The Daily Star at his office on Sunday night.

Abrar Fahad, a second-year student of Buet's electrical and electronic engineering department, was beaten to death by some Chhatri League men at the university's Sher-e-Bangla Hall sometime between 8:30pm on October 6 and 1:30am on October 7.

The murder touched off widespread outrage across the country. Fumed, students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology began a demonstration on the campus, demanding the highest punishment for the killers. They also called for the VC's resignation over his "silence".

Buet Alumni Association and Buet Teachers' Association also demanded the VC step down for his "failure to ensure security" on the campus.

After the grisly murder, Prof Saiful neither met the agitating students, nor did he attend the namaz-e-janaza of Abrar. He showed up around 38 hours after the killing to hold a meeting with the provosts of the university dormitories, the students alleged.

During the two-and-a-half-hour interview, Prof Saiful, who was appointed the VC on June 23, 2016, defended his position and the actions he took after learning about Abrar's death around 3:00am on October 7.

He said on top of overseeing administrative work, he monitored the situation and maintained constant communication with the police and the higher authorities. He also formed an inquiry committee in consultation with senior teachers that very day.

"I was in my office, doing everything possible to maintain the situation," said Prof Saiful, an eminent educationist, researcher and electrical and electronic engineering expert.

Asked why he did not meet the agitating students soon after the murder, the Cambridge-educated engineer said, "It was an abnormal situation. The students were furious. Had I gone there, I would have been held hostage because of some miscommunications."

"Then I would have not been able to maintain communication with the government and that communication was very crucial at that time," said the academician, who has more than 44 years of experience in teaching and running university administration.

He said the director of the university's Directorate of Students' Welfare (DSW) is supposed to handle the situation if anything bad happens to students.

"It is the director's prime duty. He maintains communications with the vice chancellor and takes necessary support from the university authorities. He is supposed to constantly remain in touch with the VC until the matter is resolved."

Narrating the events that unfolded after Abrar murder, Prof Saiful said he got a call from the director around 3:00am on October 7. The VC then woke up his personal secretary and programme officer and requested them to rush to the scene.

From then onward, Prof Saiful said, he was continuously in touch with the officials. He also ordered to call police to the campus and lodge a general diary

over the incident.

The VC said the matter was then handled by the higher authorities of police, including the inspector general of police, and the prime minister.

He said he made arrangement for making copies of the CCTV footage from the Sher-e-Bangla Hall and it took almost the entire day.

Replying to a query, he said he called an emergency meeting at his office around 11:00am on October 7.

The meeting, which was attended by faculty deans, department heads, institution directors and other senior teachers of the university, decided to form an inquiry committee, which started working right away.

Prof Saiful said the deputy education minister was also informed about the situation. Since the university was closed due to Durga Puja holidays, he had to do most of the tasks himself, he said.

Around 3:30pm, Abrar's uncle along with one of his relatives met the VC, who consoled the two and gave them an ambulance to take Abrar's body to his home in Kushtia for burial. They were also given a university bus, he said.

Asked why he did not attend the namaz-e-janaza on the campus, he said no one had informed him about it.

"No one even told me that Abrar's father came to the campus. I would have certainly visited him and attended the prayers if I had been informed," he said.

Talking about student ragging which took a nasty turn at the university dormitories, Prof Saiful blamed the DSW for the situation.

"This [ragging] has a long history. It dates back even before my joining [as Buet VC]," he said.

He said DSW Director Prof Delwar Hossain tried his best to keep things under control, but he left due to "health reasons" citing huge work pressure.

Later, Prof Satya Prasad Majumder was given the charge, but he also could not stop ragging at the halls. Prof Saiful said Prof Satya failed to check the practice "probably because he was too soft".

The VC said he learnt about student torture in the name of ragging in June this year during a session review committee meeting with the deans, department heads and institution directors. Some guardians also lodged complaints about ragging, he said.

"The then DSW director Prof Satya Prasad Majumder was not present at the meeting and I immediately asked him about it over phone. I asked him politely, but he loudly replied that there was no proof to this end. I felt really bad," he said.

During another meeting, Prof Satya Prasad told the VC that he could no longer hold the position.

Later, Prof Saiful appointed Prof Abul Kashem Miah as the new DSW director. Prof Abul, however, had to resign from the post right away due to strong opposition from BCL leaders, he said.

Later, Prof Mizanur Rahman replaced Prof Abul. Initially, he took some good steps and even handed down punishment to some students.

"But a few weeks later, I found that

Prof Mizan was also unable to control the [behaviour of BCL] leaders," the VC said, adding, "I cannot intervene here directly. It's the DSW which is authorised to look after the students."

Replying to another query, he rejected the allegation that the DSW director did not get cooperation from him.

"It is absolutely false. If he does not get me all the time, how could he reach me over phone at 3:00 in the morning the day Abrar was killed?" he asked.

"My door is always open for him," he said, adding that the DSW director would get all assistance in future.

Prof Saiful said a senior teacher with a strong personality should be holding the DSW director's post so that students, provosts and assistant provosts obey his orders.

"That has been our practice," he said.

Asked about his high number of overseas trips, he said he went abroad for the interests of the university. He said he presented his own research paper on two occasions. "I never took a single penny from the university or the government."

"I was invited and those who invited me bore all the expenses," said Prof Saiful, who has many publications in peer-reviewed journals.

He said he signed 66 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with different universities, institutions and organisations, including Oxford University, for research collaboration, faculty members exchange and post graduate student exchange during his tenure as the Buet VC.

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Woman with psychological issues kills son

STAR REPORT

A mother allegedly killed her son in Narayanganj throwing him off the roof of her home Monday evening.

Locals and police said she had psychological issues and had thrown her two-and-a-half-years-old son off the roof of her home in Narayanganj's Fatullah around 7:00pm Monday.

He family members took the boy to Dhaka Medical College Hospital but he did not survive the four-storey fall. He died around 10:00pm.

Police detained the mother.

Buet protest

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our demands," he added.

Sayem also said they would organise a mass oath-taking ceremony today to resist terrorism and communal forces on the campus.

Buet teachers and students will take part and the field-level protest will be called off through the oath-taking, he said.

The general students will not take part in any academic activities until the Buet authorities expel the accused on the basis of the charge sheet submitted by the law enforcers," he added.

"We do not want to share the same academic culture with the killers," he added.

ONE MORE CONFESSED TO KILLING

Buet student Moniruzzaman Monir, an accused in the Abrar Fahad murder case, yesterday confessed before a magistrate that he and several others hit Abrar with cricket stumps.

In his statement, Moniruzzaman said he and some others took Abrar to Room No 2011 of the Sher-e-Bangla Hall where he struck Abrar four to five times with a cricket stumps, investigators and court sources said.

He also said several others, including Anik Sarkar, the information and research secretary of Buet BCL, hit Abrar the most, which led to his death.

After recording Moniruzzaman's statement, Metropolitan Magistrate Sarafuzzaman Ansary sent him to jail.

Earlier, five leaders of Buet BCL made confessional statements admitting their involvement in Abrar's murder.

In another development, detectives arrested ASM Nazmus Sadat, an accused in the murder case, in Dinajpur early yesterday, while he was trying to flee to India.

With Nazmus's arrest, so far 20 people have been arrested in connection with the murder. He is a batch-17 student of Buet's mechanical engineering department.

Meanwhile, the same court yesterday placed Shamsul Arefin Rafath, another accused, on a fresh four-day remand after he was produced before the court on completion of his five-day remand.

The court also ordered to send Akash Hossain, an accused, to jail after his five-day remand.

The grisly murder took place between 7:30pm on October 6 and 2:30am on October 7. The incident sparked protests on university campuses across the country.