

'Serial killer' arrested in Natore

Arrestee Babu Sheikh admits to killing 8 women in 3 districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Police arrested an alleged serial killer in Natore on Saturday. The arrestee, Babu Sheikh alias Anwar alias Anar, 45, son of Zaher Ali of Harishpur village under Raninagar in Naogaon district, gave his statement to the court on Sunday afternoon, confessing his involvement in eight murders, police said.

Police also arrested Abul Kalam, 45, Md Rois, 22, and Ziaul Islam alias Zia, 35, alleged associates of Babu in different killings.

"Babu Sheikh confessed to killing eight women including a girl. In almost all the cases he and his associates raped the victims and looted valuables," AKM Hafiz Aktar, deputy inspector general of police in Rajshahi, told a press briefing at the office of Natore superintendent of police (SP) on Sunday.

"On the night of October 9, two women were killed in Lalpur and Bagatipara upazilas and their ornaments were looted. The distance between the spots of killing was around one kilometre and police found similarity in the two murders. One Rubel Ali, 22, was arrested in connection with the killings," SP Liton Kumar Saha said at the briefing.

"Following Rubel's statement, police on October 16 arrested Liton Khan, 30, who was buyer of the looted gold ornaments. Rubel and Liton confessed to the court about Babu's involvement in these murders under Section 164.

"Afterwards, police arrested Babu Sheikh from Natore Railway Station on Saturday and interrogated him about the murders. Babu confessed to his involvement with eight murders in Natore, Naogaon and Tangail districts," the SP said.

Police also recovered the looted ornaments and mobile phones which Babu and his associates looted after the murders, he added.

Babu Sheikh gave his confessional statement to the court under Section 164 on Sunday afternoon, said Akramul Hossain, additional SP (Crime and Admin) in Natore.

Faridpur municipality fails in garbage management

SUZIT KUMAR DAS, Faridpur

Indiscriminate dumping of garbage has turned a large section of Dhaka-Barishal highway, between the main entrance of Faridpur Medical College Hospital (FMCH) and Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC), into a landfill.

For about a year, locals and nearby businesses including diagnostic centres, fruit vendors, restaurants and roadside shops have been dumping garbage in the area as the municipality of Faridpur neither provides any garbage collection service to the roadside businesses nor has it set up any designated bin for locals in the area. Some locals even alleged that garbage from the FMCH is also disposed of there.

Many local residents said the accumulated heap of garbage in the area has been causing severe environmental pollution in the area and the municipality has to act fast to clean up the area for the sake of health safety of the townspeople.

They also said many people, especially shopkeepers and restaurant staffers, started throwing all sorts of trash in the particular stretch of the highway after a garbage bin beside the boundary of FMCH was removed by the Faridpur municipality at the request of FMCH authorities.

During a recent visit, this correspondent experienced unbearable foul odour emitting from the garbage heap in the area.

Zahiduzzaman Khan, a resident of Habilgopalpur area in Faridpur town, said, "Locals have been suffering immensely due to the stench coming out of the garbage dumped beside the important road."

Kowsar Ahamad Munshi, executive engineer of irrigation department at BADC in Faridpur, said, "We have been facing serious difficulties as the garbage is being dumped right in front of our office."

"Besides, the pile of garbage spreads all over the road during rain and when the garbage is burnt, emission of toxic smoke puts children in our staff quarters in harm's way."

"We requested the mayor of Faridpur municipality to build a dustbin in the area. He gave us his word, but no steps have been taken yet," he also said.

BADC Accountant Monowar Hossain said, "We can't open windows in our office due to the foul smell of garbage. This is polluting the environment and locals are contracting various diseases."

Kamoda Prosad Saha, superintendent of FMCH, said, "We don't throw garbage there. The owners and staffers of restaurants, food stores, and some diagnostic centres have been dumping garbage there. We keep our garbage on our campus and the municipality later collects it."

Denying dumping any waste beside the highway, Mizanur Rahman, manager of a local business, Nur Diagnostic Lab, said they pay Society Development Committee Tk 2,000 each month to collect their waste.

Sweepers of FMCH dump waste there late at night, he claimed.

Lutfur Rahman, deputy director of Department of Environment in Faridpur, said, "It's the responsibility of Faridpur municipality to remove the garbage. I do not understand why they don't do this. I sent letters to the mayor to take steps [in this regard] several times."

Faridpur municipality Mayor Sheikh Mahatab Ali said, "There was a large dustbin in front of FMCH, but we removed it from there after the hospital authorities complained to us."

"The hospital authorities asked us to build another dustbin on the south side of FMCH. We will build it within a short time," he added.

Ctg transport strike

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not avail one even after one hour. "I have to take an annual exam at college. But I cannot get on any vehicle due to the transport crisis and pressure of commuters."

She said she came to know about the strike after only arriving at Agrabad.

Many passengers were also forced to take risky rides on pickups.

On Sunday, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) Executive Magistrate SM Manjurul Haque led a mobile court in the city's Chandgaon area, and jailed a minibus owner for 15 days, and its driver and helper for 30 days each for running an unfit bus. The strike was launched the

next morning without any official declaration.

Md Ahsanullah Chowdhury, acting president of Chattogram City Bus Minibus and Human Haulers Association, told The Daily Star, "Aggrieved bus owners and workers called the strike on Sunday night as the mobile court jailed the owner after calling him to the spot."

When asked how long the strike will continue, he said he does not know because a section of owners called it, and it was not being held under the association's banner.

Manjurul Alam Manju, president of Chattogram District Road Transport Owners Group, an association of city and inter-district bus owners, said,

"We don't know anything about the strike. The bus owners called it on their own. We will sit with them to resolve the issue as soon as possible."

Meanwhile, the city dwellers criticised enforcement of the undeclared strike.

"They (transport workers) always hold the public hostage to realise their demands, and they did it this time too," said Debabrata Roy Debu, a private organisation employee.

Businessman Fazlul Kabir Manik said, "Whenever there is a drive against unfit vehicles and illegal drivers, transport workers started demonstrating. This is really unexpected. If they do it all the time, how will the government ensure road safety?"



Fishermen prepare for fishing with current nets at Hatkhali in Gaznar Beel in Pabna's Sujanagar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

GAZNAR BEEL IN PABNA'S SUJANAGAR

Current nets harm fish stock in open waterbody

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Rampant use of closely knitted mesh nets, popularly known as current nets, poses threat to fish stock in Gaznar Beel in Pabna's Sujanagar upazila.

Visiting different places of the large waterbody including Shahririvita, Bostal, Shagota, Hatkhali, Bonkola, Dulai,

Ulat, Khoyran, Durgapur and Bodonpur, this correspondent found hundreds of fishermen using banned current nets.

Due to the callous act, mother fish, small fish, even fry are not spared in the waterbody, one of the biggest sources of fish in Pabna.

"The small fish and fish fry can be saved if usual nets are

used. But the fishermen are using illegal current nets, causing harm to fish stock in the waterbody," said Md Fazlul Haque, a resident of Ulat village.

Fishermen have continued the callous act in absence of administrative move, he said, adding that locals fear lack of adequate fish in the large waterbody in the upcoming

dry season.

The government's fish production project in Gaznar Beel is hampered due to rampant fishing with current nets, said Azhar Ali Sheikh, former chairman of Hatkhali union parishad.

Contacted, Sujanagar Upazila Fisheries Officer Abdul Halim said, "We are

mostly busy with conducting drives in the flowing rivers to prevent the fishermen from catching hilsa during the ongoing ban period. Taking the opportunity, many fishermen go for catching fish in Gaznar Beel with illegal current nets."

"Soon we will launch drive in the waterbody," he said.

EU worried over rights situation

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yesterday, at a joint press conference.

The press conference was held after a more than 10-hour long meeting of the EU-Bangladesh 9th Joint Commission at the planning ministry in the capital.

Paola and Ashadul Islam, senior secretary of the Financial Institutions Division of the finance ministry, led their respective sides at the meeting.

Paola said the EU is based on certain values, including human rights, democracy and freedom of expression. She added that Bangladesh and the EU have agreed to continue the discussion on how to address the concerns the Union raised.

In a joint statement, the EU said the preferential trade facilities granted to Bangladesh and any future trade relationships are "conditional on the respect of human rights, including labour rights."

Bangladesh is the source of more than 62 percent of all EBA (Everything But Arms) exports to the EU, and hence is the largest beneficiary from the programme granted to Bangladesh under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP).

The EU said that while good progress has been made on factory safety in the garment sector, many steps are still outstanding in the area of labour rights and the full implementation of the Sustainable Compact is also necessary.

"Sustained reforms of labour rights standards by the Government of Bangladesh, and their full alignment with International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions on the basis of consensus of tripartite constituents are crucial in this regard," said the joint statement.

The two sides reviewed political developments and discussed the role of democracy, the rule of law and good governance and the importance of holding free and fair elections.

The EU stressed that a fully empowered and resilient civil society, in all its diversity, is a crucial component of a democracy.

The EU recalled its concerns regarding certain provisions of the Digital Security Act (DSA) and requested that freedom of expression is ensured. The Bangladesh side committed that no provision of the DSA will be used in any way to limit freedom of expression.

Both sides stressed the importance of ensuring full implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the other UN human rights conventions ratified by Bangladesh, in line with the country's Constitution.

"It is crucial for stability, economic growth and development to promote and protect the human rights of all, regardless of ethnicity, age, gender identity, sexual

orientation, religious or political affiliation, disability or socio-economic background," Paola said.

Lauding Bangladesh for its role in sheltering more than a million Rohingya refugees, she said the EU assured Bangladesh of political and financial support in facing the Rohingya crisis, as well as voluntary and sustainable return of the Rohingyas as Bangladesh expects continued EU support in this regard.

Both sides committed to pursue the accountability mechanisms for the crimes committed against the Rohingyas in Myanmar through various multilateral initiatives.

The EU said any relocation of the Rohingyas to Bhashan char should be voluntary.

The EU and Bangladesh also committed to further enhance the regular EU-Bangladesh Business Climate Dialogue to address impediments towards more trade and investment from the Union.

Bangladesh sought EU's support to ensure that the country gets GSP Plus facilities once the country graduates from the Least Developed Country status by 2024.

The Joint Commission agreed to continue working together towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Bridge without approach roads causes suffering



A bridge over a river causes immense sufferings to villagers in Tangail Sadar upazila as it does not have approach roads on either sides.

PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A bridge built over a local river around ten months ago does not have approach roads on either sides, causing immense suffering to people of nearby villages in Katulee union of Sadar upazila.

As there are no approach roads, finding no alternative, villagers make bamboo structures on both sides of the bridge and use it to go to the union parishad and nearby Torabganj bazar.

People of Kakrail, Kharjana, Bausat and Chowbaria villages use the bridge amid risk of accident every day.

Especially schoolchildren and elderly people suffer a lot during the rainy season as they often slipped from the bamboo structure while crossing the bridge, said villagers.

Shakhawat Hossain, a member of Katulee union parishad (UP), said Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) completed construction of the 45-metre-long and 2.2-metre-wide concrete bridge on a branch of the Dhaleswari river at Kakrail village

at a cost of Tk 36 lakh in January this year.

But local people cannot use the bridge literally as it does not have approach roads on either side, said the UP member.

Nayeb Ali, a resident of Kakrail village, said as the bridge does not have any approach roads, it is causing immense sufferings to villagers.

Mohammad Aitk, 13, a student of local Shikderpara Madrasa, said it is tough to cross the bridge with his bicycle.

Nasima Akter, a housewife of Kharjana village, said they urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to build the approach roads on both sides of the bridge considering the sufferings of local people, especially school kids.

Iqbal Hossain Miah, chairman of Katulee UP, said the upazila parishad has already allocated 10 tonnes of rice for construction of the approach roads.

Upazila LGED Engineer Faruk Ahmed said they will complete construction of the approach roads on both sides of the bridge in December this year.

Settle disputes with GP, Robi

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no decision was made, officials said.

They discussed whether to form a committee to review the audit reports that found that the carriers owed the government Tk 13,446 crore. The committee's terms of reference would be fixed beforehand.

It was also suggested that the companies should be asked to deposit a handsome amount to a BTRC account before the review starts. The amount would be adjusted after the review concludes.

It has been decided that the matters discussed at the meeting should not be divulged to anyone outside, Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar told The Daily Star, adding, "Hopefully, we

will be able to solve the problems within a short time."

Jabbar also said the government has been trying to diffuse tension between the two companies and the telecom regulator. "We will not do anything that may hurt foreign direct investment to the country."

In the next few days, representatives of the NBR, BTRC, and the two companies will hold several meetings and prepare a framework to solve the crisis, sources said.

Joy is scheduled to meet officials of the telecom division today where he is likely to discuss the issue.

The telecom regulator has run a long auditing process and in 2016, it claimed that Grameenphone owed

it Tk 12,579.95 crore and Robi Tk 867.23 crore in revenue share, taxes, and late fees accumulated until December 2014.

But the companies maintain that the process of the audits were disputed.

The BTRC last week got the government's consent in appointing administrators for the two companies to run the businesses and realise the money.

The operators had earlier gone to court.

The High Court on Thursday issued a two-month injunction on the BTRC's move to realise the money from Grameenphone.

The BTRC on Sunday also went to the Supreme Court and appealed for a stay on the injection. The court would

hear the appeal on Thursday. These issues were discussed at yesterday's Gono Bhaban meeting, the officials said.

The ICI advisor said that he was looking for a solution that would be acceptable to all as the country's reputation as a destination of foreign direct investment is related to the issue, said a source.

NBR Chairman Md Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, BTRC Chairman Md Jahurul Haque, Grameenphone CEO Michael Patrick Foley, Robi CEO and Managing Director Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, Grameenphone Deputy CEO Yasir Azman, and Regulatory Officer Shahed Alam among others attended the meeting.