

Crooked cop

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on December 10, 2017, in Chapainawabganj.

He obtained bail on January 9, 2018.

Government Service Rule says he has to be suspended the day he files for bail.

According to documents obtained by The Daily Star, Shakil, instead of being suspended, was transferred to Rajshahi on April 17, 2018, and just 13 days later, he was made the OC of Puthia Police Station.

The fact that Shakil served as OC of Puthia evading suspension came to the fore on September 16 when the High Court issued a ruling on a writ petition filed by Nigar Sultana, daughter of slain transport leader Nurul Islam.

In the petition filed on September 8, Nigar sought the court's directive on forming an enquiry committee to probe Shakil's tampering of the FIR filed in connection with the murder of her father.

She questioned why Shakil was not suspended as per the provisions of the Government Service Rule.

The HC ordered a judicial enquiry into the role of the OC and directed the authorities concerned to suspend him and initiate departmental proceedings against him.

It had asked authorities concerned as to why their inaction regarding the OC's "implication in criminal cases and involvement with corruption and other serious criminal offences" should not be deemed illegal.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the order.

The court might deliver an order today as the judicial probe report had been submitted.

Police eventually suspended Shakil on October 2 following the HC order with retrospective effect from January 9, 2018, the day he got bail.

This paper has a copy of the police order.

Following his suspension, locals opened up and alleged that Shakil, who has a lawmaker-brother, and his ally district AL Organising Secretary Ehsanul Haque Masud forged FIRs, indulged in corruption, and ran an extortion gang.

Nigar described most of the allegations against Shakil in her petition with the HC.

NURUL MURDER

Nurul ran for the general secretary post of Puthia's Road Transport Workers' Union on April 24 this year. He lost to Abdur Rahman Patal, who was backed by his ally Masud.

Nurul then filed a civil suit with a Rajshahi court alleging that the election results were manipulated in favour of Patal.

On June 9, the court issued an injunction on the results.

Around 10:00am the following day when Nurul went to the union office with the court order, Masud, Patal, Golam Faruk, a former general secretary of the upazila AL who acted as an election commissioner, and others threatened him with dire consequences, according to the writ.

Nurul went missing after the incident and on June 11 morning, his body was found near a brick kiln in Puthia. He had been bludgeoned to death and his genitals had been clubbed.

That afternoon, Nigar filed a murder case with Puthia Police Station. The case was eventually recorded at 11:30pm against Patal, Md Mithu, KM Shahin, Nurul Amin, Md Motin, and Abdur Rashid, according to documents.

Nigar in her writ said the FIR she had filed had eight named accused and Shakil had tried to persuade her to drop Masud and Golam Faruk.

She said Shakil made a fake FIR using her signature he had asked her to put on two blank sheets of paper. She said Shakil took the signatures saying those were required for the burial of Nurul and arrest of the accused.

The Detective Branch of Police was probing the case, but family members claimed that an attempt was made to divert the course of the investigation. They said the office of the Rajshahi Superintendent of Police issued a press statement on June 19 saying that a 16-year-old boy confessed to killing Nurul for attempting to rape him.

The statement said the boy killed Nurul with a single blow.

However, Nurul's inquest mentioned multiple injuries.

Nigar claimed that police had picked up the boy and kept him confined for four days to force him to make the false confessional statement.

The HC in its September 16, 2019, order had asked the Rajshahi SP to explain on what authority did "he disclosed confidential information of a confessional statement under 164".

FIR MANIPULATION

On the night of June 6, 2018, Rocky Islam, 22, of Koipukuria in Puthia was fatally injured. He died half an hour after he was taken to Puthia Health Complex, his family said.

His body had marks of numerous injuries and his genitals had been clubbed.

Before his death, Rocky told his family members that Masud's cadres,

who were accused in a case for beating up his uncle Mohidul Islam in 2017, had attacked him.

Rocky's mother Rehana Begum filed a case with Puthia police accusing 14 people for the murder.

Three weeks later, she learnt that the FIR she filed was never recorded. Instead, police recorded an unnatural death case saying Rocky died by suicide.

On July 2, 2018, Rehana filed another case with a Rajshahi court accusing the same 14 people. And the case is now being investigated by the Police Bureau of Investigation.

EXTORTION

A mob beat Md Tarek, 22, a rickshaw-van puller on suspicion of trying to steal a rickshaw-van at Jhalmalia Bazar of Puthia and handed him over to the police on September 23, 2018, police said.

Tarek's mother Sanwara Begum alleged that Shakil had called them over to the police station and demanded Tk 60,000 for his release.

The family had said they would be able to pay only after they sell a piece of land they owned.

Sanwara told The Daily Star that Tarek hanged himself inside the police station after learning that the family was trying to sell the land to have him released.

She alleged that her son was kept in the ICU of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for 22 days before being declared dead on October 15, 2018.

Police handed the body over without an autopsy, she said.

Locals claimed that soon after joining Puthia Police Station, Shakil in connivance with Masud patronised a gang of criminals, including some women, who entrapped well-off people and extorted them.

After Shakil was removed, police in early October arrested eight members of the gang.

An audio clip allegedly of a female arrestee saying how the money went to Shakil and Masud went viral in social media.

THE SUSPENSION

Shakil's mother-in-law Aklima Begum had filed the criminal case against him for forgery, forceful eviction from her property, and attempted murder.

Aklima wrote to the Rajshahi Range deputy inspector general (DIG) of police that Shakil obtained bail in the case she filed. The DIG received the letter on September 26, 2018.

The DIG also informed Chapainawabganj police of the matter.

Abu Bakar Siddique, one of the two lawyers dealing Nigar's writ petition, said there was hardly a way of suppressing the information of his bail. Either senior officials overlooked the matter while appointing him or he hid the information.

HC lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua said, "Continuation of service by a suspended officer is simply impossible without political influence."

SHAKIL'S SAY

Shakil told The Daily Star that he was not bothered about any of the allegations against him "since he was not involved".

He was involved in recording of the FIR and "I've done it properly," he said, adding that the recorded FIR carries the plaintiff's signature.

He claimed he did not take Nigar's signature on blank pieces of paper.

Shakil denied having any connections with Masud or having anything to do with the dropping of Masud and Faruk's names from the murder case.

He claimed that many of his senior officers, including the Rajshahi SP, knew about his bail.

RAJSHAHI SP

Rajshahi SP Md Shahidullah said Shakil served concealing information regarding his involvement in criminal offences.

"We knew nothing. He [Shakil] continued serving hiding facts [of his involvement in criminal offence]," the SP said, adding that his office had no records of Shakil's taking leave to attend court hearings in this connection.

MASUD'S SAY

AL leader Ehsanul Haque Masud denied involvement in the murder of Nurul. He claimed that a vested quarter was trying to harm his image.

"Nurul's family members never accused me of the murder, until they went to the High Court," he said.

"They did not accuse me at the police station ... they could have done it before the court. But they had not."

"They only accused me in the writ petition over political enmity," he said.

LAWMAKER'S SAY

Talking to The Daily Star, Shakil's brother Shamil Uddin Ahmed Shimul, lawmaker of Chapainawabganj-1, said, "Being a police officer, he knew well where to grease to get away with the charges he was facing."

"I never lobbied for him and he didn't contact me either."

"Whatever he did, he did with local political leaders beside him. He never contacted me and I never contacted him regarding these matters."



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the inauguration of the national council of Swachhchasebak League at Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PTI

PM warns onion hoarders Swachhchasebak League gets new leadership

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government wants to see whether there is any conspiracy behind the sudden hike in the price of onions in the country.

"Onion price is a problem right now... It is true that onion prices have surged in different countries, but I don't know why the price has soared abnormally in our country. We want to see if anyone is involved in this..." she said.

Hasina, also the chief of the ruling Awami League, said this while inaugurating the third national council of Awami Swachhchasebak League, an associate body of the ruling Awami League, at the Suhrawardy Udyan, reports the UNB.

Swachhchasebak League's councillors from across the country joined the inauguration of their new leadership.

Meanwhile, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader announced the names of the newly elected leaders of the central Swachhchasebak League and its Dhaka north and south units from the council session held at the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) in the afternoon.

Nirmal Ranjan Guha and Afzal Babu were named president and general secretary of Swachhchasebak League.

Nirmal was vice-president of the outgoing committee and is also the convener of the council preparatory committee, while Afzal was also vice-president of the outgoing committee.

Ishak Miah and Anisur Rahman Nayeem were named president and general secretary of the party's Dhaka north unit, while Kamrul Hasan Ripon



Nirmal Ranjan Guha Afzal Babu

and Tarek Sayeed were named president and general secretary of its south unit.

At the inauguration session, Sheikh Hasina said the government had taken initiatives to import onions in cargo planes to bring down its price, reports UNB.

"The planes carrying onions will land in the country either tomorrow [today] or day after tomorrow [Monday]," she said.

It is natural that the production of a crop may increase or decrease due to weather, she said, adding that there might be some people who want to make a quick buck by raising the price through hoarding. "But they have to think about the fact that onions cannot be preserved for a long time...they might rot."

The PM alleged that when the country is advancing and people are living in peace, vested interests are trying to confuse people by creating issues.

She said the onion price in India is also very high and it is currently being sold there at Tk 100. "But there's one state [in India] from where onion export is not allowed...The onion price in that state is lower."

Hasina said the people of the country have to be aware of not bringing killers, corrupt people, and money-launderers to power again.

"Their return to power means the suffering of people, putting the country on the verge of destruction and resuming of militancy and terrorism, as they are involved in militancy and terrorism," she said.

Stressing the importance of maintaining the pace of advancement, Hasina said the government wants to eradicate drugs, terrorism and corruption, and the drive against these social menaces will continue.

"We have to ensure peace and security for the people of Bangladesh and if the peaceful atmosphere prevails in the country, it is possible to develop the country..." she said.

The PM went on to ask why one has to earn money through corruption and theft. "The people of the country won't tolerate living a lavish life and showing off with the money earned through terrorist acts, extortion, corruption and dishonesty."

She said the government has been implementing massive programmes to ensure development and the welfare of the country and its people in such a way that no one is left behind.

Criticising BNP founder Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia, the PM said Zia started the politics of killing and destroyed the spirit of the Liberation War, while Khaleda established terrorism and militancy in the country.

They also rewarded killers of the Father of The Nation and war criminals by making them ministers, members of parliament and giving them blood spattered national flags, she said.

Hasina called upon leaders and workers of the Swachhchasebak League to work with the mentality of serving people and strengthen the organisation

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Shady traders at it again

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Dhaka and many other districts was Tk 250 a kg, which is a record high.

Traders said the high prices decreased customers' demand. There were fewer buyers at the markets yesterday.

A recent government announcement that a huge quantity of onions would be imported by air cargo may also have impacted the sales, they said.

Speaking at the Awami Swachhchasebak League's council at the capital yesterday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also said the government would import onions by air.

She said planes carrying onions would land either today or tomorrow, UNB reported.

The PM also said there might be some people who were out to make money by hoarding onions and hiking their prices.

Yesterday, a mobile court in Narayanganj fined three traders for selling onions at higher prices and for not having a price chart.

Talking to The Daily Star, several traders said a section of onion traders, including importers, was taking advantage of the onion crisis.

They said there was a supply shortage in the face of low import and a decline in supply from the districts that grow onions.

"Supply has been low compared to the demand. Importers hike prices as there are plenty of buyers," said Md Liton Sheikh, a wholesaler at the capital's Mohammadpur Krishi Market.

Contacted, Shah Alam, owner of Alam Traders, said 20 to 25 percent of imported onions get rotten on their way to local markets due to a lack of preservation facilities.

"Apart from this, the actual import costs are higher than the ones

mentioned in the import documents as we need to make separate payments in the countries we buy onions from," he said, adding that although documents show the import cost was Tk 43 per kg, it was actually Tk 90.

He said onions had never been imported from Myanmar on such a large scale before and that's why many importers were given low-quality bulbs. "Onions are perishable and they rot."

Data from the Teknaf land port show that around 100 importers brought in 32,643 tonnes of onions from Myanmar since India banned onion export on September 29.

Tk 43 was the average price of each kg, show the data.

According to Chattogram Customs House data, the average onion import price from China is between Tk 30-Tk 36 per kg while it is between Tk 15 and Tk 32 for those brought from Egypt, Pakistan and Thailand.

The wholesale and retail prices of these varieties were also much higher at the markets.

Wholesalers at Shyambazar, one of biggest wholesale onion depots in Dhaka, said some importers were trying to send onions directly to different districts as they eye more profit.

Markets observers, however, said importers were not the only ones responsible and blamed a section of onion traders.

Mohammad Shah Alam, a wholesaler at Mohammadpur Krishi market, said he along with three other traders from the market met an onion importer at the Shyambazar Bazar yesterday.

The four were willing to pay the importer Tk 88 for each kg, but another wholesaler bought the bulb from him for Tk 92 a kg. Later, he took the onions

to Karwan Bazar in a truck.

In the market, the retail price was Tk 250.

Talking to this newspaper, traders at the market said there was a dearth of customers.

Abdul Momen, a wholesaler, said he did not get a single customer since morning till noon.

The number of customers was also low at Mohammadpur Town Hall Market.

"Prices are too high. Many customers are returning empty-handed," said Riaz Hossain, an onion trader there.

Onions shoots were also pricey. Each was selling for Tk 130-140 at different markets.

Meanwhile, the BNP yesterday announced it would stage demonstrations across the country tomorrow, protesting the price hike.

Party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir made the announcement after a standing committee meeting at the party chairperson's Gulshan office last night.

ONIONS DUMPED IN CTG

Rotten onions were dumped on the banks of Chaktai Canal and the Karnaphuli river yesterday.

Photos of the dumped bulbs went viral.

Asked, traders at the Khatunganj market said they dump rotten onions on a regular basis as the bulb is perishable.

This correspondent saw several sacks of decayed onions in front of almost every onion shop.

Joni Barua, a wholesaler in the market, said five to six percent of their onions rot due to a lack of storage facilities.

[Our Staff Correspondent Shaheen Mollah and Staff Reporter Dwaipayan Barua contributed to this report]

PM leaves for UAE

3 deals likely to be signed

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina left Dhaka yesterday for a four-day official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to attend the Dubai Air Show 2019.

Hasina will attend the air show on Sunday at the invitation of Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

An Emirates flight carrying the PM and her entourage departed from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 6:45pm.

The flight is scheduled to land at Dubai International Airport at 10:10pm (local time).

Bangladesh Ambassador to the UAE Muhammad Imran will receive the PM at the airport.

During her visit, Hasina will stay at Shangri-La Hotel in Abu Dhabi.

On Sunday, she will join the opening ceremony of the Dubai Air Show 2019 at Dubai Al Maktoum International Airport (also known as Dubai World Central) at 10:00am. She will later enjoy the flying display at 2:00pm (local time).

The PM will attend a dinner to be hosted by the Bangladesh ambassador to the UAE in her honour at 7:30pm on the same day.

During her visit to the UAE, three bilateral cooperation documents are expected to be signed, said Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen.

One of the instruments is on the bilateral cooperation between Bangladesh Investment Development Authority and Emirates Development Authority, one on the bilateral cooperation between Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority and Emirates Economic Zone Authority and a protocol on the allotment of a land plot for the Bangladesh Embassy in Abu Dhabi.

Hasina is also expected to have a meeting with the big investor groups and business leaders in the UAE.

She is expected to inaugurate a NID registration programme for non-resident Bangladeshis living in the UAE at the Bangladesh Embassy in Abu Dhabi, said the Foreign Minister.

The PM will leave Dubai for Dhaka by an Emirates flight on Tuesday afternoon.

Journalist found dead in his Banasree home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police last night recovered the body of a journalist from his rented home in the capital's Banasree.

The dead was identified as Mansur Ali, 33, a sub-editor of the online news portal Bangla Tribune, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Khilgaon police station Mashiure Rahman, told this newspaper.

On information, police went there and recovered the body after breaking down the door to his house around 8:30pm, he said.

Mansur, who shared the home with two flatmates, was staying alone yesterday, the OC said.

Mashiure said police were yet to confirm the reason behind the death. The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy, he added.

Nuruzzaman Labu, a senior reporter at Bangla Tribune, said Mansur left for home at 12:15am yesterday and was supposed to attend office at 4:00pm.

As he did not come to the office, his colleagues looked for him. Around 6:00pm, one of Mansur's flatmates, Manajit Mitra, reached home and found it locked from the inside, Labu said.

When Mansur did not respond, Manajit informed the house-owner, who informed police, he added.

Mansur, hailing from Fenchuganj upazila of Sylhet, joined Bangla Tribune in 2017, the news portal reported. Earlier, he worked for The Daily Ittefaq.

Five raped across the country

One held, 3 including
AL leader sent to jail

STAR REPORT

Police held a man in a rape case in Bogura yesterday, while three others including a local Awami League leader were sent to jail over rape allegation in Satkhira and Barishal.

In Bogura, the law enforcers detained Borhan Ali, 30, for allegedly raping his speech impaired sister-in-law, said police.

Inspector (Investigation) Rezaul Karim of Bogra Sadar Police Station said the woman visited Borhan's house around 7:30am yesterday as they were relatives.

The accused, being alone in the house, raped her, he said.

Upon returning home, the woman shared the incident with her family members who along with others in the locality caught Borhan and handed him over to police, said Rezaul.

In Satkhira, a court yesterday sent Kamal Sana, 35, acting joint secretary of Jalapur union Awami League unit, for allegedly raping a housewife in Tala upazila.

Kamal, on Friday, went to the victim's home while her husband was absent, and raped her, said Officer-in-Charge (OC) Mehedi Hasan Russel of Tala Police Station.

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