

Man held for killing aunt, cousins

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Pabna

Police yesterday arrested a man for killing his aunt and her two sons, whose decomposing bodies were recovered a couple of days ago in Belkuchi, Sirajganj. Ayub Ali Sagar, 28, a weaver by profession, committed the triple murder as his aunt refused to lend him money. Sirajganj Superintendent of Police Arifur Rahman Mondal confirmed the matter at a press conference on the day.

Later in the day, Sagar confessed under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure after he was produced before a district judge's court, said Tajmilur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Belkuchi Police Station.

According to the confession, Sagar was struggling to cope with rising commodity prices and mounting debt.

On Wednesday, he went to his aunt's house to ask her for a loan. But, as she refused, he decided to stay the night and steal from her.

When everyone went to sleep, Sagar broke into his aunt's locker.

As the sound woke her, he hit her with a blunt object and strangled her to death.

Later, when her children also woke up, he killed them both.

He then stole the money and left the scene in the morning.

On Saturday, police recovered the bodies of Rawshan Ara Begum, 45, and her two sons, Jihad Hossain, 10, and three-year-old Mahin.

Later, the woman's brother, Md Nuruzzaman, filed a case with Belkuchi Police Station.



Ukrainian servicemen stand atop a watercraft in Donetsk region on Sunday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russian officials have criticised their military leadership following the retreat of Russian forces from the strategic eastern city of Lyman, in the Donetsk region.

Ukrainian forces burst through Russian lines

Several settlements in Kherson liberated

AGENCIES

Ukrainian forces achieved their biggest breakthrough in the south of the country since the war began, bursting through the front and advancing rapidly along the Dnipro River yesterday, threatening supply lines for thousands of Russian troops.

Kyiv gave no official confirmation of the gains, but Russian sources acknowledged that a Ukrainian tank offensive had advanced dozens of kilometres along the river's west bank, recapturing a number of villages along the way.

The breakthrough mirrors recent Ukrainian successes in the east that have

turned the tide in the war against Russia, even as Moscow has tried to raise the stakes by annexing territory, ordering mobilisation and threatening nuclear retaliation.

"The information is tense, let's put it that way, because, yes there were indeed breakthroughs," Vladimir Saldo, the Russian-installed leader in occupied parts of Ukraine's Kherson province told Russian state television.

"There's a settlement called Dudchany, right along the Dnipro River, and right there, in that region, there was a breakthrough. There are settlements that are occupied by Ukrainian forces," he said.

Anton Gerashchenko, an adviser to

Ukraine's interior ministry, posted a photo of Ukrainian soldiers posing with their flag draping a golden statue of an angel. He said it was the village of Mikhailivka, around 20 km beyond the previous front, reports Reuters.

Russia's State Duma yesterday passed bills endorsing the annexation of the four partly occupied Ukrainian provinces.

The advance in the south mirrors the tactics that have brought Kyiv major gains since the start of September in eastern Ukraine, where its forces swiftly seized territory to gain control of Russian supply lines, cutting off larger Russian forces and forcing them to retreat.

Leniency lends them impunity

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not being ensured, he added.

Departmental actions are taken only in name, like transfers, suspension of promotion, he said, adding, "The offenders should be punished under the criminal justice system through departmental investigation."

Prof Faruk also suggested setting up an independent and neutral commission, like the ones that exist in developed countries, to try complaints against police.

Around 9.6 percent of the force of 2.13 lakh law enforcers faced departmental action in 2021 alone, according to data the Bangladesh government provided to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on May 12, 2022.

From 2015 to 2021, that number was 1.17 lakh or 55 percent of the total force. At least 1,692 criminal cases were filed against members of the force during that period.

In 2021, a total of 17,966 members faced minor action like warnings, reprimands, or temporary wage cuts, and 2,388 faced major consequences like termination, suspension or demotions, according to the data.

But the consequences of departmental action often pale in comparison to the benefits that corrupt members can get by abusing their power.

For example, a constable who has been working at a police unit in Dhaka faced major departmental action twice in two years for taking money from people promising them jobs in the police department, said a police official wishing anonymity.

The constable is now under investigation for a similar crime, the police official added.

Another constable, Nafidul Islam, was suspended on charge of ration card forgery when he was posted in Rajarbagh Police Lines a few years back.

In September last year, Shahjahanpur police arrested Nafidul along with another member of police and three others on charges of abduction and demanding ransom.

Some victims of the crimes committed by police have alleged that they are yet to see any effective action despite submitting complaints to a complaint cell introduced by Police Headquarters (PHQ) in November 2017.

The Daily Star talked to two such victims recently. One was falsely

implicated by a team of Detective Branch (DB) of police in 2016, while another was tortured by a police team of DMP in 2019.

They said considering the extent to which the offenders abused their power, only token departmental action was taken against them.

When they moved to the court seeking justice, they faced various obstructions from the accused police members, they said, asking not to be named.

All of this has resulted in an erosion of people's confidence in the police force. A recent survey commissioned by Bangladesh Police shows that over 73 percent of victims of various crimes did not report the crime.

The reasons behind the non-reporting, according to the survey conducted between January and December 2018, include inconvenience victims face while filing a case and appearing in court, unfriendly attitude of police, and "monetary involvement" (the term the survey used).

PHQ's Deputy Inspector General (Operations) Haider Ali Khan, however, claimed that very few members of the 2.13-lakh force get involved in criminal offences.

"Since we are in uniform, crimes by police personnel draw attention. When any policeman commits any crime, we do not suppress it. We take proper punitive actions," he told The Daily Star.

He said they always instruct and brief field-level police personnel and warn them about the punishment they would face if they were involved in any crime.

"If any allegation is found against any member of the force, the allegation is probed properly. If the member is found guilty, departmental action is taken and even criminal cases are filed if he or she commits criminal offences," he said.

Asked why, despite such actions, police personnel are still involved in crimes, the DIG said he thinks as police always deal with criminals, some members get influenced by them.

SOME RECENT INCIDENTS

More than a dozen incidents involving police officials in various crimes made headlines in the last few months.

Take, for instance, the case of Assistant Sub-Inspector Mahbul Alam of Pallabi police.

On September 6, he planted yaba pills into the pocket of a pedestrian and showed him arrested in a narcotics case in the capital's Khilkhet area. Later, Alam and his two informants were arrested for framing the man.

Constable Kamruzzaman and his seven accomplices were arrested on September 12 for looting 98 tolas of gold from a jewellery shop worker in Keraniganj.

On July 17, Jahidul Islam, an ASI of Rupnagar Police Station, and his four associates were arrested for snatching 38 tolas of gold ornaments from a jewellery shop worker in the capital's Gabtoli area.

The ASI was a member of SI Masudur Rahman's team who were involved in various crimes in the area. Last year on August 19, a woman in Dhaka's Rupnagar area alleged that Masudur took Tk 2.5 lakh from her home during a drive.

On July 8, Rab arrested four people, including a constable of the special branch of Chattogram Metropolitan Police with 5,260 yaba pills.

Of all the incidents, the suspension of Banani inspector Sheikh Sohel Rana, the so-called patron of e-commerce platform E-orange which made headlines for reportedly embezzling crores of taka by not delivering customers' products, was the talk of the country.

Besides, six police personnel, including two officials of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, were closed after a complaint against them was lodged for extorting money from two people by threatening to frame them in drug cases.

DEFICIT OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Prof Omar Faruk said police culture has deviated from ensuring safety of the public and stopping crimes.

Field-level police personnel in most cases demand bribes to file cases, take money from victims and act according to politically connected or influential people's bidding while registering cases and making arrests. Police officials also get transferred or promoted in exchange for bribes, he added.

"Whatever innovations or strategies police take, they will not be able to overcome the image crisis as long as people are not getting the services," he said.

Recruitment, transfer, and promotion in the police department have to be done fairly and transparently, he said.

Former inspector general of police Nurul Huda said some undesirable people, who cannot resist temptation, are getting jobs in the force, and the bad elements are not being properly dealt with at different levels.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman thinks a lack of effective accountability beyond departmental action, which is often not a sufficient deterrent, is increasing the risk of converting the institution to protect and enforce law into violators of law.

That is not to say that there are no examples of pro-poor policing, but those are few compared to the widespread allegations of abuse of power, he told this newspaper.

He said people at large are increasingly losing confidence in police as the first and principal port of call for rule of law and justice.

"The police can get away with a culture of secrecy with regard to reports on investigations of police crime because of an apparent sense of confidence that the political authority also does not care much about the accountability of police," he added.

"On the contrary, the deficit of accountability is often politically colluded and protected to serve short-term mileage. The resulting syndromes of dysfunctionality is ominous for law enforcement agencies as an institution as well as for the future of democracy in the country," Iftekharuzzaman said.

Referring to cases where police plant narcotics on innocent people, Supreme Court lawyer Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua said such incidents indicate a flawed chain of command as well as a fragile law and order situation.

"Law and order must operate objectively to ensure no innocent is punished. This can uphold the judicial equilibrium, but we have failed in many cases," he told this newspaper.

"Punitive actions are supposed to set an example that deters others from committing crimes and in a true sense such examples could not be set."

Man killed

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According to statistics of the Accident Research Institute of Buet, 173 people were killed at level crossings in six years until 2021.

29 institutions critical

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The Director General of the Digital Security Agency is empowered with ensuring that no illegal access takes place. To achieve this, regular inspections are to take place and reports are to be submitted to the government.

The director general is also empowered with taking pre-emptive measures to protect these structures. "If the director general has reason to believe that any activity of an individual regarding any matter within his jurisdiction is threatening or detrimental to any critical information infrastructure, then he may, suo moto, or upon a complaint of any other person, inquire into the matter," states the Digital Security Act 2018.

The critical information infrastructures are PMO; the President's Office; Bangladesh Bank; National Board of Revenue; Immigration and Passport Department; Bridges Division; National Data Center Company Ltd; National Data Centre, Bangladesh

Computer Council; Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission; Election Commission's national identity database; Central Procurement Technical Unit; Sonali Bank; Agrani Bank; Rupali Bank; Janata Bank; Rooppur Nuclear Power plant project site; Biman Bangladesh Airlines; Immigration, Bangladesh Police; Bangladesh Telecommunication Company Ltd; Power Grid Company of Bangladesh; Bangladesh Power Development Board; Power Grid Company of Bangladesh; Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company; Central Depository Bangladesh; Bangabandhu Satellite Company; Bangladesh Securities and Stock Exchange Commission; Civil Aviation Authority Bangladesh; Registrar General's Office, birth and death registration; and Dhaka and Chittagong Stock Exchange.

Tarique Barkatullah, who leads the National Data Centre, said, "ICT personnel have been trained to provide security to these infrastructures."

Two years on, still confined

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Professor Lokman Hossen, team leader of the Biodiversity Conservation Programme for Padma Bridge, said erosion of the river caused by the sand extraction has devoured two unions. "Both the banks of the Padma are exposed to erosion because of the unbridled sand extraction."

Hilsa has stopped migrating to the Padma, he said, adding that dolphins are hardly seen in the river.

"Parts of Painpara, Teotia, Char Janajait and Korailor Char have already gone into the Padma. This is harming the biodiversity of the river," he told The Daily Star.

Visiting the river last month, this newspaper found more than 30 dredgers extracting sand within around 100 metres of the bridge in Mawa of Munshiganj, which is in the core zone of the sanctuary.

Sand mining in part of Sariatpur's Janjira upazila remained suspended following intervention by the local administration. Locals also held rallies demanding the stop to the dredging.

Md Salauddin Bepara, former chairman of Kunderchar Union Parishad in Janjira, told The Daily Star that around 400 homes and about 100 acres of arable land went into the river. "Sand traders in connivance with some officials from the administration and police have been causing this suffering to the people," he said.

Shafiqul Islam, director of Padma Bridge Project, told this newspaper

Fresh firing heard in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Cox's Bazar*

Firing in Myanmar was heard again from Tumbru border in Bandarban's Naikkhangchhari upazila yesterday evening.

"Firing was not heard from the Tumbru border for the last few days. But it suddenly started again around 6:30pm today [yesterday], causing panic among the locals," said SM Jahangir Aziz, chairman of Ghumdum Union Parishad.

Locals heard five shots till 7:30pm yesterday, the chairman said.

Seeking anonymity, a Border Guard Bangladesh official, who was on duty at the Ghumdum-Tumbru border, said firing in Myanmar started again yesterday after a lull of several days.

"We are vigilant in all areas along the border," added the official.

BCL leader suspended after arrest for possession

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jamalpur*

A Bangladesh Chhatra League leader was suspended yesterday after he was arrested with yaba tablets on Saturday night from Jamalpur's Namapara area.

Ishtiaq Ahmed Sifat, 25, deputy information and research affairs secretary of Nandina upazila Chhatra League, was also served a show-cause notice, said a press release issued by BCL.

Sifat, for a long time, has been involved in drug peddling.

Tipped off, a Rab-14 team raided the intersection near Jamalpur Municipality on Saturday night, arresting him with 122 Yaba tablets, said Squadron Leader Ashiq Uzzaman, commander of Rab-14.

The arrestee was produced before a court on Sunday which sent him to jail.

3 sentenced to life for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

A Pabna court yesterday sentenced three to life term imprisonment on charges of murder.

The convicts Shahin Ahmed, Azom, and Mukul Sardar, member of Faridpur's Punguli Union Parishad -- all aged around 50 -- were arrested for killing Monirul Khan, 27, on June 21, 2013 following a dispute during gambling.

They were also fined Tk 25, 000 each.

Monirul's father Ishhaque Ali Khan filed a case with Faridpur Police Station after the police recovered his body on June 22, 2013 from Kenai village.