

## 'He took part in RU teacher murder'

Rajshahi police say about Payel, one of Holey Artisan gunmen

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

One of the attackers of Holey Artisan Bakery was named as Payel having links



to the murder of Rajshahi University Prof AFM Rezaul Karim Siddique during an investigation over a month before the cafe attack.

Khairul Islam alias Payel, a madrasa student, of Shahjahanpur, Bogra, was codenamed Badhon when he along with seven others was preparing for the killing mission, said Inspector of Rajshahi Detective Branch Rezaus Sadik who has been investigating the murder case.

Payel first stabbed the RU English teacher, a music patron, from behind, and as he fell on the ground, others closed in and hacked him with machetes, according to

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the confessional statement of Maskawat Hasan Sakib alias Abdullah, a member of banned outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), of Shibganj in Bogra.

Sakib, who himself had a role in the killing, made the confession in a Rajshahi court a day after he was arrested on May 15. He gave a detailed account of how the murder had been carried out and who were involved.

The Daily Star has a copy of his statement.

Of the eight JMB men involved, four took part in the killing on April 23.

Of them, Shariful Islam, of Sripur village of Bagmara in Rajshahi, was codenamed Khalid. He was a 3rd year student of the English department of RU.

Nazrul Islam alias Baik Hasan was killed in what police say is a gunfight at Ashrafer Mor in Rajshahi city on July 2.

Osman of Joypurhat, who was known to the police as Tareque, was killed in another "gunfight" on June 7.

Sakib identified another JMB activist having links to the murder as Mamun, of Mohimaganj of Gaibandha district. He achieved a diploma from Rangpur Polytechnic Institute and joined the militant outfit in 2013. To spread militancy, Sakib travelled extensively across the northern districts of Natore, Rajshahi, Bogra

and Gaibandha.

Sakib used to communicate with the other militants through Threema app and his ID was "Badman". He had completed tasks in line with the instructions given through the Android phone app.

The killers of Rezaul used to meet at Govindaganj of Gaibandha.

Sakib went to Govindaganj on April 16 after Osman texted him to go there. There Mamun gave Osman a black coloured Discovery 135mm motorcycle and three machetes.

Sakib and Osman then went to Rajshahi by the motorcycle and met Shariful, Bike Hasan, and Payel at a petrol pump beside Rajshahi bypass road.

Shariful, Hasan and Payel took the motorcycle and machetes and asked Sakib to stay at the house of Abdus Sattar and his son Ripon.

The police later arrested Sattar and Ripon who also made confessional statements.

The decision of killing Prof Rezaul the next morning was postponed around 8:00pm of April 16. Sakib went back home.

Shariful asked Sakib to go to Rajshahi again on April 22 through an SMS.

Sakib went to Bhadra intersection of Rajshahi city on the motorcycle around 6:30am the next day and gave the vehicle to Hasan.

Hasan took along Shariful and Payel on the motorcycle and told Sakib to go to Shalbagan by an auto-rickshaw.

At Shalbagan, Sakib saw Hasan standing by the motorcycle while Shariful and Payel was waiting on the road that goes to the house of Prof Rezaul.

Soon Rezaul appeared. He was walking slowly towards his killers with a bag hanging from his shoulder to catch a university bus.

Payel and Shariful, a student of Prof Rezaul, walked towards their target and went past him.

Payel then pulled out a machete from inside his clothe and stabbed the professor. The next blow came from his department student Shariful.

Hasan at the time rebuked Sakib for standing idle and doing nothing.

Sakib took a machete from Hasan and hacked the professor to confirm his death, according to his confession.

Hasan collected the machetes and sped away on the motorbike along with Shariful and Payel.

Apart from Sakib, Sattar, Ripon and another RU student Rahmatullah gave confessional statements in the case. They all are now in jail.

Payel was among the five militants killed during "Operation Thunderbolt" carried out to end the 11-hour siege at the Gushan cafe. Shariful is on the run.

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