

# THE HIGHWAY MAN

- by **Abhilasha Bisht**, Commandant, CPL Battalion.

On a balmy evening in July a businessman of Adilabad Mr.Ghalib, who ran a General store, & his friend Mr.Faiz, were on their way to Hyderabad.. Mr.Ghalib was a merchant dealing in supari, cosmetic and other items, & he used to go to Hyderabad once in 15 days to make payment in cash to suppliers. He usually carried, cash of up to 10 to 15 lakhs &, he hired the same driver, Iqbal to make these trips. The two friends left Adilabad carrying an amount of about 10 lakhs. En route at Ichoda they met a fellow trader to collect money [Rs. 1,00,000/-] from him.

It was getting late and all were beginning to feel tired and drowsy, so they refreshed themselves before proceeding with the journey. They took two more breaks to have cold drinks, more to ensure that the driver remained alert as the night grew deeper.They were almost nearing the Hyderabad city when the driver observed that there was another vehicle following them closely.

A little down the road near the Military diary farm a car suddenly careened and stopped in front of their vehicle. Mr.Ghalib's driver slammed on the brakes and stopped the vehicle on the side of the road. Three persons got down from the obstructing car; they were armed with rods & sticks. They did not say a word but smashed the windscreen of Mr.Ghalib's car.

Having gained access to the passengers one of them threw chilly powder on Mr.Ghalib who was sitting in the front seat next to the driver, and the other did the same to Mr. Faiz who was sitting on the backseat. The assailants then beat up all the three and took the bag containing the cash from the back of the car, & before the merchant & his friends could react, the robbers got into their vehicle & left.

Mr.Ghalib & his friends rushed to the police station to report the matter. A case of robbery was registered, and the three victims were hospitalised. The detective team rushed to the spot and seized the vehicle and the forensic team scoured the vehicle for any evidence left behind by the assailants.

The detective team then returned to question the victims regarding the description of the assailants. During the second round of questioning, it was found that the driver of the victims' car had left the hospital. He had told Mr. Ghalib that he had urgent matters to take care of back in Adilabad, and had left.

Mr. Ghalib also suggested to the police that the behaviour of the driver along the route had been less than normal, especially as he often requested for a break and disappeared for almost half an hour at a time during the stops. Also it seemed that he had intentionally slowed down the speed of the car after Medchal.

The investigating teams immediately turned to the cell phone number given in the address of the driver. They collected the details of the calls made & received by the driver from 19-07-2004 to 20-07-2004. From the telephone records it was gleaned that the driver Iqbal had been contacting four persons at regular intervals in the period of these 2 days. As suspicion of a conspiracy and the role of the driver deepened, a team was rushed to Adilabad, where the driver and these four persons lived. They were nabbed near a tea stall at the government hospital in Adilabad. They were taken to the local police station for questioning. After strenuous interrogation, the driver Iqbal confessed that he had committed the robbery, together with 3 others.

He stated that he knew of Mr. Ghalib's regular visits to Hyderabad & that he carried huge amounts of money on these trips. On seeing the cash being taken on the last three occasions Iqbal got greedy and decided to rob the merchant.

He & three other friends chalked out a plan by which there would be no suspicion on Iqbal. Their plan was simple. They intended to rob the vehicle near Hyderabad. They would follow the merchant in another car, overtake them near the Hyderabad city limits, and loot the money; they would assault Iqbal as well. Earlier that month they could not carry out the plan due to their inability to get another vehicle.

The next time around, one of the friends borrowed a car ostensibly to go to Nizamabad for a couple of days. The plan was that when the merchant started Mr. Iqbal would contact them periodically on

his cell phone to ascertain their location and to ensure that they were able to catch up and overtake the merchants' car near the outskirts of Hyderabad.

When Mr. Ghalib rang up Iqbal regarding his journey to Hyderabad on the 19<sup>th</sup> the conspirators swung into action. The three accomplices borrowed a car and went off to Nizamabad, from where they followed the progress of the merchants' car by telephonic inputs from Iqbal.

The merchant & his friend, totally unaware of the misfortune they were taking along with them, started out for Hyderabad, carrying about 10 lakhs cash. At Itchoda they stopped to take money from another colleague, which the merchant kept in a Sony bag in the dicky. Afterwards Iqbal went outside on the pretext of drinking tea, and contacted his accomplices from a nearby STD booth and also told them that the money was kept in a bag in the boot of the car.

At Dichpally too, Mr. Iqbal contacted his accomplices who directed him to go slow after Medchal. About 50 km from Hyderabad, Iqbal noticed the car in which his accomplices were travelling crossing them. Giving a pre planned signal, Iqbal overtook them. From that time onwards Iqbal's accomplices followed the merchants car closely.

At about 2.30am when they reached the outskirts of Secunderabad, Iqbal's accomplices overtook his car, and suddenly stopped right in front. Then they proceeded to rob the merchant according to their plan.

Iqbal also played his part looking scared & acting frightened so that no one would be no suspicious regarding his role in the entire episode.

After carrying out the robbery, Iqbal's partners rushed to the car, started the engine and returned to Nizamabad. In the evening they went to the out skirts of Nizamabad to drink and await the arrival of Iqbal. They picked him up at the Bus stand. They counted the money on the out skirts of Nizamabad. There was a total of Rs.10, 92,000/- . Rs.12, 000/- was kept a side for expenditure. The remaining money was distributed equally. Each got Rs. 2,70,000/-. Then two of them [Iqbal & a friend] left for Adilabad in a RTC bus. They put their shares of money in cement

bags purchased at Adilabad, and concealed them in their respective homes.

On coming to know of the apprehension of Iqbal & Ahmed, for the robbery punishable U/Sec.392 IPC, the other two accomplices fled. The investigating team recovered half the money which was the share of the two apprehended criminals still intact in the bundles made by the Merchant.

The other two accused were strenuously pursued by the police leading to their surrender in the court, and when they were taken into police custody the remaining amount of the merchants' money also was recovered intact. The vehicle and the phones used in the planning and commission of the offence were seized by the investigating team.



“Ignorance of the law excuses no man: Not that all men know the law, but because 'tis an excuse every man will plead, and no man can tell how to refute him”.

- **John Seldon** ( 1584-1654)

And Sir, our contribution in popularizing Kumbh can't be minimised.....

