

ORIENTAL BANK

Tk 596cr siphoned off by a few shareholders

Reveals BB report; same group using political clout to take over bank again

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

A few politically powerful shareholders, their friends and top management of the Oriental Bank have defrauded the bank of Tk 596 crore through blatantly corrupt methods, said an interim investigation report of the Bangladesh Bank (BB).

The same group of corrupt people is now lobbying with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to take over the Oriental Bank by unduly influencing the central bank, sources said.

The BB took over Oriental Bank in June in the wake of its total financial collapse.

The BB interim report submitted to the finance ministry last week said the corrupt section of shareholders have obtained TK 488 crore from five branches of the Oriental Bank by simply issuing vouchers.

Finance ministry sources said records of these branches—Karwan Bazar, Mirpur, Nababpur, Principal Office and Bangshal—showed that the sum was sent to the bank's head office under two "adjustable block accounts".

About 60 per cent of the sum was taken from the Bangshal branch.

The group also obtained another Tk 108 crore against 26 different accounts held by unsuspecting accountholders. The investigation team found out that these accountholders did not have any clue that their names and accounts were being used for draining out such money.

"High credit limits were set against each of these accountholders without their knowledge and the corrupt group took the money against these accounts," said an Oriental Bank official.

The entire sum of Tk 596 crore was drawn between 2003 and 2006, mostly during 2005-2006 until the central bank took over Oriental Bank.

"Such corrupt practices by the owners and management of a bank is unheard of in the country's banking history," a finance ministry official said.

The BB investigation team probed into 22 of the total 33 branches of Oriental Bank. It will continue to probe into the books and ledgers of the remaining branches, sources said.

Oriental Bank sources told The Daily Star that ousted managing director Kais Sami and top officials helped the shareholders drain out money by giving verbal orders and instructions to various branch managers.

"The practice here resembles small shops where the owner asks the cashiers and shopkeepers to give money at will or by just giving a

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Butenis' tea turns cold

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis finally cancelled her scheduled plan to have tea in her residence with Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil and BNP Secretary General Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday.

The cancellation came just a few hours after Mannan Bhuiyan's news briefing where he said he would not join the other two for having a dialogue on electoral reforms over tea.

Meanwhile, senior BNP and Jamaat leaders did not attend an iftar party hosted by Butenis in her home yesterday while senior leaders of Awami League (AL) attended the party.

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Terrorists to take chance if talks do not go well

Says visiting UK minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reiterating his optimism about the dialogue between the ruling and opposition parties over the reforms issue, Chief Secretary to the UK Treasury Stephen Timms yesterday said a consensus should be reached for strengthening democracy in Bangladesh.

"If the dialogue does not go well, the terrorists would take the opportunity," he added speaking at a press briefing at the residence of British high commissioner in Dhaka. The

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Talks at Sangsad Bhaban by tomorrow

Bhuiyan to call Jalil today to set time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Clouds over the much-awaited dialogue between BNP and opposition Awami League (AL) seem to have disappeared as both the parties yesterday decided to use the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban as the venue for the talks.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil asked BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan over telephone at 8:30pm yesterday to set the Sangsad Bhaban as the venue for the talks and Bhuiyan agreed to the proposal.

Jalil told reporters at his Gulshan residence last night that

Bhuiyan will call him today (Wednesday) and fix the time for the talks.

"Mannan Bhuiyan told me that

the talks might start tomorrow (Wednesday) evening after closing of the House or maybe the day after

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Abdul Jalil



Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan

Khaleda-Hasina last face-off at JS today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina are likely to have their last face-off of the eighth parliament today when they deliver their winding up speech in the House.

Senior lawmakers of the ruling BNP and opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday hinted that both the

leaders will talk on various issues and may trade blame for the prevailing political crisis ahead of the next parliamentary election scheduled for January.

The two leaders may also talk about the electoral reforms issue and dialogue between the BNP and AL, the lawmakers said.

Leader of the House Khaleda Zia

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ENVOY'S INVITATION US embassy clears the air

UNB, Dhaka

A spokesman for the US Embassy in Dhaka yesterday said they have no desire to mediate any political process but would support direct contacts between the ruling and the opposition parties to strengthen the prospects for a successful election.

He made the remarks responding

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Babar regrets police beating of shooters

STAR REPORT

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday regretted Monday's police atrocities on shooters and employees of National Shooting Federation complex while physicians said Commonwealth Games gold-medallist Asif Hossain is likely to miss the Asian Games in December.

Meanwhile, National Shooting Federation yesterday rejected the police statement about the incident and demanded a judicial inquiry. The members and employees of National Shooting Federation wore black badges yesterday protesting against Monday's police atrocities.

Three of the five arrestees, who

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PHOTO: STAR

Shooter Asif lies in a hospital bed in the capital yesterday, a day after he was beaten up by police, while his mother consoles him as he will miss the Asian Games in December.

Ukil Abdus Sattar made new power minister

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday assigned the Power Division to Uki Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan -- who is also the State Minister for Land.

The decision came four days after the removal of his predecessor from the hot seat.

"He will concurrently perform the responsibilities of state minister for Land Ministry and the Power Division," said an official announcement.

Earlier, State Minister for Power Anwarul Kabir Talukder was "relieved of his responsibilities" amid

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Speaker's new sense of time

Thinks Aug 21 grenade attacks an old issue to discuss but Rakkhi Bahini not

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker of Parliament Jamiruddin Sircar yesterday did not allow opposition lawmakers to speak in the House about the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally and the killing of former finance minister Shah ASM Kibria terming the issues old.

But he did not term the topics regarding formations of Rakkhi Bahini and Baksl during the first AL regime just after the independence as old when ruling BNP lawmakers spoke on the issues blast-

ing AL. Irked by the speaker's action of switching off the microphone of an AL lawmaker while he was still speaking, AL deputies walked out of the House for a brief period and later accused the speaker of being biased to ruling BNP in running the parliament.

"The speaker has proved himself to be very much loyal to ruling BNP by destroying the norms and conventions of parliamentary democracy," AL lawmaker Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim said in a news briefing after the walkout.

Selim, who was interrupted by the speaker while he was speaking about the government's indifference to punishing the police personnel who were involved in an attack on the residents of Shamsunnahar Hall, a women's dormitory in Dhaka University, in July 2002.

Taking the floor on a point of order, the AL lawmaker also demanded formation of a judicial probe body to investigate Monday's police atrocities on some shooters including Common

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Condemned militants won't be hanged in this govt's tenure

All sought permission to appeal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militants condemned to death for killing two judges last year will not be executed during the tenure of the present government as all the convicts have sought permission to appeal against their sentences.

The Supreme Court registrar yesterday ordered stays of execution of the death penalty of JMB military commander Ataur Rahman Sunny and Majlish-e-Shura member Abdul Awal following their special prayers through the jail authorities for leave to appeal.

The decision marks the end of the fevered speculations whether the militant kingpins would be executed within the term of the four-party alliance government.

Of the seven militants convicted of murder, six are behind bars while Arif, the other one, is still at large.

Although the convicts had earlier said they would not file any appeal with the worldly courts, they have grabbed at the opportunity to appeal against their sentences that were confirmed by the

High Court on August 31.

Sunny and Awal submitted their prayers to the Dhaka Central Jail authorities on Monday, three days after expiry of the seven days' time since reading out of the death warrants to the convicts.

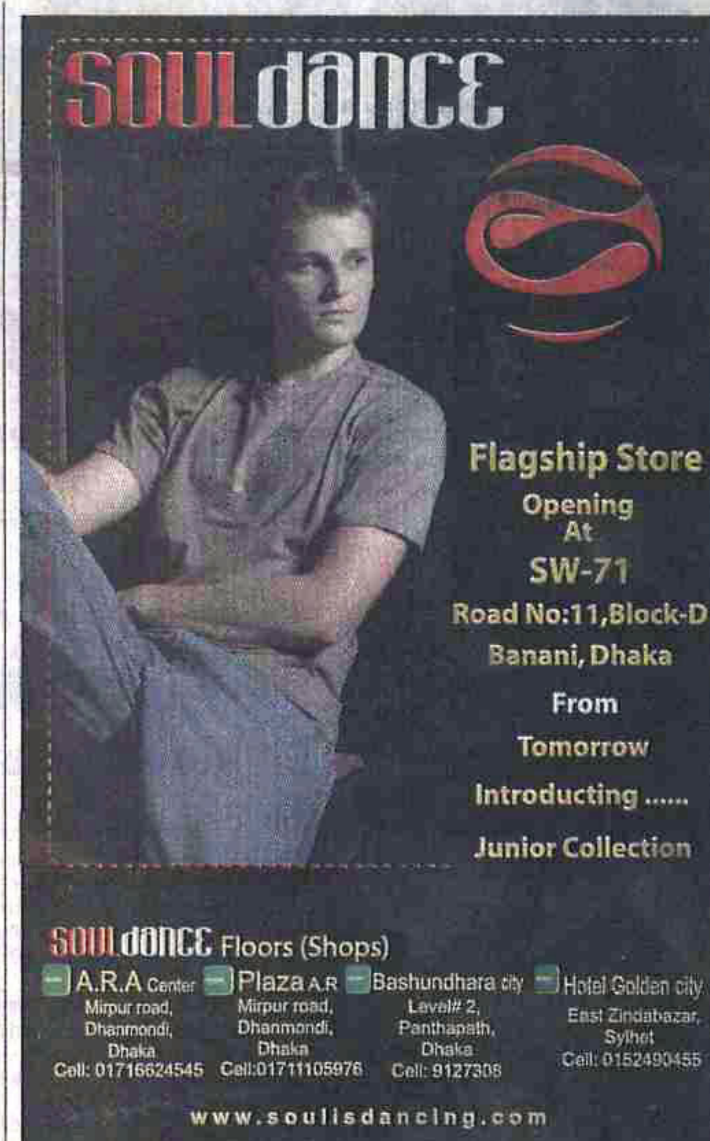
The jail authorities sent the prayers to the SC Registrar Fazlul Karim yesterday.

The SC registrar later sent separate letters to the home ministry, jail and the other authorities concerned, ordering postponement of the execution.

He told The Daily Star yesterday that he had passed on to the authorities concerned the administrative orders staying execution like he did in cases of the condemned JMB Chief Abdur Rahman, Majlish-e-Shura member Siddiquil Islam alias Bangla Bhai, Khaled Saifullah and suicide bomber Iftekhar al Mamun.

Supreme Court officials said that in line with the apex court practices, the execution of the death penalty was temporarily stalled, pending the acceptance of the petitions for hearing by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

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