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6 sued in Khulna for embezzling Tk 5.29 cr bank money

From Staff Correspondent
KHULNA, Nov 5: The District Anti-corruption Bureau (DAB), Khulna, has filed a case with Kotwali thana against five officials of Sonali Bank's Khulna Corporate branch and the Managing Director of Messrs Gazi Ice and Fish Freezing Ltd. for misappropriating Tk five crore twenty nine lakh through forgery and misusing power.

According to the FIR, the MD of the plant, Issa Hossain misappropriated the amount from the bank branch through forgery at different times from July 12, 1986 to February 13, 1996. The FIR further stated that he took loans in the name of his freezing plant where he had replaced inferior quality shrimps by stealing export quality shrimps from the master cartons. This scandal was detected by a four-member inquiry team of DAB, Khulna.

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Continued progress in reforms, accountability stressed

Donors pledge \$1.9b in fresh assistance

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Aid Group yesterday made a fresh aid pledge of 1.9 billion US dollars for the current fiscal year "provided continued progress is made in implementing the reform programmes and ensuring better governance, and greater accountability and transparency," a World Bank press release issued at the end of the two-day meeting said.

The Group comprising 15 countries and 12 international development agencies that met in Dhaka for the first time issued a separate statement warning all in Bangladesh's political arena to resolve their differences in parliament, arresting

an escalating trend in "confrontational politics," which may slow down aid.

Speaking at a press conference Ms Meiko Nishimizu, World Bank Vice President for South Asia, however, told a questioner that it was not a "threat." "We discussed all issues openly at the meeting. I found the statement on my table. It was quite unusual. I do not know the history but in three years or so this kind of topics have come up, showing concern over the good governance, instability and political situation having its impact on development affecting the aid flow."

"As the flow of aid is a continuous process, there will be no significant change in the near future and disbursement of fund which is in the pipeline will also continue," Chairperson of the meeting Nishimizu, told reporters.

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria and Pierre Lendell-Mills, country representative of the Bank, also spoke at the news conference.

Lendell-Mills said representatives of the donors had met Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia, hoping that discussions with her could avoid a hartal. They also met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The general tenor of discussion with the

government was the same as in the statement, he told a questioner.

The finance minister assured the donors that the government would continue its efforts to resolve its differences with the Opposition to reach a political consensus and strengthen parliamentary institutions. The government remains fully committed to a policy of tolerance, he added.

"But it was the Opposition which had given provocations one after another, including the hartal on Tuesday. We have taken note of the donors' concern. However, the main oppo-

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PM tells foreign investors Bangladesh a gateway to huge market in S Asia

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina held out a bounteous offer of incentives for foreign capital investment in the country in a secure atmosphere as a three-day investors' forum began in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

She also apprised the prospective investors of Bangladesh's pivotal position being a gateway to an unfolding vast market in South Asia through setting up of a free-trade area in the near future.

"With the dawning of the new century not too far away, Bangladesh stands poised to enter an era of unprecedented opportunities to achieve sustained industrial development and technological progress," the Prime Minister said and invited the foreign investors to seize the opportunities.

She assured that her government would continue to pursue policies to make Bangladesh into a very attractive place for foreign investment.

"You are most welcome to see for yourselves the many opportunities for investment that we have created since we took charge of the administration in June 1996," she said opening the Investors Forum at Hotel Sonargaon in the evening.

Chief executives of 50 international companies are attending the meet jointly organised by ERD and the Financial Times, London, to promote foreign investment in the country.

The Prime Minister said her government had adopted an economic strategy to create a suitable environment to make



PM addressing foreign investors' forum

Asian Art Biennial opens today

Thirty-five countries from Asia, Panpacific and African regions will participate in the 8th Biennial Asian Art Exhibition, beginning in the city today, reports UNB.

Two African countries — Sudan and Egypt — will take part in the festival for the first time.

State Minister for Youth and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader said this at a press conference at Shilpakala Academy yesterday afternoon.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the 25-day art exhibition at the Osmani Auditorium at 10 am.

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4 hurt as crackers explode during BNP procession

By Staff Correspondent
Three policemen and one pedestrian were injured in an explosion of fire-crackers at Kakrai crossing in the city yesterday.

The explosions took place when a BNP procession reached the spot at about 6 pm, witnesses said.

The injured policemen — Jahangir, Khokon and Nurul Haq — and the pedestrian, Zahir, 13, were rushed to the Police Hospital at Rajarbagh. Hospital sources said they were later released after treatment.

The procession was brought out as part of a programme of BNP and its six allies to protest attacks on party activists at

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UP polls: Scrutiny of nomination papers held

Scrutiny of nomination papers of candidates in the coming Union Parishad elections was held yesterday at the offices of returning officers, reports BSS.

According to the Election Commission sources, the candidates whose nominations have been cancelled after the scrutiny would be able to appeal before the appealing authority headed by the Thana Nirbahi Officer in their respective areas by Sunday next.

The last date for withdrawal of candidature has been fixed on November 12.

The polling will be held in phases from December 1 to December 10.

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Traffic jam at Nayabazar in the city is a common sight.

— Star photo

Commentary

It is an insult, but did we not deserve it?

By Mahfuz Anam

From any consideration of self respect and dignity of a sovereign country, the donors statement, as published in this newspaper, literally amounts to be an insult and a blatant interference in the internal affairs of our country. As a part of global citizenry, well versed in the ways of diplomatic norms, we are shocked at its language and content. As a part of a people who have fought an armed struggle to gain our independence and have defeated several military and quasi-military dictatorships, to establish democracy (without donor assistance, and in fact with donor assistance going to the junta) we feel outraged at the open demonstration of how little respect is shown for our sovereign right to manage our internal affairs. As a people who have made so much sacrifice to establish representative govern-

ment we are offended by the way our elected government is literally lectured upon as to how it should govern, and our elected opposition as to how it should behave. Not only have we been told what to do, there is also a not so veiled threat as to what will happen if we don't — external aid flow to Bangladesh will be adversely affected.

At the same time that we express our outrage we would also like to ask, why in heaven's name did this international group feel compelled to go public on such a sensitive issue? The answer is, a genuine concern for our future which looks clouded by an arrogant government and irresponsible opposition. However harshly we castigate the donors for their diplomatic misstep, we will be the first to admit that we deserved it. Why do we keep on

making the same mistakes, taking the same arrogant path, uttering the same rhetorical nonsense, damaging our potential for growth, spoiling our image in the world as a country which is serious about changing its fortune? Why, in God's name, do we keep on ignoring our vital development challenges, turn a blind eye to the fact that ours is one of the poorest countries in the world with 120 million inhabitants packed into the smallest of areas as possible, refrain from recognising the reality that a vast majority of that population are malnourished, illiterate and unskilled? Why again do we not learn from the fact that no government in Bangladesh has ever been able to deliver on any major issue without the cooperation of the opposition of the day?

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Timely warning saves 30 lives as bldg collapses

From Our Correspondent
NARAYANGANJ, Nov 5: Timely warning by a woman saved the lives of some 30 inmates of a newly constructed four-storey building that collapsed here in the small hours of today.

The building, housing four families caved-in at 57 Mobarak Road in Baburail area in the town.

Witnesses said, the woman residing in the ground floor apartment, first noticed a crack on the ground inside her room during the Fajr prayers. As the crack started expanding, she shouted at the top of her voice to warn the inmates. All the inmates woke up and came out from their respective houses.

As the building took some three hours to collapse, the residents could also manage to bring out their valuables. The structure caved-in 10 to 15 feet below the ground level. Panicked people living in the surrounding buildings also vacated their houses. However, no other building was affected.

Owner of the building, Jaynal Abedin, was missing since

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Korean Co offers to buy BMTF

By Rafiq Hasan

A South Korean Company has shown interest in buying Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory (BMTF) at Gazipur which has been awaiting privatisation since 1994.

Privatisation Board (PB) sources said that the company, Youngone Corporation, proposed to buy the closed factory — BMTF — after facing some difficulties and delay in setting up a private Export Processing Zone in Chittagong. The main objective of the company is to turn the factory into a mini-EPZ for providing accommodation to the foreign investors, the source said.

The company's lone machine tools factory was shut down in 1994 after suffering huge losses since its inception. After closing the large factory, the government tried to sell it out to any private company or business house but could not because none showed interest in buying such a white elephant bearing liabilities of more than Tk 300 crore. Then the government considered a number of alternatives about the future of the

BMTF but none was implemented and the fate of the factory remained uncertain. PB sources said that Youngone chairman Kihak Sung recently came to the board and submitted a proposal to buy the BMTF sprawling over 170 acres of land, situated at about 45 km from Dhaka.

"The main objective of the Korean company is to provide emergency accommodation to

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CHT settlers apprehensive of proposed Regional Council

By Reaz Ahmad, back from CHT

A sense of deprivation prevails among a section of settlers in the three hill districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) as they seem "doubtful" about the structure of the much talked about 'Regional Council'.

Though it has not yet been officially announced, people in the CHT belonging to both tribal and non-tribal communities say they have heard that a 'Regional Council' will be formed for overall development of the three hill districts — Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban — after signing of a peace treaty between the NCCHT and the PCJSS.

All of them welcome formation of such a broad-based Council in addition to existing three local government councils in three hill districts. However, a section of the non-tribal people fear that the proposed

'Regional Council' may also be headed by a tribal leader, as in the cases of three local government councils.

The local government councils, each comprising one chairman and 30 members, were formed back in 1989.

Talking to this correspondent during the last couple of days, a number of Bengalee community leaders expressed the view that if the post of chairman is kept reserved for tribal people only, people belonging to the non-tribal community would continue to suffer from a sense of deprivation.

ASM Shahidullah, president of 'Parbaty' Sarbadalya Oikyo Parishad in Rangamati said, discrimination was created by forming three local government councils and reserving the posts of chairmen for tribesmen. "Now, if the struc-

ture of the proposed Regional Council also reflects the manifestation of more discrimination, people will not appreciate it."

Leaders of tribal communities, however, disagreed. They expressed the view that as a "backward group" in the CHT, keeping the chairman post reserved for tribesmen should be considered as a "special privilege as allowed in the Constitution."

Goutam Dewan, a former chairman of Rangamati Local Government Council, sees no deprivation for Bengalees as there will be proper representation of all communities in the Regional Council.

Some hard-line leaders of 'Pahari Chhatra Parishad' in Khagrachhari gave a different view. They expressed the view

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PW-36 tells court No shot was fired from Bangabandhu's house

"Switch on the radio. Blood at the adjacent house all have been finished," a young neighbour was told by an army guard posted at the Bangabandhu's residence after the pre-dawn operation on August 15, 1975, reports UNB.

The neighbour, Newaz Ahmed Gorjon, now 43 years, stated the tragic episode of assassination of country's founding President as the 36th prosecution witness in Bangabandhu Murder Case during the trial proceedings yesterday.

In his deposition, Newaz, son of Badrunnessa Ahmed, who was the founding chairperson of Mohila Awami League and a minister, said army personnel from Bangabandhu's residence also indicated by putting fingers on their throats that the troops carried out slaughtering in the house.

The witnesses, a cousin of President Mujib's press secre-

tary Aminul Haq Badsha, during his cross-examination told the court no shot was fired from the Bangabandhu's house. "I later talked to the sentries posted there, they also didn't say any such thing."

"Sheikh Kamal was an ideal model for the young generation," said Newaz, who was two years junior to the eldest son of Sheikh Mujib. Replying to another query, he ruled out that Kamal was shot and injured and took treatment sometime before the August 15 carnage.

Replying to a suggestion, the PW-36 also ruled out that cars of different foreign missions in Dhaka had gone to Bangabandhu's house after the bloody operation. He said he didn't see any flag car of army or minister there on that day.

Newaz, who resided at Dhanmondi Road No. 32, House No. 678, the next building to

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Cyclonic storm near Bay

By Staff Correspondent
The Typhoon Linda, which lashed Vietnam Monday, had part of its tail spinning off to the Andaman Sea brewing into a cyclonic storm last night and it may move in a north-westerly direction towards Bangladesh coast.

Met office has said last night that it churned into a depression at Andaman sea yesterday morning after roaring over Thailand from South China Sea. By evening, it gelled into a cyclone from a deep depression.

At 9 pm, it was centred at 960 km south east of Chittagong port and was moving in a north-westerly direction. Chittagong Cox's bazar and Mongla ports have been asked to raise Cautionary Signal Number 2, the Met office said.

Maximum sustained wind within 48 kms of the depression is 70 kms, rising to 85 kms in gusts or squalls, the Met office said.

Tullow's rejoinder

Tullow Oil plc takes great exception to the reports published in your daily dated 31 October 1997 and 3 November 1997. Uttered "Unofficial list ready as negotiations continue" and "Some big co's being left out of negotiations". The story alleges that Tullow did not submit any Bank Guarantee against its proposals is completely false. With the dropping of the bid Tullow had furnished 87 M US\$ Bank Guarantee for all its four proposals and during negotiations it again furnished 248.575 M US\$. 100% Bank Guarantee (BG) for the four proposals for 7 years of exploration. Tullow due to its reputation and experience worldwide does not need to submit BG if it is not mandatory by the Govt of the countries. Yet as per instruction to Bidders in Second Round Bid BG was sought from bidders without mentioning any percentage hence Tullow offered a BG of 87 M US\$ for its four proposals.

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