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Attack on UCBL directors condemned

By Staff Correspondent

Different organisations in separate statements yesterday condemned the attack on directors of the United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) during a Board meeting on Thursday.

A group of armed hoodlums numbering about 50 allegedly backed by police forces on Thursday stormed the boardroom of the UCBL and forced some bank directors to resign at the instigation of former Awami League MP Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu.

Eminent economist and Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud termed the incident unprecedented and called for firm steps to maintain credibility in the financial sector.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mahmud said the incident must not be treated as just another routine violation of law and order.

"It can greatly undermine public confidence in the entire banking system and tarnish its international image."

"Decisive and firm steps must be taken immediately to maintain credibility in the system of regulation and governance in the financial sector."

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Dhaka concerned at reported intrusion of Indian police

Bangladesh yesterday expressed deep concern over reported intrusion of Indian police into the country, sometimes earlier this month.

The Indian union government categorically denied the report published in a section of Indian press. Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami told BSS last night.

Asked for his reaction to the report, he said they immediately contacted the Indian authorities who said that the report was not based on facts.

The External Affairs Ministry of India at a briefing in New Delhi on August 23 denied press reports that Indian police had entered the Bangladesh territory in hot pursuit of explores.

The foreign secretary quoting Indian officials said no such incident of intrusion into Bangladesh territory had happened and that Assam Chief Minister P K Mahanta was misquoted.

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35 shops looted in Siddirganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 27: A group of armed hoodlums looted at least 35 shops and damaged valuable worth about Tk 20 lakh at a bazar near Mukti Swarani in Siddirganj this morning.

The shopkeepers who have been paying to Giasuddin since 1985 said that armed hoodlums appeared before the kutchi market at about 6:30 am today. The gang exploded several crackers and opened blank shots which created panic among the vendors and people who went there for shopping.

Police arrived on the scene after the gangsters, reportedly

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Prayer Timings

August 28

Fajr 4:10 4:15

Zohr 12:45 1:30

Asr 4:45 5:00

Maghrib 6:40 6:45

Esha 8:00 8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Head office sealed: Showcause on MD Activities of UCBL Board suspended

By M Shamsur Rahman

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday suspended all activities of the Board of Directors of United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) and decided to appoint its Executive Director Mohiuddin Zahir Amin as caretaker to run the bank.

Besides, the government sealed the head office of the bank.

The decisions came in the wake of Thursday's incident in which five UCBL directors were allegedly forced to resign at gun point.

Some 50 armed goons allegedly backed by police stormed the UCBL boardroom during a Board meeting Thursday afternoon and forced the directors to resign at the instigation of former Awami League MP Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was learnt to have taken exception to the action of Akhteruzzaman who had occupied the head office of the UCBL ousting members of the board of directors through vandalism.

Bangladesh Bank (BB) also issued a notice on the Managing Director of UCBL asking him to show cause why the Board of the bank will not be dissolved.

The MD will be asked to respond by tomorrow, according to highly placed sources in the

central bank.

"Activities of the Board of Directors of UCBL are considered harmful and against the interest of the bank itself and its depositors", BB said in an announcement yesterday.

The BB also asked the UCBL Board of Directors not to participate directly or indirectly in the affairs of the bank for the sake of proper management of the bank and averting any adverse activity, the announcement said.

Governor of Bangladesh Bank Dr Mohammed Farashuddin could not be contacted despite repeated attempts.

Talking to The Daily Star, Home Minister Mohammad Nasim admitted that he ordered police to 'seal the head office

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Camel race over, they abandoned Juru, 4, in the desert

afraid and crying for my mother," he said.

His mother, Kajol, a widow who works as a maid in the Emirates, said that she had been tricked in 1996 into letting her three youngest sons come to this country.

A man named Abu Sayeed had promised that they would be educated and she would have a job, she said.

Juru was less than two years old then and twins Akkas and Nuru were three.

"My brothers are under different guys. One of them, Rahim, beats Akkas regularly," Juru said.

Kajol said she wants to go home to Bangladesh and her employers had agreed.

"I had enough bad experience. I don't want to lose my sons," she said.

The Bangladeshi Consul General, Golam Hussain, said he was aware of the case but could only act if the mother made a written complaint.

"Action will definitely be taken, but after a thorough investigation," he said.

On Sunday last, another Bangladeshi boy, who was kidnapped to work as a camel jockey, was returned to his parents.

The 7-year-old boy was reunited with his family at the Bangladeshi consulate here, AP said quoting Bangladeshi Consul-General Abdul Fadil Moshammad Golam Hussein.

The boy was kidnapped by an associate of a Bangladeshi man who had lured the family to the Emirates with promises of work three months ago, Hussein said.

The boy's father, Moti Matabar, reported the abduction of his son, Saiful, to the consulate some days ago. The consulate tracked down the abductor, a man named Jahangir, and Saiful was retrieved from a camel-jockey training camp, the diplomat said.



Star Japanese striker Hideki Matsuki (L) is under pressure from an Indonesian player in their opening match of the Bangabandhu Cup yesterday. — Star photo by Anisur Rahman

Bangabandhu Cup tourney kicks off

The second Bangabandhu Cup international football tournament kicked off at Bangabandhu National Stadium in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the biggest soccer extravaganza in the country's history at a brief, colourful function in the big bowl.

She was later introduced to the Japanese and Indonesian teams.

The inaugural ceremony began at 4:30 pm with the four-nation's theme song.

Sabina Yasmin, Andrew Kishore and other co-artists sang "Bondhura Tomader Suswagatam" (Welcome friends) rounding off the lush green in two bedecked mobile vehicles.

The portrait of the nation's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was displayed on the electronic board.

Physical displays by girls of

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Matsuki magic spellbinds Indonesians

By Sports Reporter

Hideki Matsuki struck a terrific treble to power Japan FL selection to a 5-0 victory over Pandang Soman of Indonesia in the inaugural match of the Second Bangabandhu Cup at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The 22-year-old striker, who plays for Jatco FC in the semi-professional league at Sezaku province, completed his hat-trick even before the opening game reached the halfway mark. Matsuki's strike partner Suzuki and the other goal to take the Japanese to a seemingly unassailable 4-0 lead at the breather.

Tall defender Taku Watanabe then settled the issue midway through the second session.

The flattering victory of the mediocre selection from Japan

against the leading Indonesian club not only put them in a comfortable position in Group D of the 12-team fray, but also firmly incorporated the coming of Japanese football.

Although the Japanese appeared tentative at the start on a rain-soaked fast field, they never looked behind once Matsuki beat an off-side trap to open the floodgate at the 16th minute.

The nimble forward, who was irrepressible with his sudden bursts of speed and consummate wizardry with the ball, made a wicked run to get hold of a nice Nobushita free-kick before rounding off the Pandang custodian Zulkarnine Zakaria.

Suzuki doubled the margin

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Opposition plans 'big' procession in city Monday

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance is taking "massive preparations" for its "mass procession" in the city on Monday to protest government's decision to provide "corridor facility to India in the name of transhipment," alliance sources said.

BNP and its three alliance components — Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote (IOJ) — will bring out separate "mass processions" from different parts of the city on the day.

The parties will organise a "grand show" to demonstrate people's opposition to the government move as well as to drum up support for future agitation programmes including the September 12 sit-in demonstration in front of the Secretariat, they said.

But a conflict between BNP and JP over the meeting venue for Monday's mass procession is yet to be resolved. Both the parties have sought the authorities' permission to assemble at the Paltan Maidan for bringing out their separate processions.

The authorities have however given permission to JP as it reportedly applied first.

But a senior leader of city BNP said the party announced much earlier that it would hold its pre-procession meeting at the Paltan Maidan.

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BNP to decide today whether to join JS session

By Staff Correspondent

A crucial meeting of the BNP Parliamentary Party meeting will be held at the Sangsads Bhaban at 7 pm today.

The meeting is likely decide whether the party lawmakers will attend the Jatiya Sangsads session beginning tomorrow.

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia will preside over the meeting, said a press release.

Chief Whip of the Opposition Khandaker Delwar Hossain has asked the party MPs to attend the meeting on time.

The meeting is being considered crucial as the party may decide to boycott the JS session to protest the government's decision to provide transit facility to India, sources pointed out.

A number of BNP MPs told The Daily Star that the party may not join the session and the announcement will be made after today's parliamentary party meeting.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Party at a presidium meeting Thursday night decided not to join the JS session on the same ground. Jamaat will follow the BNP and JP, sources said.

JP won't join JS session

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Party has decided not to join the Jatiya Sangsads session beginning tomorrow unless the recent Cabinet approval of transhipment facility to India is withdrawn.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the party presidium Thursday night.

Party Chairman HM Ershad presided over the meeting, said a press release.

The meeting denounced the transhipment facilities to India saying that such arrangement might jeopardise the country's sovereignty.

It expressed deep concern at the growing tendency of bypassing the parliament in important decision-making process. The government was making the parliament a rubber stamp of the Cabinet.

The meeting, participated by 21 presidium members, also condemned the 'confiscation of passports' of party leaders, Nazir Rahman and Kazi Firoj Rashid.



— AFP photo

Better healthcare only when one makes 'unofficial payment'

By Naimul Haq

One in every five people who avail government health services has to make 'unofficial payment' to health workers, according to a survey report submitted to the health ministry recently.

Payments have to be made to all — from doctors down to security guards — at the government hospitals and health centres for proper healthcare. The amount of such payments ranged from Tk 30 to 100, the report quoted those concerned recently.

The survey covered 26,207 households in 44 thanas and four metropolitan areas.

The baseline service delivery survey was part of the ongoing Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP). It was conducted by an American consulting agency in February and March this year.

During a visit to hospitals in greater Rajshahi and Jessor regions, this correspondent heard many of the patients and their relatives (clients) complaining that they were to pay for services, in addition to registration fees. 'unofficial fees' were charged by many of the doctors, they alleged.

"I paid Tk 40 to one of the doctors for treatment of my all-

tal store. "Hospital staff behave decently when we make extra payment and we also get advantage in case of diagnostic services" one of them said.

The authorities in some thana health complexes in Magura, Faridpur and Rajshahi, however, claimed that they delivered medicines as per requisition and charged no extra fees.

Many clients also complained that they were to make payments while taking delivery of free medicines from hospitals in advance.

Despite being aware of such illegal 'practices', the authorities have taken no action as yet in this, many clients alleged.

During the survey, lack of medicines and poor quality of those were cited as a common problem. Lack of facilities was also a major problem.

When