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HC halts operation of BB orders

Petitioners blame government, central bank 'high-ups'

By M Shamsur Rahman

A High Court bench yesterday stayed till today (Monday) the central bank order which suspended all activities of the board of United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL).

The court order came following a writ petition filed by Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury and 10 other directors against the central bank, UCBL and three Bangladesh Bank officials including the governor.

On Thursday afternoon, some 50 armed men allegedly backed by police stormed into boardroom of United Commercial Bank (UCBL) during a meeting and forced some bank directors to resign at gunpoint.

The ousted directors later alleged that founding UCBL chairman Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, who had later lost his position in 1992 through a central bank order, led a gang of hoodlums and forced them to resign to declare himself chairman of the bank. Babu is a former Awami League MP and a former president of FBCCI (1987-89).

Just a day after the incident, the central bank on Friday issued a showcause notice addressing both Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury and Akhteruzzaman as chairman of the bank directing them to explain why the board of the bank will not be declared dissolved. They had been asked to reply by 3:00pm Monday (yesterday).

Yesterday, Zafar and other directors filed the writ and obtained the court order, but Dr M Zahir, appearing for the central bank, pointed out that the BB had received an appeal from the petitioners and was set to decide on it at a meeting at 4:00pm yesterday.

Following Zahir's submission, the court allowed the Bangladesh Bank to take a decision and inform the court today (Monday).

The court also said that it would hear the petitioners if the central bank fails to come to reach any decision at yesterday's meeting.

See Page 12 Col 3

Akhtaruzzaman not a UCBL director: BB Governor

By Staff Correspondent

Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu is not a director of UCBL from the Bangladesh Bank's point of view and has no legal right to sit in the board, Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr M Farashuddin said yesterday.

"The board headed by Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury is the only legal body representing sponsors," the Governor told a group of journalists at his office at around 3pm.

Asked why the Bangladesh Bank sent notices to both Chowdhury and Babu, Dr Farashuddin said the central bank had three options: to keep away from doing anything, to send notice to Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury or to serve notice on both Chowdhury and Babu.

"We chose the last option as per the recommendation of the standing committee of the BB. The standing committee met after being informed of the inci-

See Page 12 Col 5

BB decides to restore Zafar-led Board

By Inam Ahmed and M Shamsur Rahman

The central bank in its board meeting yesterday decided to restore at the earliest the lawful rights of the UCBL board.

The board took the decision for which it was granted time by the High Court after the BB lawyer, Dr M Zahir, informed the court that the central bank was disposing an appeal made by the petitioners.

Following Zahir's submission the court allowed Bangladesh Bank to decide and

See Page 12 Col 4

Not an isolated incident

FBCCI condemns UCBL incident, demands probe

By Staff Correspondent

FBCCI yesterday strongly condemned Thursday's incident at the United Commercial Bank Limited (UCBL) boardroom and demanded impartial investigation into the whole affair.

FBCCI said it was not an isolated incident nor was it an affair falling only under the jurisdiction of the Bangladesh Bank, an FBCCI statement said.

The statement said people of all segments of the society have reacted angrily to the UCBL incident.

"The FBCCI is very much worried about the UCBL issue as the incident has seriously damaged the country's image," the

See page 11 Col 6

CID asked to probe UCBL incident

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim yesterday directed the CID to investigate Thursday's incident at the head office of the United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) in the city's Motijheel area and report to the ministry, reports UNB.

Three cases were filed with Motijheel thana against Akhtaruzzaman Babu, his son and over 50 others for launching the attack.

The FIR-listed accused in the three cases were former MP Akhtaruzzaman Babu, his son Saifuzzaman Zabed, Khurshid Alam, Abdul Kader, Chira Akbar and unnamed 50 persons.

The plaintiffs are Monwara Begum, Shawkat Aziz Russel and chairman of the UCBL Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury.

Pre-Thursday UCBL board takes charge

By Staff Correspondent

Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury along with other board members who were forced out of the United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL) last Thursday returned to their bank at around 4.45pm yesterday.

They were welcomed by cheering bank officials.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Bank called back administrator Mohiuddin Zahir Amin after the HC order that stayed till today (Monday) the central bank action regarding UCBL.

Immediately after returning to the bank, Zafar Chowdhury held an emergency board meeting at UCBL boardroom.

The meeting decided that the bank would make a list of documents lost during the period Babu was in control, sources said. After drawing the list, it will file a first information report (FIR) with the police. If the police refuse to take the case, the bank will go to the court, the meeting decided.

Before coming to the bank, Zafar Chowdhury wrote to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner seeking protection.

"In view of the stay order, we are going to our head office to hold an emergency board meeting today. Please ensure that our safety and security are not in any manner jeopardised by the attacks of the miscreants led by Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu and his son Saifuzzaman Chowdhury Zabed as happened earlier," the letter read.

Some 50 armed men 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.

Zafar Chowdhury also talked with the journalists in a crowded boardroom yesterday and welcomed the court order. He said the truth has triumphed and that it would have been a major setback for the banking sector if the court order had not come.

"By the grace of the Almighty and by the decision of the High Court, we have returned," said an elated but tired looking Chowdhury. "We demand justice as to why police helped the terrorists in attacking us."

"We are still under threats although we have entered the bank lawfully. The government has not helped us coming here."

Shawkat Aziz Russel, a UCBL director, asked why BB served notice on Babu. "If BB

See Page 12 Col 1

A decade-old rivalry

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Aug 29: The rivalry persisting for more than a decade between Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, a central leader of Awami League, and Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury, chairman of UCBL and a leader of Chittagong south unit of AL, has deepened after Thursday's incident at the UCBL head office in Dhaka, sources concerned said.

Police have been deployed at the residence of Zafar at Kulshi here, fearing attack by supporters of Akhtaruzzaman.

The rivalry between the two 'friends' started over a decade ago, centring leadership of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), chamber sources said seeking anonymity.

Zafar was an aspirant for the post of CCCI president after expiry of the tenure of Akhtaruzzaman. But he was not supported by Akhtaruzzaman and this angered him.

After a few days, Akhtaruzzaman's jeep was attacked in front of MES College in the city by unidentified terrorists while he was in the vehicle. He blamed Zafar's supporters for the attack and allegedly ordered his men to take revenge, the sources said.

Zafar's family members were attacked and the residence of his father-in-law was raided by rival activists searching for

See page 11 Col 2

JS session begins, Opposition stays out

By Staff Correspondent

The autumn session of the 7th Jatiya Sangsad began yesterday with the Opposition abstaining from attending it.

However, ten MPs of a dissident faction of Jatiya Party led by Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju joined the session.

The session began at 9:30 pm with Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury in the chair. The session nominated a five-member panel of chairmen and adopted a resolution condoling the deaths of some distinguished persons at home and abroad.

The sitting was adjourned till 9:30 am today. It lasted about 55 minutes.

Opposition BNP, Jatiya Party (Ershad) and Jamaat-e-Islami are abstaining from at-

See page 11 Col 1

Deadline expired 18 days ago, no probe report yet

By Naimul Haq

The probe committee formed by the health ministry to investigate the 'leakage' of gas from liquid oxygen tank at Dhaka Medical College Hospital early this month has not submitted its report even 18 days after the expiry of its scheduled time.

The committee was given three days to submit its report.

The health ministry formed

See page 11 Col 5

Kader Siddiqui resigns from JS

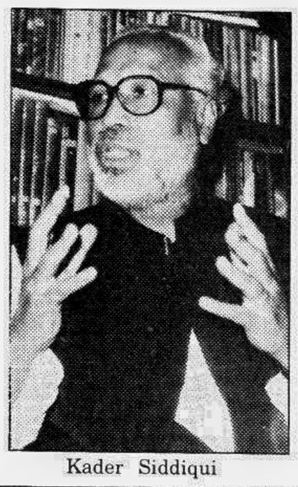
By Staff Correspondent

Ruling party lawmaker Kader Siddiqui resigned from the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, bringing a number of charges against the Awami League government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and raising questions about the parliament.

In his five-page letter of resignation, Siddiqui regretted that the prime minister had recently dubbed him — 'mad' and 'a goat'. "It's a despicable act on the part of the head of the government and the House leader to call an MP mad and goat. I tender my resignation finding no timely redress to this unjust act and other issues ...."

In his letter, he also raised a series of grievances against the functioning of parliament, harassment of MPs, and AL's failures to implement its election

See Page 11 Col 7



Kader Siddiqui

He has finally found out his right place, says Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the role of Kader Siddiqui will strengthen the hands of those who want to protect the killers of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, reports BSS.

"Whenever Awami League is in a good position, it becomes victim of internal conspiracy," she said and declared that no harm could be caused by such mischievous move as her party's main strength is not any individual but its countless dedicated workers.

Addressing a large number of partymen who met her at the International Conference Centre (ICC), the prime minister called upon them to remain alert against the conspiracy of the vested forces who killed Bangabandhu and captured

See Page 11 Col 8

Mass processions today

BNP to hold rally outside Paltan, JP in the field

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance will bring out separate "mass processions" in the city this afternoon to protest the government decision to provide "corridor to India in the name of transhipment".

BNP will now bring out its procession from the eastern side of the Paltan Maidan as talks with Jatiya Party to allow it to use the field for its pre-procession gathering failed despite negotiations in the last two days, party sources said.

BNP activists and supporters will gather at the Rajuk Avenue, Dainik Bangla crossing and in Motijheel area. They will not enter the Paltan Maidan, the sources said.

Party chief and leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia will lead the BNP procession that will start at 3:30 pm.

BNP and JP had sought permission from the authorities to allow them to use of the Paltan Maidan for pre-procession gatherings. The authorities gave permission to JP.

BNP earlier claimed that it had declared its programme first to bring out its procession from Paltan Maidan.

As per schedule, JP will bring out its procession from Paltan Maidan at 4pm. Party chief HM Ershad will lead the march.

Jamaat -e-Islami Ameer Golam Azam will lead his party procession that will be brought out from Muktangan at 4 pm.

Moulana Azizul Haq will lead the Islami Oikkya Jote (IOJ) procession from Purana Paltan at 4 pm.

BNP sent two delegations to Ershad yesterday and the day before to request him to shift JP's meeting venue. But Ershad turned down the request saying that his party secured the permission from the authorities and so the question of shifting the venue does not arise at all. He however told the BNP leaders that he could consider if Begum Zia requested him over

See page 11 Col 3

Mig deal

JS body member to go to court

Opposition BNP lawmaker Major (retd) Akhteruzzaman plans to move a lawcourt for stalling the second installment of advance payments for the purchase of supersonic fighter jet Mig-29, reports UNB.

As per contract, the government is to pay 23 million US dollars equivalent to about Tk 115 crore by September 28.

The government had earlier paid 11.5 million US dollars equivalent to about Tk 57.50 crore to Russia against the purchase of eight fighter planes costing 124 million dollars.

Talking to UNB yesterday Major Akhter, a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence, said he had already talked to lawyers and would go to court within a couple of days to protect the interest of the country.

"I have tried to discuss the matter in Parliament, but the ruling party ignored the whole thing and never appeared in the committee meeting with contract documents," he said.

The outspoken MP regretted that the Prime Minister, who is in charge of the Ministry of Defence, did never attend any of the meetings of the committee.

"I put in all my efforts to stop these unwanted and unnecessary purchases which involved huge money in foreign currency, but the ruling party didn't pay heed," he said. "And this has now forced me to appear before the court."

The government on June 28 signed a contract with a Russian delegation for purchase of eight most advanced supersonic fighter aircraft and made an advance cash payment of 11.5 million US dollar and is now getting ready to pay a second installment.

Illes Sitku's match-winning hat-trick

Hungarian striker Illes Sitku (L) slides the ball past the despairing Malaysian goalie during yesterday's Bangabandhu Cup match. — Star photo

By Sports Reporter

Experience stole a march over youthful exuberance as Kerulet FC of Hungary prevailed over the Malaysian Olympic team 3-2 in a keenly contested match of the 2nd Bangabandhu Cup International Football Tournament at the floodlit Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Tipped as one of the favourites to win the title, the professional side from Europe almost had their hearts in their mouth when they capitulated a 2-0 first-half lead in the face of a tremendous recovery act after the lemon break by the rejuvenated South-east Asian nation.

But, thanks to a terrific treble from Kerulet's opportunist striker Illes Sitku, who pulled off the match-winner in the penultimate minute of regulation time after the Malaysians hit back with two goals in the space of ten minutes into the second session.

Sitku's hat trick earned him the man-of-the-match award, but the oldest Hungarian league side needed a special effort from their custodian Azabolacs Kiss to win the thriller by the skin of their teeth.

Azabolacs, who made a bril-

See Page 11 Col 7

Regional support for WRIP being mobilised

By Sharier Khan

As the government is delaying the complicated and controversial Western Region Integrated Project (WRIP) of US oil company Unocal, its local partner Abdul Awal Mintoo is mobilising support for the project through business chambers in Khulna-Barisal region.

As President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Mintoo is influencing the business community in the country's western region to speak in favour of WRIP, sources claimed.

Mintoo recently met these business leaders and briefed them on the economic importance of WRIP, a 700 million dollar project aimed at development of the Shahbazpur gas field in Bhola, setting up of four power plants in areas from Gopalganj to Khulna and laying 150 km gas pipeline.

The FBCCI chief expects that the business community would put pressure on the government to go ahead with the project that is progressing with a snail's pace since 1997.

Meanwhile, Calvin Humphrey, Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy and International Affairs, US Department of Energy, arrived Dhaka yesterday.

Humphrey is leading a US-Bangladesh Energy Sector Co-operation Delegation that will look into affairs concerning US-funded technical support to Bangladesh to scrutinise WRIP and conduct a tender for it.

The sources further claimed that Unocal was quite sure that the project would get a go-ahead very soon. "Unocal purchased pipes worth 40 million dollars for WRIP earlier this year," said a source.

Though WRIP apparently sounds very attractive as it deals with a region that is unlikely to attract foreign investment soon, government experts have detected various loopholes in the project proposal that brings its profitability into question.

They said, as per Unocal's proposal, Bangladesh shoulders all the risk of WRIP and it will cause Bangladesh to lose in the long run. Unocal is not going

See Page 12 Col 7

5-yr tax holiday for computer industry

The government has decided to provide special facilities including tax holiday for five years in computer industry for the development of computer software in the country, reports BSS.

The decision was taken yesterday at a high-level meeting on the development of computer software and data processing service export held with Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria in the chair.

The meeting decided to provide 15 per cent value facilities in the software purchase by different government organisations to encourage the local software manufacturers and setting up of temporary IT village.

It was also decided that the National Board of Revenue will soon issue notification to provide tax holiday for five years in the computer software industry and copy right law will be passed soon.

Pre-election bomb blast in Andhra kills four

NEW DELHI, Aug 29: Four people died in a massive bomb blast at the home of a provincial minister in southern India a week ahead of national elections, police said today, reports AFP.

The bomb exploded late Saturday at the ancestral home of Kodela Sivaprasad Rao, a minister in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh which has been wracked by rebel violence.

"Three people died immediately while one died in hospital today," said Mazharuddin, police chief of Guntur district where the blast occurred.

"It was massive. There were about 12 feet by 15 feet holes on two walls of the room which is about 25 feet wide. The minister escaped because he was campaigning in another part of Guntur."

The attack came ahead of India's staggered elections which start early next month.

Mazharuddin said the blast occurred at a makeshift election office on the first floor and "the four victims appear to be people helping (Rao) in his election campaign."

He said the minister had blamed the attack on the People's War Group (PWG), an outlawed Maoist guerilla group which frequently uses bombs, kidnappings and murder in its fight for rights in Andhra Pradesh.

"The minister claimed he had received death threats from the PWG recently for speaking out against its members," Mazharuddin said.

"Our investigation is on and I cannot tell you at this stage if it (the rebel group) was involved."

But he said the attack could be linked to the elections.

"There are all kinds of claims and counter-claims. Some political parties are saying that Rao's people were making bombs to intimidate rivals and voters when one of them accidentally exploded," he said.

Andhra Pradesh police earlier admitted they had recently seized 126 bombs from a nearby village.

Meanwhile, Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes has joined the government's election campaign onslaught on opposition leader Sonia Gandhi over her foreign roots, a report said today.

The outspoken Fernandes insisted Gandhi was not Indian and termed members of her Congress party "eunuchs" for choosing a foreign-born chief.

Women's groups have reacted angrily to the government comments about Gandhi. And the Indian Express daily said

See page 11 Col 1

Today's matches to be held at Mirpur stadium

Sports Reporter

Bangladesh Football Federation has shifted both of today's matches of the 2nd Bangabandhu Cup to the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur because of the poor ground condition prevailing at the Bangabandhu National Stadium, according to a press release.

In the first match, Kuwait national team will take on Pudang-Sumen Football Club of Indonesia in a group D clash at 4 pm, while the next match, a group C encounter between Uzbekistan combined team and the Nepal national team, will kick off at 6 pm.

Spectators will have to spend Tk 15 for a gallery ticket today while the season card holders can use the same card at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium.

The BFF press release, however, did not mention anything about tomorrow.

Opposition to boycott

36 countries to join confce of Asian MPs

By Nurul Kabir

Lawmakers from 36 Asian countries including Bangladesh will attend a five-day conference beginning in the city on Wednesday to explore avenues for mutual co-operation to establish peace in the region.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the conference at the International Conference Centre.

Opposition parties in the Jatiya Sangsad (Bangladesh parliament) have decided to boycott the conference.

The conference, styled Asian Parliamentarian's Conference for Peace and Co-operation, is expected to culminate in formation of an association of legislative bodies of Asian countries. Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury disclosed at a press conference here yesterday.

"We have already proposed formation of an Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace for effective co-ordination among the legislative bodies of the region. A draft charter for the proposed body has also been sent to the invited parliaments. I am optimistic that all concerned would find it important to form such a regional body."

Sources in the conference organising committee also told The Daily Star that the conference, on its concluding day, is likely to come out with a declaration to be named Dhaka Declaration, highlighting some specific objectives to be realised through united efforts of parliaments of the region.

Deputy Leader of the [illegible] tion in the Ja[illegible]

Magurchhara incident

US energy official urged to expedite payment of compensation

Visiting US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs of the department of energy, Calvin Humphrey called on Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad at his office yesterday, reports UNB.

During the meeting, the Foreign Minister enquired about the progress in the plan of action formulated by the department of energy for the development of the energy sector.

He requested Humphrey to expedite the payment of compensation for the Magurchhara gas exploration accident.

The visiting US official expressed satisfaction about th present state of cooperatio[illegible] [illegible]een

Inside Today

Article

Another 'Glasnost' in Iran?

Column: Perspectives by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

Page 4

Focus

Protecting the Sundarbans

Page 5

Prayer Timings

August 30

	Azan	Jamaat
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