

# SB cashier still at large: Is he solely responsible?

STAFF REPORTER

Police are yet to nab Tapan Kumar Saha, cashier of Sonali Bank branch at Mirpur Section 12 in the city, who siphoned off a huge amount of depositors' money from the bank branch.

Many of the depositors yesterday raised the question whether Tapan was solely responsible for this or some others in the branch were also involved with him.

Some 'ghost transactions' in accounts indicate that it was difficult for Tapan to siphon off the depositors' money without the help of some of his colleagues, they claimed.

It was learnt that some 'fat amounts' were deposited in different accounts and later withdrawn without the knowledge of the account holders.

Tk 2,00,000 was deposited in savings account no. 13600 and later withdrawn. But the account holder, Noor Mohammad Khan, neither deposited nor withdrew the amount. There are instances of such ghost transactions in different

accounts without the knowledge of the account holders.

Mysteriously, Tapan held the post of cashier of the branch for the last 10 years. Usually, a bank staff has to be transferred every three years. The rule should be strictly applied in case of staff members who handle transactions, bankers said.

According to sources, there were several attempts to transfer Tapan, but to no effect. The bank authorities recently issued an order for transfer of Tapan, the sources said.

Tapan is a leader of the workers' association running the CBA in Sonali Bank. He holds the post of vice-president of its Ramna regional unit.

Meanwhile, the CBA suspended Tapan from their organisation yesterday.

So far, 28 depositors have given written representations to the bank branch, citing irregularities in their accounts. There are many others who are yet to apply.

According to bank officials, the applications they received involve embezzlement of Tk 125,800.

# 33.5 TCF gas reserves

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"We did not look into the potential of individual blocks. We studied all the geological structures in the country," said a Bangladeshi expert who participated in the study.

On the credibility of the report, he said, "The study was conducted by using a methodology developed by USGS two decades ago. The USGS is continuously developing the methodology, spending millions of dollars from the US government. Its methodology is very advanced. There is no doubt about it."

He said, "While the USGS methodology focussed more on technology, we presented facts and figures on Bangladesh's geological structures. The Bangladeshi input was very useful because it allowed the researchers to check whether the parameters set in the study were acceptable or not."

The study focuses on a 30-year period because it represents one generation. A forecast beyond one generation is not possible.

"Now that we have a 30-year resource assessment, we can make an economic forecast. The mean

possibility of 33 TCF of gas does not mean that this quantity, if really found, would be economically viable. With an economic forecast, we will be able to see how much gas we can actually use."

He added, "The USGS technical studies on energy resources in US are used by different energy agencies in that country to chalk out strategies. Explorers chalk out their plans on the basis of both the USGS studies and the strategies."

"During the study, both Shell Oil and Unocal made presentations before USGS experts on their gas resource assessment in Bangladesh, and both the companies were meticulously questioned to justify their studies. USGS is free from any company interest and therefore it has strong credibility world-wide," he added.

The study report also says more gas may be found in off-shore geological structures than on-shore parts. There is a mean possibility of striking 18 TCF of gas in off-shore structures and 15.4 TCF in on-shore areas, it says.

# Sundarbans confce

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were 'neglected' in such an important issue relating to the Sundarbans.

We were informed after organisers finalised programmes for the conference and fair which is disgraceful on our part as well as the ministry concerned, the officials said. The Sundarbans Forest Division was placed in the fourth position on the list of organisers of the conference, the officials alleged.

A high official of SFD said that organisers should have sought prior permission from the ministry concerned for holding such a conference. The ministry does not have and written application from the organisers in this regard. So the two NGOs Rupanar and BAPA (Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan) have obviously ignored the government, the official said.

The invitation card issued by organisers does not have the name of Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Minister for Environment and Forest. The card bears names of the state minister Talukdar Abdul Khaleque and the city mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman as special guests.

The organisers of the conference on the Sundarbans flatly denied the charges brought against them.

It is, however, learnt from different circles that the first National conference and fair on the Sundarbans has created keen interest among the people.

Different organisations have extended full support to organisers of the conference.

Rupanar's move to create mass awareness for saving the Sundarbans has annoyed only those vested interests who have been looting its resources in the name of conservation, said leaders of different socio-cultural organisations.

# Hartal today, tomorrow

FROM PAGE 1

democracy and cling to power.

In her brief speech, the BNP chief sought co-operation from all quarters to make the current ousting-government movement a success. She congratulated the countrymen for observing the yesterday's hartal and urged them to observe the hartal on today and tomorrow.

Earlier, briefing newsmen, BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan alleged that the government in a pre-planned way attacked opposition activists in different parts of the capital city yesterday and killed five people and wounded unspecified number of activists.

He said the AL since its assumption to power continued attack on opposition's peaceful programmes, killing and injuring many people over the last four and a half years.

Bhuiyan called upon countrymen to make today's and tomorrow's hartal a complete success.

Speaking at the briefing, the party's joint secretary general and Juba Dal President Mirza Abbas, whose procession came under attack, alleged that Dr Iqbal MP himself opened fire, targeting him (Abbas) and the processionists.

They armed terrorists took cue from Iqbal and went on a shooting spree, killing and wounding BNP and Juba Dal activists. A dozen of activists are still missing, he claimed.

Jashim, a Juba Dal leader of Ward No 33, Khokon, a Ward No 25 unit leader, and Sultan, an aged BNP activist, died on the spot, Abbas said. Nazma, the female victim, also belonged to BNP, he added.

Jatiya Party Secretary General Nazir Rahman Manjur, Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mujahid, acting Secretary General of Islami Oikya Jote Ahmed Abdul Qader and City BNP General Secretary Abdus Salam also spoke at the briefing. Senior leaders of the alliance were present.

**Int'l Theatre Festival opens today**  
BSS, Dhaka

A weeklong international theatre festival begins in the city today at seven different venues simultaneously.

State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader will inaugurate the festival "Roots and Blossoms," at the National Museum at 7 pm, a Press release said.

Bangladesh Centre of the International Theatre Institute in association with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation have organised the festival marking the International Mother Language Day.



Palestinian mourners carry the body of Bilal Ramadan, 14, during his funeral at the Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip yesterday. Bilal was shot in the chest near the settlement of Netzarim as he was walking home from school.

# Gunshots from AL procession

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They said a few retaliatory shots were fired from the Opposition procession, but the processionists dispersed immediately after the firing started.

The fleeing BNP activists escaped through the Outer Circular Road leading to Shahjahanpur, widely believed to be a stronghold of Mirza Abbas.

The policeman was identified as Abu Naser, 27, hailing from Jamalpur district. Abu Naser was hit by a sniper shot when he was preparing for a bath standing on the corridor adjacent to his third floor room in building no. 4 at Rajarbagh police lines.

He died on the spot. Another bullet pierced through the left arm of his colleague Partha Roy Chowdhury who was witnessing the violence from the other end of the same floor.

The three others killed were identified as Rashid Mollah, 50, a rickshawpuller, Jashim, 23, a cloth trader at Bangabazar and Khokon, 26, of Khilgaon area in the city, sources at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) said. The bodies were taken to the hospital for autopsy.

Of the injured, three were admitted to DMCH. They are Nazma, 34, a beggar, Nurul Amin, 23, an electric mechanic, Munir, 22.

Partha Roy Chowdhury, was taken to DMCH and then shifted to Rajarbagh Police Hospital.

Policemen on duty at the spot said they tried to intercept the lqbal-led procession coming from Mouchak to allow the Abbas-led procession from Shantinagar to pass peacefully through the Malibagh crossing. But the shooting broke out immediately following pelting of some bricks on police. They could not say specifically from which side the firing began first.

But photographic evidence and witnesses said the AL processionists opened fire in presence of riot police and several police officials.

Minutes after the firing, some people in Rajarbagh area claimed that stray shots were fired by the fleeing Opposition activists while another person alleged that gunmen from inside an auto-tempo fired shots while speeding through

the Outer Circular Road in front of the police lines.

A private security guard in front of Mohammadi Medical Hospital opposite Barrack No. 4 at the police lines said he heard gunshots a few seconds after the shooting at Malibagh crossing but could not confirm whether those shots hit any policeman inside the barrack.

Talking to The Daily Star at Ward No. 1 at the Police Hospital yesterday, injured police constable Partha said, "I have no idea who fired shots on us. A bullet hit my left hand as I was about to turn to the bathroom from the verandah for a shower." Partha hails from Rangamati.

Some aggrieved and deeply shocked policemen attending Partha at the hospital told newsmen that policemen were no more safe inside their barracks.

Kabir Hossain, a private security guard at Mouchak tower opposite Malibagh petrol pump said he saw a procession of Ramna thana AL pushing through police resistance near the Malibagh crossing and seconds after, shots were fired from that direction.

Another witness, Md. Razi, an employee of Sonali Bank, Malibagh branch, told The Daily Star that he heard the first shot from the Mouchak-end of the crossing when a BNP procession was passing through the Malibagh intersection.

Agitated BNP activists went on the rampage at Shahjahanpur and torched a number of rickshaws there. They also burnt motor tyres on Kakrail- Shantinagar road, making the area off-limit for rickshaws as well.

The militant Opposition activists torched a police motorcycle and a shop at Bijoy Nagar. Police fired tear gas shells to disperse them.

Stray incidents of violence also took place in alleys in Paltan and Bijoy Nagar areas, leaving at least 10-15 people injured.

A number of BNP activists and party leader Shahjahan Siraj were injured when police baton-charged a pro-hartal procession led by former home minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury at 10 am near Mouchak. Matin Chowdhury was also slightly injured. Police swooped on the

procession following explosion of cocktails, witnesses said.

At the DMCH, Nazma was bleeding profusely as a bullet hit the left side of her neck just below the ear.

Nurul Amin said he was in the BNP procession when a bullet hit his right leg. Amin, who works as an electrician in a shop at Gandaria said, "I was in the procession chanting slogans. Suddenly, near the Malibagh petrol pump, I saw shots being fired. As I ran for shelter, a bullet hit me and I fell unconscious on the road."

Amin said, "I was at the rear of procession when the shooting started from another procession from behind at the Malibagh square."

A number of cocktails were blasted at Bangshal crossing in Old Dhaka, injuring police inspector Mahtab Hossain Talukdar of Detective Branch in the left foot.

Elsewhere in the country, the hartal passed off by and large peacefully.

However, some incidents of violence were reported from Chittagong and Manikganj.

Educational institutions, business establishments and shopping malls remained closed yesterday. Attendance in government offices was thin.

Barring rickshaws and a few auto-tempos, all modes of transport were off the city streets. Some buses of state-run BRTC plied some streets with few passengers.

Our Manikganj correspondent reported that at least 10 people were injured in sporadic clashes between pro- and anti-hartal pickets in the town.

Police charged batons and lobbed tear shells to disperse rival political activists when they were engaged in a chase and counter-chase. Additional police force was deployed at the district town.

In Chittagong, some pickets set fire to a bus at Station Road at about 5:45 pm. One person was arrested from the spot.

Our correspondents from Narayanaria, Rajshahi, Brahmanbaria and Satkhira reported that the hartal was observed peacefully in the districts.

# Truck carrying Tk 5 cr falls into ditch

UNB, Dhaka

A truck, carrying about Tk 5 crore skidded off the road and fell into a roadside ditch at Keudala in Bandar upazila on Dhaka-Chittagong highway on Monday night, leaving nine policemen injured.

On information, district police rushed to the spot and cordoned off the area. They later sent the money to Bangladesh Bank in Dhaka.

Police sources said a convoy of seven trucks carrying new notes of taka 10 denomination amounting to Tk 33.28 crore were heading towards Dhaka from Chittagong on Monday.

One of the trucks, according to them, fell into the ditch with 120 packets containing Tk 4.80 crore when its driver lost control over the steering at about 10.45 pm. There were only 66 policemen in all the seven trucks.

The injured policemen were identified as Subedar Azharul Islam, Nayek Mukhlesur Rahman, Nayek Abul Kalam and constables Anwar Hossain, Saidullah, Tajul Islam, Shahidullah, Abul Hossain and Abul Kashem.

They were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Orthopaedic Hospital and Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital.

# Gaddafi's message handed over to PM

UNB, Dhaka

A special envoy of Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Gonobhaban yesterday evening and discussed with her matters of mutual interest.

Saad Mustafa Mujber, a cabinet minister, handed over a message from the Libyan president to Sheikh Hasina in the meeting.

Foreign Secretary Syed Moazzem Ali was present during the meeting.

# Bill approved

FROM PAGE 12

Understanding (MOU) on science and technology between Bangladesh and Italy.

The Cabinet discussed the development projects implemented and undertaken by the government in the northern region of the country.

The projects are gas-power development, agriculture processing industry and infrastructure development, implementation of rail and gas lines, Bangabandhu Bridge, development of educational institutes, including four science and technology universities, construction of roads and bridges, EPZ, fertiliser factory, establishment of radio-television centres, pulse research centre, granite factory, modern tea garden and development of land port and social sectors, including ashrajan project.

# AL procession

FROM PAGE 12

Aurang and Hannan, were earlier declared persona non grata at the PM's Secretariat. Arman is known as a member of the 'hit squad' of Five Star group.

Liakat is widely known as the leader of the "Five Star" group, an underworld gang of notorious terrorists in the city.

Jubo League leader Kiran is the main accused in a case filed with Teigoan thana for hurling petrol bombs, which resulted in a fire that gutted two thousand shanties and killed at least one person on January 24.

Though Kiran was seen in the Iqbal-led procession yesterday, Teigoan police failed to arrest him since the incident.

# Gazipur rape

FROM PAGE 12

But later the officer-in-charge of the police station refused to take the case, since the complainant did not have any certificate proving that Zebawas raped.

The doctor concerned at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital said she would provide the certificate at the time of discharging the patient. A certificate that says "consistent and forceful act" was committed against her was issued last afternoon.

In a curious development, the OC of the Palash police station visited Zeba at DMCH Monday night and asked her father to see him. However, relatives complained that he had refused to take the case.

To look into such cases of violence, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs set up a cell on the hospital premises inside the newly inaugurated national blood transfusion centre next to the emergency wing.

The cell is supposed to deal with violence cases brought or referred to the hospital, issue certificates, provide adequate medical care and initiate legal process.

It has been more than two years since its inception. However the cell is yet to render any such services.

# NCTB to take action

FROM PAGE 1

NCTB twice revised the timeframe till December 31, but the Beximco concern failed to meet the deadline on both occasions.

On Monday started distribution of 11 more categories of textbooks including Social Science, General Science and Islamic Studies for class VI, VII and VIII; Social Science and Islamic Studies for class IX.

With Monday's distribution, Pustaka has so far distributed 25 out of 60 categories of secondary-level textbooks.

"These books are compulsory for secondary-level students," Chowdhury said.

He said 15 more categories would

be available in the market from February 18 and the rest from February 25. "I'm hopeful that all the books will be made available by February 28."

Meanwhile, the NCTB has so far received Tk 3.17 crore out of Tk 7.70 crore from Pustaka as royalty.

Last month Pustaka distributed 14 categories of secondary-level textbooks without depositing royalty to the NCTB.

However, sources claimed that the number of books available in the market was not adequate.

There is still scarcity of books in the market and a section of unscrupulous booksellers have capitalised on the non-availability of textbooks.

# AL embarrassed

FROM PAGE 1

official residence of the Prime Minister, to chalk out a plan of action to cope with the situation in a careful manner.

"Awami League needs to think twice before dealing with such a volatile situation at this moment," said a senior leader of the party.

Today's meeting is expected to be a stormy one, hinted one source.

According to another leader of the party preferring anonymity, the recent incidents - murder of a cop inside a city mosque, killing of eight at Brhmanbaria and death of four in the capital city yesterday - have shaken the government's position.

He said that the Awami League wanted to face the opposition politi-

cally. "But yesterday's incident has swung the advantage in opposition's favour. BNP wanted dead bodies to fuel ongoing ousting-government movement."

Political insiders said that the ruling party has made an opportunity for the four-party opposition by unleashing vandalism on the procession.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Mohammad Nasim has blamed the "fundamentalist" forces for yesterday's incident that claimed four lives including a cop.

"Today's incident was part of a fundamentalist blueprint to destabilise the political situation," he said while briefing newsmen at his office.

# MP Iqbal's version

FROM PAGE 12

State Minister for Shipping and also General Secretary of City Awami League (AL) Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and a large number of leaders of city AL, Ramna thana AL and its front organisations accompanied Iqbal at the 15-minute press conference.

According to Iqbal, the procession led by him was 'peaceful as ever'. "When police intercepted our procession, I asked them why they did not stop the BNP procession coming from Kakrail."

As soon as the BNP procession turned towards the Rajarbagh police line, bullets were sprayed indiscriminately on the AL procession, he claimed.

"Suddenly, I found myself standing alone on the road and bullets from the BNP procession were rained on us. While escaping they

fired gunshots that killed the police constable inside the police barrack. "At this point, Iqbal was asked by The Daily Star correspondent to explain how three bodies were found at the same point where the BNP procession took turn.

This correspondent also reminded him that as police intercepted the AL procession at Malibagh crossing, the AL procession was behind the BNP procession which was taking a turn and the gunshots started.

"Following the firing, the people of our procession split up and were running helter-skelter," replied Iqbal.

Earlier Iqbal and Maya arrived at the press club at about 4:40 p.m. as the press conference was first scheduled to be held at 4:30 p.m. But surprisingly they left the area without holding the conference. Later, they started it at 6:10 p.m.

# PM asks partymen

FROM PAGE 12

come back to parliament if you've anything to say. Please don't try to gain political dividend by misleading the people and bringing them sufferings by calling hartals," she urged the opposition leader.

People in the remote Naldanga thana were in a festive mood as the PM and her cabinet colleagues reached the tiny school ground that failed to contain the huge crowd. A large section of the audience gathered around the venue of the public meeting that was marked by frequent acts of indiscipline despite tight security measures.

Thousands of people thronged around the Bastevedpur High School ground where the PM flew in with a helicopter from the helipad near the Uttara Ganabhaban.

Kids from local schools and curious people lined up along the narrow road leading to the meeting venue to greet the Prime minister, MPs and other top leaders of the ruling party. Big arches, and colourful banners, festoons, portraits and flag featured high all around.

About a popular demand for upgrading Naldanga thana into an upazila, the PM reminded that it was her government that developed the area as a thana. She however promised to consider all demands of the locals once her party comes back to power. The AL chief urged the people to vote for boat (AL's polls symbol) in the coming elections.

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It has been more than two years since its inception. However the cell is yet to render any such services.

Naldanga thana falls in the Nature-2 constituency held by BNP.

Seeking vote for her party, Hasina told her audience that whenever people voted for AL they got a big return. Elected in the 1970 election, the party earned them independence and again it ensued people's basic rights after winning the 1996 polls.

On the contrary, she accused the BNP of plundering national wealth while the party was in power twice. The prime minister highlighted major development works of her government and promised more developments if her party wins the next polls due late this year. For further development of the northern region, she repeated her plan to set up large agro-based industries.

"The governments of Zia, Ershad and Khaleda looted people's wealth whereas our target is to establish a poverty-free Bangladesh," Hasina told the rally.

She thanked people for joining the rally despite a hartal called by opposition parties.

The nationwide hartal was peaceful in the district town but transportation linked to PM's programme was uninterrupted. Minister, MPs and other AL leaders also addressed the rally chaired by local AL leader Sirajul Islam.

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# KU convocation

FROM PAGE 12

Education Minister ASHK Sadique and Chairman of the University Grants Commission Prof Dr ATM Zahurul Huq will attend the convocation as special guests, said a KU press release.

Meanwhile, security measures in and around the Khulna University have been beefed up.

Heads of diplomatic missions, members of parliament and some ministers are expected to attend the convocation.

Meanwhile, Khulna unit of All-party Action Committee has allowed holding of second convocation of Khulna university despite call for another countrywide hartal today.

Khulna APAC announced this decision in a rally held yesterday afternoon.

"We have taken the decision to pay respect to President Shahabuddin Ahmed who is expected to inaugurate the convocation this morning," said Nazrul Islam Monju, secretary of Khulna city BNP and also city unit of APAC.

# BIMSTEC meets tomorrow

FROM PAGE 1

members would try to adopt a 'positive-list' approach to go for tariff concessions on bilateral basis before moving onto a multilateral agreement.

Meanwhile, senior officials of the member-countries are scheduled to meet today and tomorrow in Yangon to do the groundwork for the ministerial meeting.

The Bangladesh delegation, led by Commerce Secretary Golam Rahman, is already in the Myanmar capital to attend the official-level meeting. The meeting, like the ministerial one, is expected to deliberate on formulation of a standard customs procedure and removal of impediments to development of surface, air and shipping links

among the five countries.

BIMSTEC, launched in 1997 at the Thai capital of Bangkok, comprises Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand. The economic bloc is viewed as a potential plank for promotion of regional trade, investment and tourism among the member-countries and also as a bridge between SAARC and ASEAN.

Ambassadors of BIMSTEC countries have already started holding informal consultations every week in Bangkok.

The third ministerial level of BIMSTEC, held in New Delhi on July 6 last year, decided that every year in February a ministerial level meet would be held to give the organisation required dynamism.

The New Delhi meeting also launched the BIMSTEC Economic Forum to promote private sector trade, investment and tourism among the five member-nations.

BIMSTEC has also on its aviril plans to encourage growth of private sector airlines in the region. The BIMSTEC countries are willing to provide concessional