

M-16 link another conspiracy, says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said police implicated five AL leaders in an arms possession case upon an instruction by the ruling party high-ups.

"It's part of a conspiracy by the four-party alliance against the opposition," Hasina said in a statement.

She also said law enforcers are harassing her party members since the ruling party's assumption of power and urged the government to stop repression on opposition leaders and activists.

On July 4, the Detective Branch of Police arrested four persons and seized an American-made M-16 rifle at Uttara in the town.

The arrested are Shafiqul Islam Lablu, Zahirul Islam Russel, Fazal Rabbi Sufal and Abdur Razzak Khan.

Lablu and Russel confessed in

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600 tonnes of wheat stolen from Khulna silo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

More than 600 tonnes of wheat have been stolen from the Khulna central food godown, sources said.

The food ministry in a letter on July 30 asked local officials of food department to supply 4500 tonnes of wheat to carrying contractors by August 7. But till August 11, only 2106 tonnes were supplied. The godown now has a wheat stock of 1755 tonnes, showing a shortage of 639 tonnes, the sources pointed out.

One source however said the shortage would be more than 1000 tonnes if the stock is checked immediately.

Carrying contractors have alleged that officials of the godown were not allowing them to take delivery of the rest 2306 tonnes of wheat although they produced necessary documents for this.

"This is because of the shortage of stock due to theft committed in collusion with a section of officials of local food department," one source said seeking anonymity.

Carrying contractors said they are suffering financial loss due to non-supply of wheat within the stipulated time. They also alleged that wheat supplied to them was of low quality, purchased during the procurement drive.

When contacted, Manager of the godown Biswas Zafar Ahmed however said there is no shortage of stock. But he admitted allegations of theft and said the entire godown area is insecure with thieves and pilferers having easy access.

Police source shot dead at Karwan Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified assailants shot dead a police informant at Karwan Bazar in the city's Tejgaon area yesterday morning.

Abdur Sattar, 50, was shot in the head and shoulder by a gang of four near Karwan Bazar kitchen market at 9:30 am.

Sattar was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

The reason behind the killing could not be known.

Victim's wife Amena Begum filed a case with Tejgaon Police Station accusing 20 people, including Sentu, Monju and Selim.

None was arrested in connection with the murder till 8:00 pm yesterday.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Aug 14		6:33 pm
Aug 15	5:33 am	

Prayer Timings		
August 14		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-00
Zahr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-38	6-42
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation



Senior Awami League leaders (from L to R) Abdus Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman, Amir Hossain Amu, Suranjit Sengupta and Sajeda Chowdhury talk to the officer-in-charge of the Dhanmondi police station as they file a general diary against the government on lack of 'proper security' for Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

PHOTO: STAR

BB teams on paper trail to Agarwal, Modi

STAR REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has begun investigation into bank transactions of Marwari businessmen Giridhari Lal Modi, Om Prakash Agarwal and a business group, Doel Group, to find out whether they have flouted rules to get loans and have any connection with illegal hundi business.

"We have started investigation of Modi and Doel Group today (Tuesday). We have sent our investigation teams to different banks and they have collected some information. They are now looking for more information and probing documents of more banks," the central bank governor, Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed told a press briefing yesterday.

The investigation teams are going through papers of eight

banks to find out transactions those had with Modi, his Uttara Group, Agarwal and Doel Group, owned by Deekinandan Kejriwal and Ashok Kejriwal.

Deputy Governor of the BB Nazrul Huda said their investigation team was checking the papers of National Credit and Commerce Bank (NCCBL), One Bank, Dhaka Bank, IFIC Bank, Mercantile Bank, Prime Bank, National Bank Ltd (NBL) and Credit Agricole Indosuez.

The central bank investigation has also found out that the NCCBL, One Bank and Dhaka Bank sanctioned Tk 114 crore to Agarwal in direct loan and other facilities. Of Tk 23 crore sanctioned as direct loan, only two crore was for Agarwal and the rest for fictitious accounts.

When asked whether there would be any action against man-

agement of these banks for sanctioning loans to fictitious accounts, the central bank governor said, "We are probing the issue. Once we complete the investigation, we will decide what can be done."

"The investigation is now not only confined to the loan sanction process but also to find out whether there is any foul play in withdrawing cash assistance and whether the people in question have any connection with hundi transactions," Ahmed added.

Disclosing the preliminary findings on Agarwal, Huda said, "We have started the second phase of our investigations to find out whether the process of loan sanctions was right and whether the loans were sanctioned against proper security. Also we will try to find out whether there is any connection with hundi."

Landslide kills 3 in Chittagong

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three children were killed and their mother was injured in landslide in the city in the early hours of yesterday.

The children were identified as Monir Uddin, 12, Shamsuddin, 10, and Monsoor Uddin.

The critically injured mother, Munira Begum, was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Local people said, the victims were asleep when a chunk of earth collapsed on their thatched house at the foot of a railway hill (locally known as Musar pahar) at Lalkhan Bazar at around 1.40 am.

Fire-service men with the help of local people rescued the bodies and sent them to hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed with Khulshi thana in this connection.

BRAC to assist Afghan govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BRAC will assist the Afghan government in its strategic planning exercise to develop an extensive plan to effectively address the post-war development challenges of that country.

In response to a request from the Afghanistan government, a BRAC team led by Dr Golam Samdarni Fakir will leave Dhaka for Kabul on August 17 to assist the strategic planning team of the rural development ministry.

Nassim Jawad, senior policy advisor to the Afghan minister for rural rehabilitation and development, in a letter to Chairperson of the BRAC Fazle Hossain Abed sought its help to rebuild and develop Afghanistan.

Jawad lauded the launching of BRAC programmes in Afghanistan saying that it is a commitment to the reconstruction and development process of his country, which will make 'a real difference in the NGO arena'.

Hasina's security GD filed with Dhanmondi thana

UNB, Dhaka

A general diary (GD) was filed with Dhanmondi police yesterday protesting withdrawal of 'security protection force' from Sheikh Hasina, leader of the opposition in Parliament.

Awami League MPs handed over a copy of GD to Assistant Police Commissioner Morshed in the absence of OC, Dhanmondi thana.

Presidium member Abdus Samad Azad, general secretary Zillur Rahman, deputy leader of the opposition in parliament Abdul Hamid and AL office secretary Abdul Mannan Khan filed separate general diaries demanding adequate security for Sheikh Hasina.

Coming out of Dhanmondi thana Samad expressed apprehension that the government action might lead to an incident like that of August 15 (1975).

He told reporters that the level of security provided for Khaleda Zia when she was opposition leader has

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Gano Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain looks on as the mother of Rubaiyet Ahmed Bappi breaks down while demanding trial of her son's killers at yesterday's Muktangan meeting.

PHOTO: STAR

Govt to seek offers from more cell cos in Nov

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will invite more cellular phone companies in November to start mobile phone service. Moreover, private companies will also be invited to set up fixed line telephony in April 2003.

"This will revolutionise the country's telecommunication sector in line with the prime minister's recent announcement to open up the sector to private investors," Syed Marghub Morshed, chairman of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), said at a press conference at his office yesterday.

"The licences will be awarded in a transparent way to bring dynamism and competition in the sector," Morshed said.

He said there is a huge potential for development of the telecommunication sector in the country, as the regulators want to provide more telephone access to people.

He said the state-owned Bangladesh Telegraph and

Telephone Board (BTTB) would facilitate other operators since it has a huge infrastructure, skilled manpower and experience.

He said the mobile operators now largely provide mobile-to-mobile connections without access to the fixed line network.

"To resolve this problem, the BTRC would ask the fixed line service provider, the BTTB, for an engineering audit to find out how the mobile operators can get access to its network," he said.

Morshed said the Canadian CIDA has come up with a technical assistance to assess telecom frequency and recommend spectrum management in cooperation with the Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre (IIFC).

He said the BTRC has already given permission to three companies -- Grameen Shakti, Rangs IT and Square Informatics -- to transfer data through satellite.

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DU judicial probe body to file report on Aug 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The judicial commission investigating the police attack on the Shamsunnahar Hall will submit its report by August 18 and complete depositions today.

Justice M Tafazzal Islam, the commission head, told The Daily Star yesterday that he was trying his best to complete the whole procedure by the time.

He is preparing the final report and, if needed, will crosscheck the statements of both the persons who testified earlier and of the new persons mentioned in depositions.

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Plunderers shave off savings

Speakers at Prothom Alo-EBL roundtable also blame poor public confidence

STAR REPORT

Speakers at a roundtable discussion yesterday said plundering of people's money by the wealthy section of the society is responsible for the low growth in savings and investment in the country.

They said the savings rate remained very low due to lack of proper savings instruments and people's confidence on banks and financial institutions.

They also blamed a section of businessmen and industrialists for siphoning off people's money instead of investing it in productive sectors.

The speakers underscored the need for good governance in the economic sector for bringing discipline and boosting savings and investment in the country.

They urged managements of banks and financial institutions to expand their network and bring rural people into various savings schemes.

The roundtable was jointly organised by prominent Bengali daily Prothom Alo and Eastern Bank Limited (EBL). It was held at Hotel Sonargaon.

Khondoker Ibrahim Khaled, managing director of Pubali Bank Limited, presented a keynote paper titled "Savings is the Ladder of Prosperity".

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, renowned economist Prof. Muzaffar Ahmad, former advisors of care taker government Rokya Rahman and Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud, economist Prof. Abu Ahmed, Prof. Amirul Islam, BIDS research fellow Rashidun Islam, managing director of Mercantile Bank M Taher Uddin, managing director of EBL K Mahmud Sattar former BAIIRA president Mohammad Noor Ali, President of Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry Wali Bhuiyan, Mirza Azizul Islam, Chief Executive officer of Chittagong Stock Exchange Walui Maruf Matin and Nasir Hossain of EBL took part in the discussion.

Prothom Alo Editor Motiur Rahman moderated the discussion.

Prof. Muzaffar Ahmad called upon the authorities concerned to train small savers to build entrepreneurs

from among them. This will boost savings and investment.

He said the actual savings rate in the country is much higher than the official rate. "The household saving is 7 to 8 per cent but if we consider the non-monitory sector, the savings rate may go up to 30 per cent".

The official savings rate is not increasing because people have lost their confidence on the savings system.

Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud said although there is no specific statistics, it is assumed that a huge amount of money is siphoned off the country regularly.

Those who earned crores of taka through smuggling, taking bribe, loan default and corruption are mainly responsible for siphoning off capital.

"This is not a problem of market economy. Rather, it is related to good governance of the economy."

Wahiduddin Mahmud alleged that big businessmen and industrialists in the country often abuse people's savings instead of helping capital formation.

Hundreds of sick industries and loan defaulters prove this.

On the other hand, those who did not invest significant amounts of bank money, ultimately plundered people's savings.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed underscored the need for strong corporate governance in the financial sector.

He regretted that 'criminals' in the financial sector were never sent to jail in our country for plundering people's money. Loan defaulters are more powerful than managements of banks and financial institutions.

He blamed the government and the officials concerned in the banking system for loan default. He emphasised self-imposed discipline among the officials to improve the situation.

He said there is a section of people, mainly the middle class, who do not take loan either from micro creditors or

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