

ORIENTAL BANK SCAM

ACC sues ex-MD, 13 others for graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has filed 29 graft cases against 14 former and current officials of Oriental Bank Ltd, including its former managing director CM Koyes Sham, for embezzling Tk 33.3 crore.

The cases were filed with the Motijheel and Kotwali Police Stations on December 28 and 29 for misappropriating the money in fake names and organisations, said an ACC press release yesterday.

Following news items published in different dailies on the scam, the ACC made partial enquiry into the matter and filed the cases, said the release adding that several cases are in process to be filed.

The other accused bankers are - Imamul Huq, former deputy managing director, Fazlur Rahman, assistant vice president (AVP), Kamru

Islam, executive vice president (EVP), Shah Mohammad Harun, senior VP, Abul Kashem Mahmud Ullah, senior assistant VP (SAVP), Mohiuddin Ahmed, AVP, Mahmud Hossain, senior executive VP (SEVP), Touhid Uddin Khandakar, senior officer of Bangshal Branch, Syed Mahmud Hassan, AVP of the same branch, Tarikul Alam and Jahir Hossain, executive officers of principal branch, ANM Asifil Rahman, SAVP and former manager of the Bangshal branch and Arif Kadri, former SEVP, now working at One Bank.

The bank authorities suspended some of the officials and dismissed a few others, while Asifil Rahman, one of the prime accused, left the country immediately after the scam was disclosed, sources in the bank said.

ACC said it found 27 fake names and organisations with the bank's

principal branch, which sent the loan applications to its main office. After the credit committee of the bank sanctioned the loan totalling around Tk 27 crore, the accused embezzled it.

The name of the fake organisations are -- Noor and Sons, Anwar Electronics, Evan Tel, Ibrahim Khalil, ZU Trading, Modern Builders, Latif Engineering, Mamta Enterprise, Noshin Enterprise, Afaz Uddin Traders, Cyber Telelink, Noor Machinery, Ali and Ali Company, Super Metal Works, Alam Traders, City Com, Bakar Hossain, Abdus Salam, Meghna Traders, Rahmat Ullah, Sarwar Morshed, Mohammad Salauddin, Abul Hossain, Tanvir Agency, Janata Enterprise, Bellal Hossain and Sarfad Traders.

Four deputy directors (DD) of

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Dhaka regrets Saddam's execution

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh yesterday regretted the execution of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein on Eid day.

"The people and the government of Bangladesh observe that this did happen on a day holy to the entire Islamic world," a government spokesman said.

He said: "The people and the government of Bangladesh are deeply concerned about the unfortunate violence and political instability in any part of the Islamic world, especially in Iraq."

As an expression of the same concern and in the larger interest of

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Septuagenarian Nurjan Begum of Fatulla in Narayanganj earns Tk 800 to 1,000 a month by producing incense sticks.

Six jute silos gutted in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

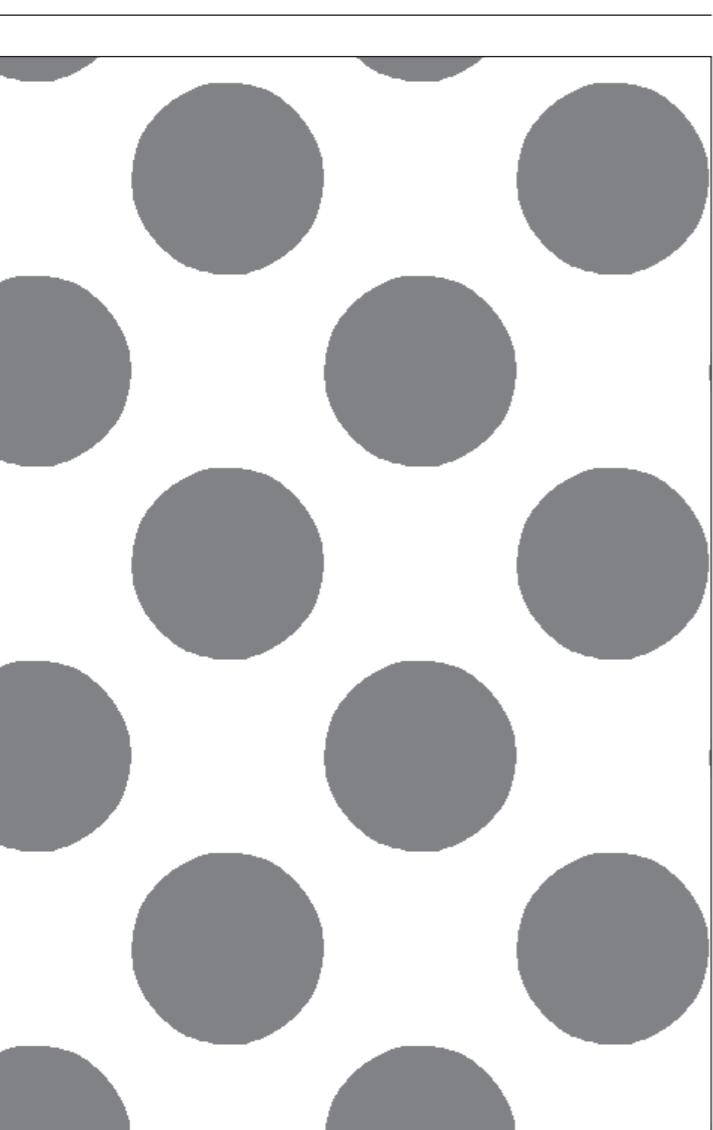
A devastating fire yesterday burnt down Tk 8 crore worth raw jute stockpiled in six adjacent warehouses at Daulatpur.

However, the locals said the damage would not be worth over Tk 3 crore.

Assistant Director of Fire Services Golam Rahman told The Daily Star that the incident was mysterious and he is yet to find out how the fire originated.

The fire broke out at around 11:00am and was brought under control after four hours by eleven

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Black smoke emitted from the chimneys of brick kilns pollutes environment in Aminbazar area of Savar.

Poll participation of major parties essential for legitimate govt
Says UK envoy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

British High Commissioner in Dhaka Anwar Choudhury yesterday said participation of all major political parties in a parliamentary election is required to form a legitimate and credible government in Bangladesh.

In a statement made yesterday in response to questions regarding the current political situation in Bangladesh and the prospect of a free and fair election, he said, "The UK was disappointed that the political impasse has led to the grand alliance's decision to boycott the election."

Stressing the need for a legitimate and credible government in Bangladesh, the British envoy said, "This would require full participation of all major parties."

The High Commissioner went on to say, "For the elections to be credible, the institutions responsible for the election must enjoy the confidence of the major parties. The UK urges all parties to engage in constructive dialogue in order to address how to achieve this."

Expressing concern over the possible violence in the coming weeks, Choudhury said, "We call on all parties to exercise restraint and to refrain from political violence."

"The current political difficulties will not be solved by violence, which has no place in a modern democratic society," the high commissioner said, adding, "We trust that the president and caretaker administration will respond to any incidences of political confrontation in a proportionate manner in keeping with international standards."

Hajis start coming back

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hajis started to return home as three Biman Bangladesh Airlines flights carrying pilgrims landed at Zia International Airport yesterday.

The first flight touched down at the airport at 2:20 am in the night yesterday though it was scheduled to land at 11:15 pm on Wednesday. Dense fog deferred the landing, Biman sources said.

According to a Biman press release, the national flag carrier will operate 60 haj flights until February 1 to bring back 27,482 pilgrims.

This year a total of 2,505 ballotees and around 48,000 non-ballotees hajj pilgrims went to Saudi Arabia.

Apart from Biman, other airlines including Saudi Arabian Airlines, Emirates and Gulf Air also ferried hajis this year, added the press release.

POLL BOYCOTT

EU observers to assess latest situation

UNB, Dhaka

The EU Election Observer Mission (EOM) yesterday termed the decision by the Awami League and its allies to boycott the election "a very significant development," saying they will observe the current situation in next few days.

"... This is a very significant development. The EOM is going to spend the next few days assessing the current situation. We're not coming to a conclusion at the

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Tannery relocation halts on damages bargaining

MAMUN AL MOSTOFA

The much-awaited relocation of the tanneries from Hazaribagh in the capital to proposed 'leather estate' at Savar is yet to be started while the tannery owners are now bargaining hard with the government for compensation and other facilities.

As compensation for the relocation, tannery owners are demanding Tk 250 crore, half of the amount as grants and the rest as 'loan without interest', sources said.

Their demands also include

making the 'leather estate' a special economic zone with all the facilities enjoyed by the country's Export Processing Zones (EPZs), provision for easy exit of the 'weak' tanneries from the leather industries and special loan rescheduling facilities to other viable factories.

The tannery owners have placed their demands to the government through a report that three bargaining associations -- Bangladesh Finished Leather and Leather Goods Exporters' Association (BFLLEA), Bangladesh Tanners Association

and Leather Goods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh -- and heads of different ministries jointly prepared.

"Unless the government provides us with those facilities, it would not be possible for us to shift our factories from Hazaribagh to Savar," BFLLEA President Md Tipu Sultan said.

"We have narrowed down our demands to the minimum level. Now the government is to decide about the relocation."

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Iraq halts execution of Saddam aides

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq postponed hanging two of Saddam Hussein's henchmen yesterday amid international pressure following the ousted dictator's bungled and much criticised hanging.

Meanwhile, two justice ministry guards are being held for questioning in connection with the secret filming of Saddam's final moments.

Barzani Ibrahim al-Tikrit, Saddam's half brother and former intelligence chief and Awad Ahmed al-Bandar, the head of the revolutionary court, were to have been

hanged on Thursday. A senior official from Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's office, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the execution was postponed "due to international pressure."

Baha al-Araji, an influential Shia lawmaker from radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's parliamentary bloc, said: "I am sure it will be done on Sunday."

Another Shia deputy, Sami al-Askari, said the executions will be carried out after state holidays for

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Democrats set to take control of US Congress

AFP, Washington

Democrats take control of the US Congress yesterday for the first time in 12 years, vowing to hold Republican President George W Bush accountable for the Iraq quagmire.

Nearly 500 lawmakers -- a third of the 100-seat US Senate and the entire 435-seat House -- are to be sworn in after the November 7 election, which saw heavy losses

inflicted on the Republicans, mainly over the Iraq war.

In the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, 66, will become the first female majority leader. Ever smiling and brimming with energy, she has been an implacable Bush opponent.

Holocaust survivor Tom Lantos, 78, who voted for the Iraq war and now is calling for dialogue with Syria and Iran, will head the House

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Garbage trucks carry loads during the day time, polluting air and causing health hazard. This picture was taken yesterday at Kakrail in Dhaka.

Prayer Timing

| | January 5 | |
|---------|-----------|--------|
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 5-30 | 6-05 |
| Juma | 12-30 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 4-00 | 4-15 |
| Maghrib | 5-30 | 5-35 |
| Esha | 7-00 | 7-30 |

Source: Islamic Foundation