

## Sonali Bank CBA

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they tracked down Sonali Bank trade union leader BM Bakir, one of the 50 corruption suspects listed by the ACC, from flat 19/B on the fourth floor of Rajuk Staff Quarters at West Malibagh by following a microbus that took Bakir to Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) on February 22.

Bakir, alleged for raking in crores of taka in the last few years using his trade union influence and loyalty to BNP, had slipped through Rab's dragnet on February 22.

Rab also arrested from the flat Bakir's associates Ruhul Amin, a senior officer of Tejgaon branch Sonali Bank, and Mohammad Monir, a clerk at Sonali Bank Principal Office at Motijheel, said the press release.

Bakir joined Sonali Bank as a clerk in 1977. He is now a deputy accountant there with a salary of Tk 7,500 per month.

Mystery shrouded his slipping through law enforcers' dragnet as intelligence officials spying on visitors at the ACC office initially admitted to having arrested him at the Matsya Bhaban intersection. Later, they said that he had dodged the security personnel.

While he was coming out of the ACC and attempted to leave the spot on a microbus, an intelligence official stopped Bakir's vehicle. Another intelligence official got into the car and it drove away, said sources.

Although intelligence officials at the ACC confirmed Bakir's arrest, they later said that they were not definite about his arrest.

"Immediately after knowing that Bakir went to ACC office to submit his wealth statement, a team of Rab 3 headed out for the ACC to arrest him. It took the team 20 to 25 minutes to reach ACC. Bakir managed to flee the scene by that time after submitting his statement," the Rab said.

Meanwhile, the joint forces rounded up Anis Ahmed, chairman of MGH Group, from near his office at Karwan Bazar on Sunday afternoon. He is known to have close ties with BNP senior joint secretary general Tanique Rahman.

Although the joint forces asked him to come out of the office to have a few words, they did not release him till yesterday evening, said his family members.

Sources said Anis was picked up to be quizzed about the corruption of several influential persons of the immediate past alliance government.

### OTHER OPERATIONS

In Sylhet, Mashuq Ahmed, CBA president of Jalalabad Gas, surrendered to the joint forces yesterday. He is also the labour affairs secretary of Sylhet city BNP. He faces allegations of tender manipulations,

## Electric fault fire

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at BSEC building on order from Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed.

The authorities could not identify reasons until filing of the report at 9:00 pm while firefighters did not want to make any comment until their inquiry ends.

According to witnesses and employees, the fire might have been originated from one of the two offices-- Bengal Carpet or Jamuna Oil Company Ltd-- located on the first floor and later engulfed the whole building.

"I first noticed smoke at Jamuna Oil Company. We switched off the main electricity line when it started to engulf the area," Mohiuddin, a peon of Nationwide Communication Ltd, a private firm on the first floor, said.

However, according to Sadhon, an employee of the Bangla daily Amar Desh, the fire originated from Bengal Carpet office.

According to Major Siddique, who visited the building after the fire was extinguished, the fire engulfed the floors due to a number of IPS used by different offices.

## Hafiz Ibrahim

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earlier statement, Ibrahim made a startling claim that he and his wife own 12 and 30 bori of gold ornaments respectively, worth Tk 12,000, and Tk 20,000.

The former lawmaker showed less amount of wealth in his second statement than his previous one as well. In the first wealth statement, Ibrahim claimed that his wife owns properties worth Tk 10.25 crore whereas in the second statement this amount is shown as Tk 9.50 crore. He showed Tk 6.80 crore as his total properties worth in the second statement while it was Tk 6.85 crore in the previous one.

In the second statement papers, Ibrahim also left out the amount of his wife's loans taken from different banks, which was stated in the first statement.

Meanwhile, Chairman of Jamuna Group Nurul Islam Babul seems to be the richest person among the 34 people that submitted their wealth statements to the ACC.

His declared amount of wealth is worth about Tk 150 crore. Possessing Tk 105 crore worth of properties, Salma F Rahman followed him in the second place.

## The Bravehearts

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corruption and abuse of power.

In Rajshahi, joint forces arrested a close aide to former post and telecommunications minister of the immediate past alliance government Mofiz Uddin. Mofiz is also vice president of Tanore upazila BNP. He is the prime accused in the gang rape case of an 18-year-old girl in Tanore in April 1988.

Mofiz and one Sheesh Mohammad used to maintain contact with militant leaders of Jamatul Mujahideen Bangladesh including Bangla Bhai on behalf of the minister, said sources.

Using the minister's influence, Mofiz was engaged in extortion over recruitment of government staff, smuggling and selling fertiliser on the black market. He had been evading arrest since June 2005 after he was shown as prime accused in the rape case.

In Putia, police recovered 37 CI sheets from Zia Smriti Sangha at Zamira village of Belpukuria union and arrested president and general secretary of Belghoria union BNP Abdul Aziz and Selina Begum on Sunday night.

In Lalmonirhat, the joint forces seized 48 CI sheets from the house of Altaf Hossain, upazila BNP vice president and also chairman of Gokunda UP, reports our correspondent.

Earlier on Sunday night, joint forces seized 150 CI sheets from Kulaghat UP BNP office.

They seized another 200 sheets from the house of district BNP leader and Kulaghat UP chairman Shahjahan Ali and over 200 CI sheets from upazila BNP leader and Kulaghat UP member Dulal Hossain.

At Barobari, the forces seized 200 more CI sheets from the house of Nazrul Islam, cousin of former state minister Asadul Habib Dulu.

In Khulna, joint forces recovered 70 CI sheets from the house of local Jatiyatobadi Sramik Dal leader B. E. I. A. Y. E. H. O. S. S. A. I. at Maheshwarpasha in Daulatpur.

They also seized 11 CI sheets from the possession of Alamgir Bepari, a ward unit general secretary of Jubo Dal.

In Pabna, the forces seized 69 CI sheets from the house of Harunur Rashid at Kachuri on Shujanagar.

In Bogra, Duplicancia police recovered 11 CI sheets from local Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal office yesterday.

In Manikganj, joint forces arrested chairman of Manikganj municipality and Rupashi Bangla Television Ramjan Ali on Sunday night. He was sent to jail yesterday. Ramjan faces 16 corruption cases.

## Six tonnes

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Homes guilty of manufacturing and selling two-pin-sockets by putting stickers of different brands on those. Its manager Mohammad Niaz was arrested and fined Tk 20,000. The court also issued warrant against the owner Abdul Kalam Azad.

Faisal Enterprise was found manufacturing new electronic metres from used ones for which they do not have any legal papers. The court issued a warrant against the owner Abdus Sattar.

In the showroom of Elina Metal Industries at Kapitan Bazar, the mobile court found fans of two brands Sharp and Pidy are being sold without BSTI approval. The employees admitted that these are produced at a factory at Kachpur in Sonargaon. The court issued warrant against owner Nurul Islam.

## Falu's bail

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lawyers had filed a criminal appeal with the Sessions Judge's Court seeking bail against the rejection order of the lower court on February 4.

The army-led joint forces seized government relief materials from a Falu-owned factory in Savar on February 9.

Following the seizure, Ashulia police filed the case against Falu and several other unnamed officials and employees of the factory.

On February 12, Falu was shown arrested in the case.

According to the prosecution, the joint forces came to know that Falu, owner and chairman of the Dhaka Shanghai Ceramics Factory, built 40 feet wide and 50 feet long structures to accommodate his factory workers with government relief material.

The joint forces dismantled six such structures constructed on the factory premises that were built with corrugated iron (CI) sheets. Six hundred and fifty pieces of CI sheets worth around Tk 4 lakh had the inscription, "Relief materials of Relief and Rehabilitation Department: Not for sale" on them.

The BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government bought the CI sheets manufactured by PHP Arabian Horse Ltd to rehabilitate the poor and distressed through government assistance.

Falu, also owner of private satellite television channels Rtv and Rtv and the daily Amar Desh, is now in jail on a 30-day detention. He was charged with anti-state activities, obstructing public safety, and illegally erecting hoardings.

## ACC accepts Iqbal's

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service arrived forty minutes after the fire was detected.

They were seen carrying the injured on their shoulders to a safe place, they were seen helping them down ladders when some were too shocked to move, they were breaking windows and running in to grab people, often seriously injuring themselves in the process. Tainted black with smoke, drenched in water and smeared with blood, the civilian rescuers were invaluable in their efforts until the professionals took over.

When the firemen arrived in force, plumes of smoke were coming out of the first, second and third floor. Often criticised for their lack-lustre track record, they stormed the blazing floors and searched for survivors.

While pandemonium was taking place outside, the ten firemen who entered the first, second and third floor, quietly continued to evacuate men and women to give hope in what had become a despondent situation. They kept on working away floor after floor, even till most of the blazes were put out, making their final rescue of three people at 3:15pm on the 10th floor.

Meanwhile, 20 fact-finding teams have started scrutinising the wealth statements. They have already found some statements to be at variance with the information they have collected, said sources.

ACC Chairman Lt Gen (retired) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury said, "We will match the statements against the information we have gathered through various agencies."

Discrepancy between the state-

ments and the ACC's information would mean they [the suspects] have lied and cases would be filed against them, said the newly appointed ACC boss.

ACC Director Nasrin Ara Surat Amin yesterday said, "The government will now initiate the process to seize the properties of those who did not produce statements within the time frame."

About receiving Iqbal's statement from his representative after the deadline, she said, "We have received his statement because of the High Court order."

Asked why they have refused statements from representatives of the other three AL men, she said, "As of yesterday, no court order was issued. That's why we didn't receive theirs."

Talking to the reporters, the ACC director said, "Then again we won't be able to seize their properties till the petitions are resolved."

According to the statement, Iqbal owns immovable properties to the value of Tk 17.30 crore and moveable and other properties Tk 27 crore. His liabilities stand at Tk 28 crore.

His wife Dr Momtaz Begum's immovable assets are worth Tk 3.4 crore and moveable Tk 4.58 crore. Of his children, Moin Iqbal's property is valued at Tk 88 lakh, Imran Iqbal's Tk 57 lakh and daughter Nawrin Iqbal's Tk 4.89 crore.

## Living horror

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But then the chopper vanished, leaving the trapped in despair.

It was now becoming difficult to breath. Oxygen was getting preciously scant. The burning smell getting stronger by every passing minutes. Ehsanul could hear people clapping with every successful rescue. And his heart sank in the roar. "It was not me who was rescued," he thought with every successful rescue.

About half an hour later, the firemen finally fixed a tall ladder to the roof and people were scrambling to climb down. Paratroopers who had landed on the roof before made them stand in a line. As luck would have it, Ehsanul was at the end of the line.

The two men then got to work. The fire continued to spread over the whole building. It took more than two hours to set up the fire service's only Turntable Ladder (TTL) so it could reach the roof. Aziz, Akbar, an unidentified policeman and a member of the fire brigade organised the toughest evacuation operation of their lives. As Aziz stood on top of the ladder, the team of rescuers instructed the men and women how to use the ladder to get down.

In the first batch Aziz and others helped dozens of men and women get down the tallest ladder in the country that reached the height of around 150 feet.

The toughest challenge for the rescuers on the rooftop came with four-year-old Muzan Rahman, who had accompanied his mother to the building to meet his uncle. The team tied the child to the back of a volunteer, who was seen descending the ladder.

Abdul Momen (50), a security man, was waiting outside the room of the chairman of the BSEC. It was around 10:30am and the 'sir' was late today. He was getting bored and unmindful of the screams downstairs. Suddenly, he found smoke

Momen jumped up and sprinted towards the stairs. Now he knew why there were all these screams downstairs! But more horror waited for him at the stairs as flames were dancing behind the roiling smoke. He turned back and did what came next to his mind -- he jumped out of the open window of the second floor. Momen is now lying at Dhaka Medical College Hospital with multiple fractures on his hands and

legs.

On the ninth floor, Monir Hossain, Ashok Kumar Jha and Mizan got trapped in one corner of the balcony with the flames just yards behind them. Their skin was singeing and their hair searing in the extreme heat. They could smell their body burning even above the smell of burning computer and paper files.

Their only hope was the ladder being raised from below. But then hope dimmed as the ladder could reach only to the eighth floor. Now there was a gaping 12 feet clearance between life and death.

Monir's mother, Salma Begum, was watching in horror as the ladder was slowly coming down now, leaving the three trapped for certain death. She screamed on the mobile to Monir.

"Come down! Please come down!" she sounded hysterical. "Come down my son!"

But then the ladder started going up again. This time the rescuer standing on the rescue platform holding a bamboo ladder. The ladder stopped on the eighth floor and the rescuer held out the rickety bamboo structure.

There was no time to think. Monir lowered himself onto the bamboo and started crawling. It trembled dangerously and he could see the pinheads of the crowd watching him. "I cannot slip. I cannot die now!" he muttered and kept crawling. Monir does not know how he reached the steel platform of the ladder. But he knew he had seen the face of certain death.

## New anti-terror law

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board to review appeals of persons arrested under the ordinance.

Two sitting judges of the Supreme Court and one joint secretary-level government official will comprise the advisory board, and the government will appoint one of them as its chairman.

The draft says religious communalism means activities of those who indulge in terrorist acts in the name of religion and present themselves as heroes for such activities as well as those who assist in such activities. Spewing hatred against believers of different faiths will also be considered as terrorism.

According to the proposed law, any act that poses a threat to the sovereignty, unity, integrity or security of Bangladesh is a terrorist act. Use of bombs, dynamite, other explosives, inflammable things, firearms, poison, harmful gases or any other chemicals in a way that may injure or kill people to create public panic will also be considered as terrorist acts.

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Besides, forcing the government to do or abstain from any act is included in the category of terrorist acts.

Damage of equipment used for the country's defence or any equipment used by government organisations will also be treated as a terrorist act.

Moreover, the caretaker government has also initiated amending the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2002.

The immediate past BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government had also taken initiatives to enact anti-terrorism laws and amend the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2002. But it did not succeed due to pressures from some influential quarters within its executive.

Counsel for the judiciary separation case Barrister Amirul Islam and counsel for the nine bureaucrats TH Khan were present during the hearing.

The government last month promulgated four rules related to judicial service and amended the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2002. But it did not succeed due to pressures from some influential quarters within its executive.

The alliance government had made the move at the suggestion of the US in the wake of 9/11 and in the context of the worldwide rise in terrorist activities to prevent and crush money laundering and funding of terrorism and militancy.

In the latest development, two officials of the US embassy in Dhaka held separate meetings with officials of the finance and home ministries last week and suggested synchronising the two laws under a single title.

The court also asked the government to release them forthwith if they are not wanted in any other criminal cases.

Dismissing the attorney general's arguments, the court observed that the powers of the High Court Division to issue certain orders and directions can not be exercised by the state of emergency rules.