

Hallmark loan scam

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managing director, a general manager and the branch manager, were directly involved in the scam.
"We are investigating the irregularities, but I cannot say how long it will take to finish the probe," ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.
He said the ACC set up an inquiry committee after the media published reports on the scam in May this year. Later, the commission received the letter from the central bank, he said.
The BB investigation found that Sonali Bank's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch lent Hallmark Group and five other companies Tk 3,547 crore between 2010

and May this year on fake documents. The businesses embezzled the whole amount that belongs to depositors in collusion with some bank officials.
Of Tk 3,547 crore, Hallmark Group alone took away Tk 2,686.14 crore, T and Brothers Tk 609.69 crore, Paragon Group Tk 146.60 crore, Nakshi Knit Tk 66.36 crore, DN Sports Tk 33.25 crore and Khanjahan Ali Tk 4.96 crore.
Of the six borrowers, Hallmark has been found to be the biggest fraudster.
On March 28 this year, Hallmark opened local letters of credit worth Tk 500 crore in favour of Anwara Spinning Mills, Max Spinning Mills and Star

Spinning Mills to buy yarn. The three companies are also clients of the bank's same branch.
Following Hallmark's guarantee to repay the LCs, the bank purchased the acceptance bills and disbursed the money to the accounts of the three spinning mills.
A few days later, the three mills asked the bank branch to transfer the money to the account of Hallmark Group and the branch duly obliged. Later, Hallmark transferred the money to a current account of Century International, a concern of the group.
The probe found that the three spinning mills are fictitious.

The officials of the bank's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch breached the bank rules by giving loans beyond their permitted limits.
According to the bank's rules, a deputy general manager can buy a maximum of Tk 30 crore as acceptance bill from a group or organisation. But branch Manager AKM Azizur Rahman bought acceptance bill worth Tk 500 crore that was given to Hallmark Group on a single day.
The BB report said a general manager responsible for monitoring the branch's activities completely failed to carry out his duties. The report also found involvement of Md Mainul Haque, deputy managing

director (international business), in the scam.
Humayun Kabir, who was the managing director of Sonali Bank from May 20, 2010 to May 19 this year, also failed to detect the scam in his bank.
Kabir could not be reached over the phone for comments despite repeated attempts.
Meanwhile, a member of the ACC inquiry team told The Daily Star that the main suspected culprits Hallmark Group managing director Tanvir Mahmud and his wife Group Chairman Jesmin Islam sought time to appear before the ACC.
"We'll ask them to appear before the commission after the Eid," said the ACC offi-

Ask Myanmar to settle it

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In June, as sectarian violence broke out in Myanmar, hundreds of Rohingyas tried to enter Bangladesh by crossing the river Naff in Teknaf.
The BGB and coast guard men sent them back despite repeated pressure from some foreign countries and international agencies to accept them as refugees.
Hasina said her government was providing the Rohingyas with food, medicine and even financial assistance before repatriating them.
Additionally, in an interview with a foreign television channel last month, she said Bangladesh was already an overpopulated country so it could not take in any more Rohingyas.
This time, too, she explained to the British

secretary of state the context of Bangladesh and why her government had to deny entry to Rohingyas fleeing Myanmar in June.
The Rohingyas are a centuries-old minority Muslim population of Myanmar. But they have been "stateless" since Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Act undid their citizenship status in 1948.
Last month, Amnesty International also called on Myanmar's parliament to amend or repeal the 1982 Citizenship Law to ensure that Rohingyas were no longer stateless.
"Under international human rights law and standards, no one may be left or rendered stateless. For too long Myanmar's human rights record has been marred by the continued

denial of citizenship for Rohingyas and a host of discriminatory practices against them," said Benjamin Zawacki, Amnesty International's Myanmar researcher.
Bangladesh first allowed Rohingyas in as refugees in 1978. Some 2,50,877 Rohingyas took shelter at the time as registered refugees in dozens of camps across Cox's Bazar. After this influx, Bangladesh could send back 2,36,599 refugees till 2005, official statistics show.
At present, there are around 30,000 registered Rohingya refugees at two camps in Teknaf in Cox's Bazar. But roughly about half a million of them unofficially live in Cox's Bazar and other areas of the Chittagong region.

Martyr's widow identifies Mollah

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from her father-in-law, she had heard from many of her village that Quader Mollah had killed her husband on November 25, 1971 and that at least 50-60 others had also been killed that day.
On August 8, Abdul Majid Palowan, the seventh prosecution witness of the case, told the tribunal that Quader Mollah directly took part in the killing of around 60 people at Ghatarchar in Keraniganj on November 25, 1971.
Mozaffar Ahmed Khan, the first prosecution witness in the case, also narrated the same massacre in his testimony on July 3.
The three-member tribunal headed by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir, with Justice Obaidul Hassan and Md Shahinur Islam as members, adjourned the case proceedings until August 26. The eighth witness is set to face cross-examination by the defence on the day. Defence counsel Abdus Sobhan Tarafder asked only two questions before the adjournment.

The tribunal on May 28 framed six charges of crimes against humanity against the Jamaat assistant secretary general. The fourth charge relates to the atrocities at Ghatarchar village.
During her 24-minute testimony, Nur Jahan said she was 13 during the Liberation War and was pregnant at that time.
"I was living with my husband at Ghatarchar [in Keraniganj, on the outskirts of the capital, during the war] and an incident took place [at Ghatarchar] on November 25, 1971," said the witness, who wore a veil and spectacles.
"Shooting started that day after Fajr prayers. Hearing the sounds of gunshots, my husband and I hid under our cot," said Nur Jahan, adding that after a while the shooting ceased.
As they stepped out, they saw Pakistan army soldiers approaching their house. Her husband went to his uncle Mozammel's place and soon she heard the sounds of gunshots again.
"After some time, my maternal aunt came to our

house and told my mother-in-law that Bulu was no more," said Nur Jahan, adding, "After hearing the news, I rushed to that house screaming and saw that our uncle [Mozammel] had been shot too."
"I saw some Pakistani soldiers and a short and dark Bangalee man. My husband lay on the ground there," said Nur Jahan, adding, "When I approached, to hold my husband, the Bangalee man asked me to leave the spot, pointing something like a rifle at me."
She said she had left the place in fear but went back there between 10:30am and 11:00am and found her husband's body still lying there.
At least 50-60 people of Ghatarchar were killed on the day and Dr Joynal and Mokter Hossain were also involved in the killing, added Nur Jahan.
"I have heard from my father-in-law that Jamaat leader Quader Mollah had killed my husband," said the witness, adding, "Besides my father-in-law Luddu Mia, I have heard about the

killing from many others, including Majid Palowan [seventh prosecution witness] of my village."
At the end of the testimony, Mohammad Ali, conducting prosecutor of the case, asked Nur Jahan if she could identify the "short and dark Bangalee man" of her statement.
She replied affirmatively and identified Quader Mollah in the dock, saying his hair was short and he did not have a beard back then.
Meanwhile, the tribunal completed recording the defence cross-examination of Abdul Majid Palowan, the seventh prosecution witness in the case.
Abdus Sobhan Tarafder cross-examined the witness for 80 minutes and asked him around 50 questions.
In his testimony, Palowan said he was hiding behind a tree from where he saw Quader Mollah firing at the people at Ghatarchar School ground on November 25, 1971.
The defence counsel suggested that Palowan did not see Quader Mollah, who did not go there that day.

But Palowan rejected the defence's claim by just saying, "It is not true."
There was no rifle in Quader Mollah's hand and he did not open fire on the day of the incident, argued the defence counsel.
Palowan again rejected the defence's claim.
In reply to a question, Palowan said he was president of a ward unit of the ruling Awami League in his locality.
"You have given false testimony against the accused as you are loyal to the present government," said Abdus Sobhan. "It is not true," said the witness.
The tribunal yesterday adjourned the case proceedings against another Jamaat leader, Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, until August 28 when the fifth prosecution witness is expected to testify.
The fifth prosecution witness was supposed to give his testimony yesterday, but prosecutor AKM Saiful Islam told the tribunal all the witnesses are from outside Dhaka and it was not possible to bring them before the

Women leaders

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The amendment will enable the government-appointed chairman of the bank to choose its managing director, sidelining other members of the GB board, reads the statement.
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directors. But in the case of Grameen Bank, the government is trying to vest power in the chairman, who is always appointed by the government. Through this move the chairman will be allowed to make undemocratic decisions by overriding the majority of the board members who are women, according to the statement.
The managing director post fell vacant after Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus was forced to step down by the central bank in May last year.
The group urged all conscientious citizens to call upon the government to reverse its plan of taking over the bank, thereby jeopardising its future and depriving the majority of GB board members of their role in decision making.
The signatories of the statement are Sarah Abedin, Prof Fahmina Ahmed, Samia Ahmed, Asma Alam, Anusheh Anadil, Prof Firdous

Azim, Dr Dil Afroz Begum Choby, Prof Daria Noor Begum, Jeenat Ara Bhuiyan, Dr Dilara Chowdhury, Fahima Chowdhury, Geeteera Safiya Chowdhury, Luva Nahid Chowdhury, Naila Chowdhury, Ruby Ghuznavi, Angela Gomes, Prof Yasmin Haque, Lopita Huq, Dr Samia Huq, Taheerah Huq, Prof Jahanara Huq, Dr Humaira Islam, Dr Mahmuda Islam, Dr Rounaq Jahan, Roushan Jahan, Sonia Bashir Kabir, Dr Nusrat Jahan Kajal, Prof Naila Zaman Khan, Ayesha Khanam, Prof Rashida Khanam, Munize Manzur, Lubna Marium, Nasreen Awal Minto, Hasna Moudud, Wasfia Nazreen, Zeenat Afroz Rahim, Prof Joushan Ara Rahman, Raushanara Rahman, Taleya Rehman, Seema Asif Reza, Farhana Reza, Durreen Shahnaz, Sadaf Saaz Siddiqi, Shahana Siddiqi, Begum Quamrun Nahar Zafar and Sara Zaker.

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