

Modasser

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Meanwhile, Tanvir Mahmud, managing director of Hall-Mark, yesterday claimed to the ACC investigators that his company had taken the loan from Sonali Bank "legally".

After being interrogated by the ACC team, Tanvir told journalists that he had assets worth 20 times higher than the amount borrowed from the state-run commercial bank.

"I am not involved in any corruption. I have taken money [from Sonali Bank] and I will return it," he said. "I did not flee the country; I will not do so. I will return the money and only then will I go."

He also claimed he had not taken any help from any minister or lawmaker to get this loan.

Tanvir said the health adviser attended only two events of his company and went to his hometown for a reception programme. If it was a crime, the government should make it clear, he added.

Earlier, a Bangladesh Bank probe found that the Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch of Sonali Bank had lent Hall-Mark Group and five other companies Tk 3,547 crore between 2010 and May this year on forged documents.

Of the Tk 3,547 crore, Hall-Mark Group alone took Tk 2,686.14 crore while 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.

An investigation team yesterday quizzed Hall-Mark Chairman Jesmin Islam and Tanvir from 2:00pm to 5:00pm.

Hall-Mark General Manager Tusher Ahmed also went to the ACC office but the investigators could not interrogate him due to time constraints.

Contacted, Tusher said Jesmin and Tanvir were asked how they had got the money and what had been done with it.

"The ACC is investigating 134 garment units of the group," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

The ACC did not demand any document from the group on the first day of the quizzing, he said. "If necessary, the ACC might call us in the near future."

The six-member probe body has so far interrogated 17 Sonali Bank officials.

Led by ACC Deputy Director Mir Md Zainul Abedin Shebly, the team yesterday also quizzed top officials of DN Sports, another business organisation.

The five other investigators of the team are Akhter Hamid, a deputy director; assistant directors Nazmus Sadat and Moshir Rahman and deputy assistant directors Mohammad Mojibur Rahman and Zainal Abedin.

DN Sports Chairman Motahar Uddin Chowdhury, Managing Director Shafiqur Rahman and Director Fahmida Akhter Chowdhury Shikha were questioned from 10:00am to 2:00pm.

The ACC sources said all the officials from Hall-Mark and DN Sports claimed they had taken loans from Sonali Bank by following due process.

China working

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China wants to see revival of the WB loan and is doing a lot to that end, he told the meeting.

Li Jun also said his country attaches great importance to its relationship with Bangladesh.

In reply to a query, the envoy said China was ready to help Bangladesh construct a deep-sea port at Sonadia.



Mainul Haque



Atiqur Rahman

Sonali moves

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Bangladesh Bank directive, according to which the two DMDs are Atiqur Rahman and Mainul Haque.

Last week, the central bank asked Sonali Bank to suspend 31 of its officials, including the two DMDs, over the Tk 3,547-crore loan scam.

On Thursday, the Sonali Bank suspended 17 of its officials over the fraud.

The BB in its audit found that the loan was given to Hall-Mark and a number of

companies through fraudulent means.

Banking Secretary Shafiqur Rahman Patwari told reporters that they received the letter, which did not mention any name.

A top-level Sonali Bank official, however, said the letter requested the ministry to take "proper action" against the two DMDs in line with the BB directive.

The central bank's directive was also attached to the letter, he added.

Agitation called

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decision not to hold any admission test have to be withdrawn, said AFM Ruhul Haque, the health minister, after a meeting with students at the Secretariat.

The demonstrators welcomed the decision to hold the test at a press conference held at Madhu's Canteen at Dhaka University yesterday.

The government on August 12 decided that students would be enrolled at medical and dental colleges based on SSC and HSC examination results and without any admission test.

Eunus Ali Akond, a Supreme Court lawyer, and Mizanur Rahman, father of an admission seeker, last month filed two separate writ petitions with the High Court, challenging the legality of the government's August 12 decision.

Lawyers for the two writ petitioners said they would not withdraw the petitions until the government issues a circular for enrolling students by holding a test.

A spokesperson for the demonstrators, Mominul Islam, at the press conference said, "We talked to the writ petitioner [Eunus] and he told us he would withdraw the petition today."

If the health minister had told us earlier that the idea of results-based enrolment was a government

proposal and not a formal decision, we would not have taken to the streets, Mominul added.

He said the government would circulate medical admission forms as soon as the writ petitions are withdrawn.

However, if the petitions are not withdrawn, the government would abide by the directives of the HC, he added.

Following the writ petitions, the HC on August 14 and 27 issued two separate rules upon the government to explain why its August 12 decision should not be declared illegal.

Besides, on August 27, a two-judge HC bench passed a split order on the petition filed by Eunus Ali seeking its directives on the government to immediately start the admission process at medical and dental colleges by holding a test.

Justice Qamrul Islam Siddiqui, senior judge of an HC bench, directed the authorities concerned to immediately start the admission process, while junior judge of the bench Justice Md Ashrafur Kamal rejected the petition.

The HC bench will now send the petition along with the orders to the chief justice for a decision, and the chief justice will refer the matter to another bench for its disposal.

50 hurt as locals

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a sub-inspector.

The councillor's supporters, wielding sticks, blocked Dhaka-Narayanganj link road at Jalkuri in Siddhirganj area for three hours from 8:00pm to protest the detention. They vandalised at least 10 vehicles, triggering a severe traffic jam on the road.

As police tried to disperse the crowd, a clash ensued. Chase and counter-chase continued for around two hours. The mob hurled bricks and bats at the cops.

The law enforcers fired around 50 teargas shells and rubber bullets to bring the situation under control. Vehicular movement on the link road resumed around 11:30pm, said Narayanganj Superintendent of Police Sheikh Nazmul Alam.

Earlier around 7:00pm, police detained Councillor Israfil Hossain of NCC ward-9, after he assaulted one of the policemen who went to his office to inquire about the beating of a relative of local Awami League lawmaker Abdullah Al Kaiser.

The councillor used rude and offensive language about the lawmaker in the presence of the policemen including Kamrul Alam Mollah, officer-in-charge of the Siddhirganj Police Station.

As Sub-Inspector Ataur Rahman protested, Israfil assaulted him. Later, the police team arrested the councillor.

Hearing the news, several hundred supporters of Israfil came out on the link road and went on the rampage. Siddhirganj police told

The Daily Star around 2:00am today that two cases were filed against Israfil last night.

Maldives warns Nasheed to halt protests

AFP, Colombo

The Maldives government yesterday accused former president Mohamed Nasheed of "seeking to inflame" unrest in the island nation and said unruly protests by his supporters would no longer be tolerated.

Nasheed claimed he was forced out of power in February by a coup, but an international investigation last week concluded that he had resigned after a police and military mutiny and weeks of demonstrations against his leadership.

Since his fall, supporters of Nasheed have expressed their anger at regular protests in the island capital Male and have often clashed with police.

However, Nasheed has accepted the commission's findings.

The new government, led by President Mohamed Waheed, said yesterday that the protests must end after the investigation found that the transfer of power was legal and constitutional.

"Former president Nasheed whilst he has reluctantly accepted the findings of (the report) continues to call for and partake in violent demonstrations," the government said in a statement. "(He) is seeking to inflame the

Grameen

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journalists after meeting visiting Singapore State Minister for Foreign and Home Zulkifli Masagos at the state guesthouse Padma.

Dipu Moni said the idea and information given to the foreign friends about Grameen Bank are not authentic.

Replying to query, she said, "Grameen Bank is a statutory body of the government and it is being run as a government institution should."

"The government is not doing anything breaking the laws. Most of the beneficiaries of the bank are women and the government is sincere about protecting their interests. Grameen Bank is now running far better than in the past."

Asked whether the government will reply to the letter from US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton over the bank, the foreign minister avoided a direct reply, saying, "We have regular contact with them on various issues."

Lending

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Furthermore, the branch extended credit to different concerns of the controversial Hall-Mark Group -- Hallmark Fashion, Boby Fashion, Walmart Fashion, T and Brothers Knit Composite and Dress Me Fashion -- without forwarding the relevant renewal applications to the International Trade Finance Division (ITFD) of the bank.

"The ITFD of Sonali Bank did not raise any question as to how the borrowers were allowed the credit facility after expiry of sanction in March-April 2011," said the report.

Sonali Bank's Ruposhi Bangla branch came under the spotlight recently after a Bangladesh Bank investigation found the branch at fault for disbursing Tk 3,547 crore, of which Tk 2,686 crore was to Hall-Mark Group, in unscrupulous ways.

After Sonali Bank failed to detect the gross irregularities in its internal inspection an external audit firm came into the scene.

The report found the branch to have created invalid bill purchases (IBP) -- Tk 10.70 crore for Anwara Spinning Mills, Tk 12.69 crore for Expertec Ltd, Tk 6.61 crore for LNS Accessories and Tk 13.67 lakh for Blue See -- without having received any applications from the parties.

"This means there was no buy and sale -- it was a complete fraud," a senior official of a private commercial bank told The Daily Star.

IBP is essentially a credit facility that takes place when a bank gives guarantee to its client for purchase of goods and services from the local market.

As per the bank's circular, prior to accepting the documents for the letter of credit (LC) the branch is required to inspect whether the physical exchange of goods took place between the parties concerned.

The Ruposhi Bangla branch manager, however, did not carry out any of the essential steps, which, ultimately, was conducive to the embezzlement of over Tk 30.14 crore.

Grenade injures 37 in Philippines

AFP, Davao

A grenade attack at a packed circus show injured at least 37 people in the troubled southern Philippines, police said yesterday.

The blast in Davao city was apparently meant to strike an army camp but the grenade bounced off netting and landed inside an adjacent basketball gym where a circus was being held late Saturday, police said.

It was not yet known who carried out the attack and why, but communist and Muslim insurgents are known to operate in the area and have been blamed for similar incidents in the past.

Davao city is on Mindanao island in the southern third of the mainly Catholic Philippines where deadly insurgencies have raged for decades.

Quader sorry

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standing on the train with her paralysed husband even after having tickets. They were weeping at not having seats.

"When I asked them about the reason behind their predicament, the woman complained that the attendant had asked for extra money from her before she could be given a seat. Then I could not control myself and slapped the attendant, who is very young, as he failed to explain his undue demand for money," Quader said.

Moreover, the minister explained that the attendant replied in English to show his competence which also irked him.

Sources said the attendant was later handed over to police for demanding the extra money.

At the meeting, the minister asked the engineers to

work sincerely to deliver services to the people properly. He also directed them to ensure quality in road construction and maintenance works so that the government did not have to go for repairing again and again.

Talking to The Daily Star, some engineers quoted the minister as saying that he was working relentlessly and would not tolerate any negligence of duty by any officials concerned.

Quader also thanked the engineers for cooperating with him in repairing roads and highways ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Claiming that he did not take any percentage from engineers and contractors for any road construction work, the minister warned that he would go tough against any kind of corruption or irregularities in the RHD.

BCL elements swing

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The BCL men brought out a counter programme on the campus and were locked in a tussle with agitating students yesterday, creating panic throughout the campus.

This correspondent saw some BCL leaders enter the vice-chancellor's residence on the campus around 1:45pm. They held a meeting with the VC, Buet sources said.

Contacted, VC Prof SM Nazrul Islam said he would follow whatever directives the government gave him. He also ruled out any communication with the Chhatra League over the issue.

Pro-VC M Habibur Rahman declined to make any comment.

Earlier, the demonstrators torched the effigies of the duo in front of the civil engineering building around 11:15am and brought out a procession on the campus.

A number of teachers in black T-shirts joined the protesters.

At around noon, more than 100 students along with a number of teachers entered the VC office on the first floor of the administrative building with police permission and declared their intention to stay there until the VC and Pro-VC were

removed.

"We will remain here until the VC and pro-VC are removed," said Abdul Hasib Chowdhury, a teacher of the electrical department. "We are here also for the security of the students as some elements from outside may intrude here."

A huge number of law enforcers were deployed on the campus.

Around 12:15pm, some 30-40 BCL members along with some outsiders, wearing white T-shirts with printed texts urging the teachers to keep academic activities above all agitations, commenced a procession from the university cafeteria.

Around 12:45pm, they went to the administrative building, where the agitating students and teachers were staging the sit-in, and tried to enter the first floor but failed. The protesters had locked the gate at the first floor stairs from the inside.

As the BCL members kicked away at the gate and hit it with bricks and bamboo, students shouted for help from the newsmen and law enforcers.

The BCL men then assaulted a few students on the ground floor, snatched away the microphone used by a demonstrating teacher and hurled abuse at him, and drove away the rickshaw

Rab nabs six

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A few Rab sources, meanwhile, said two doctors of the NIDCH had links with the killing as prior to the incident they had communicated several times with the manager of Nitai's clinic, his driver and assistant.

One of the two doctors had already been arrested by Rab, a Rab source said, wishing anonymity. But the Rab authorities denied it.

The arrestees in Rab custody are Nitai's manager Saifur Rahman, 36, driver Kamrul Hasan Arun, 27, assistant Tariqul Islam, 24, and three others -- Bakul Miah, 26, Rafiqul Islam, 24, and Sayeed, 25.

At a press briefing yesterday at the Rab headquarters in Dhaka, Arun said he had hired Bakul, Rafiqul, Sayeed, Hossain and Mintu on the instructions of manager Saifur and medical assistant Tariqul to loot Tk 20 lakh in cash and 108 tolas of gold from the doctor's house.

"We were five in the gang. Bakul, Sayeed, Hossain, Mintu and I entered the house. Mintu stabbed the doctor to death," Rafiqul said.

Saifur, however, claimed that he had not been involved.

Another four arrestees -- Peda Mashud, 25, Saiful, 37, Pichhi Kalam, 26, and Faisal, 30 -- at the briefing arranged by DB on August 25 said they had been seven in a group. Four of them had entered the house while the other three had remained outside.

Mintu was the one who had stabbed the doctor, resulting in his death, they

equipped with loudspeaker.

A BCL member was shouting: "You [students] will vandalise VC's room and we'll stay calm? We did not say anything to you in the last several days but now we will not spare you."

The BCL activists left the place around 1:15pm and the students started chanting slogans such as "There is no place for terrorists on Buet premises."

Around 4:45pm, the students at a press briefing before the administrative building announced their intention of staying in the building till 11:00am today.

"How long must we suffer before you [VC and pro-VC] resign?" Faisal Hasan, a student of the mechanical department, said.

It all started on April 7 this year when Buet Teachers Association launched an agitation, including work abstention, and brought 16 allegations against the VC and pro-VC. Students and university officials joined them in mid-July.

CASES FILED

Buet Security Officer Golam Kuddus Khan last night filed two cases with Shahbagh Police Station, accusing around 150 named and unnamed students and teachers of ransacking furniture and looting files from the VC and pro-VC's rooms.

Carjacking

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The stolen cars used to be first transferred to Jahir in Feni and then to Mahbub in Chittagong. Mahbub used to do the paperwork -- arranging documents -- before selling them for Tk 80,000 to Tk 1 lakh each, according to the DC.

"We hope we will find more information about the gang on further interrogation," he added.

Assistant Superintendent of Police Montasir Rahman told this correspondent that the police received about 30 carjacking cases per month. "Different groups are active in the business in different areas of the city. We are trying to identify them."

Sources in the police say the number of carjacking cases is much higher as most of the carjacking incidents remain unreported.

In August, law enforcers arrested at least 15 people over carjacking in the capital, recovering six cars and a motorbike from them.

Earlier in February, detectives arrested three alleged carjackers and recovered stolen parts of four vehicles at Siddhirganj in Narayanganj.

Despite such frequent arrests, carjacking in the capital is rampant because most of the arrestees come out of jail on bail and resume their old business.

"It's true that criminals get bail and then start all over again. We're trying to find a way to keep them in jail for a longer period," said Nazrul Islam, deputy police commissioner of DB.

BSF kills 1 in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi cattle trader along Burimari border in Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat on Saturday.

The victim was identified as Babul Hossain, 31, of Islampur village in the upazila.

Helal Uddin, camp commander of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) 31 Battalion, said a BSF patrol team of Changrabandha camp of Cooch Behar opened fire on Babul around 9:20pm when he went there to receive cattle smuggled in from India.

The BSF later took the body, he added.

The BGB in a letter to the BSF demanded the return of the body. The BSF said it would hand over the body after an autopsy, said BGB officials.

BNP briefs

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stance on caretaker government system.

A BNP-delegation led by party's acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir at a meeting with EU representatives at a hotel in the capital reiterated that a neutral administration is a must for holding a credible election.

Party Vice-chairman Shamsur Mubin Chowdhury, however, said the meeting was part of the party's regular discussion with diplomats.

"We discussed the bilateral issues as the EU is a big development partner of Bangladesh," he told The Daily Star when asked about the discussion.

During the meeting, the opposition leaders also reiterated that the party would not participate in the upcoming election if it is held under a political administration, party sources said.

They also drew attention of the diplomats regarding the deterioration of law and order in the country, and the government's "failure to return" BNP leader M Ilias Ali, who went missing from the capital on April 17 night.

Sources said the delegation also accused the Awami League-led government of harassing the opposition leaders including the family members of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia by filing false cases and obstructing the opposition's regular protest programmes.

The issue of Grameen Bank also came up in the discussion, said a BNP leader asking not to be named.

BNP chairperson's advisers Reaz Rahman, Jahiuddin Ahmed, and journalist Shafiq Rehman was present in the meeting.

Limon

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Limon Hossain, one of the eight accused, could not appear before it due to illness.

The case was filed for obstruction in the discharge of official duty, attempted murder and injuring Rab personnel. The charge sheet was submitted by police on July 1 this year.

Limon's counsels yesterday sought time as Limon failed to attend the hearing due to sickness, said lawyer Manik Acharya.

Accepting the plea, the magistrate fixed October 17 for the hearing.

Limon, who used to work at a brick kiln to meet the expenses for his education, was maimed in Rab shooting at his village Saturia in Rajapur upazila of Jhalakathi on March 23 last year. Rab the same day filed two cases. The date for framing of the charges in the other case, filed under the Arms Act, is September 16.

The same court on October 17 will hear the "no-confidence" petition against the final probe report of police in the attempted murder case filed by Limon's mother against six Rab members. The report found the Rab personnel innocent.